

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited

HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Development Consent Order

Project reference TR050007

Response to Draft National Policy Statement National Networks

Document reference: 7.2

Revision: 01

March 2023

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
Regulation 5(2)(q)

This document forms a part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange project.

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited (TSH) has applied to the Secretary of State for Transport for a DCO for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI).

Further details about the proposed Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange are available on the project website:

<http://www.hinckleynrfi.co.uk/>

The DCO application and documents relating to the examination of the proposed development can be viewed on the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Planning website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/hinckley-national-rail-freight-interchange/>

THE APPLICANT'S COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR NATIONAL NETWORKS PUBLISHED FOR CONSULTATION ON 14 MARCH 2023

MARCH 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the publication of the Draft NPS for National Networks, the Applicant considers that a response should be made to the Draft NPS with the re-submission of the applications for a DCO for Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI).
- 1.2 The transitional provisions (Draft NPS paragraph 1.16 -1.17) are noted. On the basis the application for HNRFI is accepted for examination before designation of the 2023 amendments, the existing NPS, dated December 2014. as referred to in the planning statement will still be the NPS which "has effect" for the purposes of section 104 Planning Act 2008 and in accordance with which decisions on the application must be made by the Secretary of State . Nevertheless, the provisions of the draft NPS are potentially capable of being important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process for the purposes of s104(2)(d) Planning Act 2008.
- 1.3 It is considered that HNRFI is consistent with the Draft NPS, as explained in the Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.1). The consistency of HNRFI with the Draft NPS adds further weight in favour of the application for a DCO. The draft NPS endorses the Governments conclusion that there continues to be a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs – as stated in the existing NPS. In so far as there are some substantive changes to the 'General Policies and Considerations' this note comments upon these changes and the extent to which the application for HNRFI engages with the issues.

2. Statement of the Need

- 2.1 The 'drivers of need for SRFIs' reflects the significant evolution of the logistics sector since the NPS for National Networks was designated in 2015. As explained in the Market Needs Assessment (Document Reference 16.1) and the Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.1), HNRFI offers a unique opportunity due to its location on the strategic rail freight network to not only serve its own market but to also operate as a 'rail hub', capable of aggregating mixed loads to and from smaller regional terminals and ports. This would considerably enhance the commercial viability of their freight train services and thereby help to establish a national network of SRFI's in accordance with Government policy, as set out in the Draft NPS (paragraph 3.102-3.108)
- 2.2 The Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.1) and Market Needs Assessment (Document Reference 16.1) have appropriately responded to the contention raised by some interests during the consultation stages of HNRFI (non-statutory and statutory) that sufficient provision has been made for SRFIs within the Midlands Region. The application submission explains the market which HNRFI will serve and the markets served by committed operational SRFIs within the Midlands. The position taken by the Applicant is aligned with the Draft NPS (paragraph 3.103) that commitments to date for SRFIs do not fully meet the Government's ambitions for rail freight growth. Midlands Connect - Our Freight Routemap for the Midlands (published August 2022) recognises that if it is to be successful, the region requires additional SRFI capacity. (Market Needs Assessment Document Reference 16.1 - para 5.25).

- 2.3 Paragraph 4.86 of Draft NPS provides welcome policy clarity to the issues raised in paragraph 4.88 concerning the timing of rail network connection which has been scrutinised in the examination of other SRFIs by the Examining Authority and the Secretary of State. The Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.1) and the ES Chapter 3 Project Description (Document Reference 6.1.3) describe the phasing of the rail port and warehouse construction. The approach taken in the HNRFI is consistent with Draft NPS.
- 2.4 The Applicant has been working collaboratively with Network Rail to understand the time frame for the delivery and commissioning of the rail network connection. An operational rail connection for HNRFI will be brought forward in a 'timely manner' (Draft NPS paragraph 4.86).
- 2.5 TSL consider that the Design and Access Statement (Document Reference 8.1), and the consideration of 'alternatives' as explained in ES Chapter 4 Site Selection and Evolution (Document Reference 6.1.4), demonstrate the evolution of good design for HNRFI. TSL has appropriately considered the functionality of the design to meet future occupier demands, sustainability and the aesthetics of the development within the locality.
- 2.6 The development team of specialist consultants have worked collectively in the evolution of the design for HNRFI to meet the four design principles identified by the National Infrastructure commission comprising Climate, People, Places and Nature. In the evolution of the design for Hinckley National, the scheme has been amended and refined including:
- Revisions to the highway proposals to minimise the requirement for new road construction.
 - Buildings to be constructed to net zero carbon, in line with the UK Green Building Council Net-Zero Buildings Framework.
 - Reducing the height of the warehouse buildings.
 - Increasing structural landscaping.
 - Safeguarding land in an open land-use between Burbage Common and HNRFI – with public rights of access.
 - Providing a strategy to achieve a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - Provision for renewable energy generation through the provision of roof mounted PV panels.
 - Identifying a palette of external colouring to the warehouse buildings to reduce visual impact.
 - The closure and diversion of five unmanned rail crossings to improve rail safety
- 2.7 TSL has anticipated, in the design process for HNRFI, the emerging policy requirement for national networks to deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The strategy to achieve a 10% BNG is explained in the Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculations (Document Reference (6.12.2) .

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 In the context of the proposed transitional provisions set out in the Draft NPS, it is considered that the DCO application has anticipated and addresses the substantive changes within the emerging policy .
- 3.2 TSL will monitor the further progress of the Draft NPS following the close of the consultation on 6 June 2023 and anticipates that the Examining Authority may wish to ask further questions in due course.