Site selection and alternatives

One of a series of background topic papers prepared by db symmetry in support of a public consultation on proposals for a strategic rail freight interchange in Blaby district, to the north-east of Hinckley in Leicestershire.

INTRODUCTION

1. In 2019 db symmetry will apply to the government for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a proposed strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) on a site in Blaby District, to the east of Hinckley in Leicestershire. The project is known as the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI).

2. A DCO is a special form of planning permission for large infrastructure projects. It can include a range of additional powers required to implement the proposals, such as powers to acquire land, undertake works to streets, trees and hedgerows and divert utility services.

3. The HNRFI project requires **environmental impact assessment** (EIA). This is a process that aims to improve the environmental design of a development proposal and provide decision makers with information about its environmental effects. The findings of the environmental studies are written up and presented in a report called an **environmental statement** (ES). The ES describes the development proposals in detail and explains how the site was chosen and how the project design evolved in the light of environmental studies and consultations with the local community and other interested parties. The ES will be submitted with the DCO application.

4. According to the EIA Regulations 2017 [1], the ES shall include:

   'a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the applicant, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment'.

[1] Section 14(2)(d) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 572 2017) http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/pdfs/uksi_20170572_en.pdf

5. This topic paper explains how db symmetry identified a site for a strategic rail freight interchange. It begins by looking at the regional context and outlines the options that db symmetry considered in terms of alternative locations. It then outlines the consideration that db symmetry is giving to the design and technology, size and scale of the development, guided by consultation feedback and the EIA.

6. This paper should be read in conjunction with db symmetry topic papers on *Policy and Need*, which explains the national need for strategic rail freight interchange facilities, and *Rail Operations*, which explains how the HNRFI would work.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

What does a SRFI do?

7. According to para. 2.44 of the government's *National Policy Statement for National Networks* ('the NPS'):

'The aim of a strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) is to optimise the use of rail in the freight journey by maximising rail trunk haul and minimising some elements of the secondary distribution leg by road, through co-location of other distribution and freight activities. SRFIs are a key element in reducing the cost to users of moving freight by rail and are important in facilitating the transfer of freight from road to rail, thereby reducing trip mileage of freight movements on both the national and local road networks'.

8. As para. 2.57 of the NPS acknowledges, most of these intermodal interchanges are located in the Midlands and North of England. These are hub regions both for the strategic road and rail networks and the UK economy that these networks serve. These regions also enjoy direct rail access to a range of large coastal ports through which containerised goods pass.

Growth areas in Leicestershire

9. db symmetry has extensive experience in developing freight logistics schemes in the Midlands and North of England. Working with strategic rail adviser Baker Rose and drawing upon evidence from the *Leicester and Leicestershire Distribution Sector Study* (November 2014) [2] as updated by the *Wider Market Developments: Implications for Leicester and Leicestershire* (Jan 2017) [3], and from the Leicester and Leicestershire

[2] http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwjw-bTo-JTcAhXOKlAKHfDXCgYQFgg1MAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.blaby.gov.uk%2FEasySiteWeb%2FGatewayLink.aspx%3FalId%3D11928&usg=AOvVaw1bZG6nZaaACrPyyJ7vcYDA

[3] http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwi2wKKA-pTcAhWRbVAKHTsMCgEQFggvMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.harborough.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2

Enterprise Partnership's *Strategic Economic Plan 2014-20* (March 2014) [4], it was established that there remains a significant need for rail-related logistics development in addition to the consented East Midlands Gateway development close to East Midlands Airport and the M1 motorway. This need is considered in a *Policy and Need* topic paper that accompanies this paper.

10. As shown in figure 1 (overleaf), the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan ('the LLEP-SEP') identifies five priority Growth Areas as follows:

- *GROWTH AREA 1 (GA1)* - the Leicester urban area (based on the Waterside and Abbey Meadows Strategic Regeneration Area);
- *GROWTH AREA 2 (GA2)* - East Midlands Enterprise Gateway (based on the East Midlands Gateway Strategic Rail Freight Terminal);
- *GROWTH AREA 3 (GA3)* - Coalville Growth Corridor (based on improving the A511 corridor to bring forward already-planned developments);
- *GROWTH AREA 4 (GA4)* - Loughborough (based on the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park for bio and pharmaceutical research and development);
- *GROWTH AREA 5 (GA5)* – South West Leicestershire, in which the proposed Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange is situated.

11. According to the LLEP-SEP (pp 48-9):

'The South West Leicestershire Growth Area offers a unique combination of key commercial and employment hubs. These provide the opportunity to harness major employment and housing opportunities for Leicester and Leicestershire. The M1 corridor (including the M69/M1 Junction 21 location) and A5 corridor are crucial economic areas in their own right, with established and expanding services, distribution, retail and leisure roles providing thousands of jobs for the sub-region.

'The area is also the major gateway to the Leicester Urban Area. Major Sustainable Urban Extensions and Strategic Employment Sites can create 9,000 new homes and 21 hectares of commercial development at New Lubbesthorpe, Earl Shilton and Barwell SUEs.

The success of these significant opportunities depends largely on the delivery of supporting infrastructure. Such investment, alongside other key initiatives such as the major upgrading of the Nuneaton-Felixstowe freight line, will also open up longer term growth potential in this area.'

Fid%2F3102%2Fwider_market_developments_final_report_jan_17pdf.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1p5FvtNG2n_80Lk4OM2PFP

[4] https://www.llep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SEP_-_full_document.pdf

Figure 1: Growth areas identified in the Strategic Economic Plan 2014. The route of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway across Leicestershire is shown diagrammatically as a red line

12. The importance of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight line improvements is recognised in both the Leicester and Leicestershire Distribution Study and the LLEP-SEP, with the latter commenting in para. 3.49 that:

'Freight connectivity will be substantially enhanced by the upgrade of the Nuneaton-Felixstowe freight railway line which will significantly increase freight capacity through

accommodating longer trains up to 750m and larger shipping containers. This route passes through the Growth Area'.

13. In May 2015 the LLEP published a *Logistics & Distribution Sector Growth Action Plan* [5] which states on page 16 under the heading *Rail Interchange*:

'The LLSDSS researched the baseline position, key challenges and plans for growth within the LLEP area and established that the development of new, ***commercially-attractive sites directly served by rail is of upmost importance for Leicestershire*** *to remain one of the strategic locations for Logistics and Distribution. Currently Leicester and Leicestershire remains the 'location of choice' for national distribution centres (NDCs) and regional distribution centres (RDCs) with an estimated 7:3 ratio between the two. This ratio is significant as it demonstrates that the South East Midlands, of which Leicestershire is part, is a favoured location for national distribution operations due to its central location and that a driver can take inbound and / or outbound cargo from both deep-sea and Dover Straits ports within a shift (*original emphasis)'.

14. An SRFI on the Felixstowe to Nuneaton line, ideally within the South West Leicestershire growth Area (GA5) and with good access to the M69, M1 and A5 corridors will provide optimal multi-modal connectivity and a nodal point for the expressed need for future growth.

SITE OPTIONS APPRAISAL CRITERIA

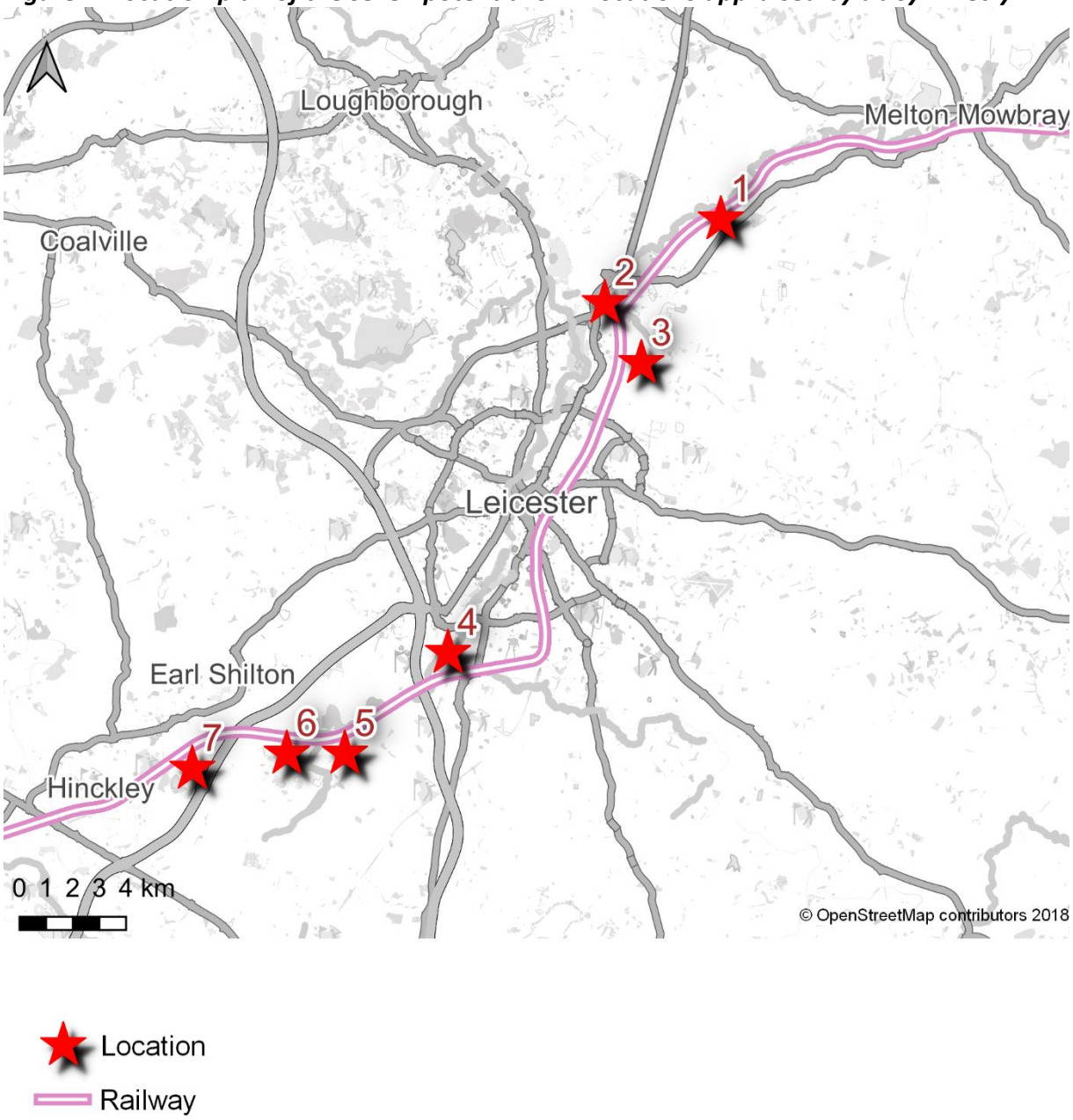
15. Paras 4.83 – 4.89 of the National Networks NPS provide specific policy guidance on the assessment principles for SRFIs, including their function, locational requirements and scale and design. This text is reproduced in full at the end of this topic paper and is taken into account in db symmetry's assessment of locations and design options.

16. At the outset, db symmetry's strategic rail adviser Baker Rose examined locations on the rail network in Leicestershire that might present opportunities for a SRFI in locations on or readily connectable to the Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight line, using a combination of professional knowledge of the network, local knowledge, rail network maps and aerial photographs.

17. Along this route and on potential short spurs from it, seven potential rail locations for a SRFI were identified. These are shown in figure 2.

[5] https://www.llep.org.uk/strategies-and-plans/sector-growth-plans/distribution-and-logistics-sector/

Figure 2: Location plan of the seven potential SRFI locations appraised by db symmetry



18. The following criteria and principles were employed in the appraisal of the options identified.

Rail

- Access for W10 gauge intermodal container traffic. W10 is the mainstream gauge for intermodal freight in the UK and enables the transport of containers 2.9 metres high and 2.5 metres wide on wagons with a bogie spacing of 14.02 metres.
- Ability to receive 775 metre long freight trains.

- Ability for trains to connect to the SRFI site from more than one direction.
- Proximity to the main railways.
- Ability to gain ready access to rail lines.
- Availability of train paths that avoid conflicts with passenger services, with capacity for handling at least four freight trains per day.
- Rail connectivity to major deep water ports of Felixstowe, London Gateway, Liverpool and Southampton, maximising opportunities for modal shift from road to rail.

Road

- Access to the national motorway network.
- Access to the strategic highway network.
- Access at all times of the day and week without creating disturbance to neighbouring and nearby land uses.

Environmental

- Avoidance of housing.
- Avoidance of flood plain.
- A broadly level topography that minimises the need for excessive ground works.
- A tract of land largely free of built development, extending to a minimum of 60 hectares and capable of accommodating large scale warehouse development.

Commercial and economic

- Compatibility with the objectives of the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership's Economic Plan, particularly the Key Areas of Opportunity designated Growth Areas.
- Avoidance of conflicts with existing rail terminals.
- The demand profile for users and occupiers.
- Proximity to a labour force.
- Part of the selection criteria would be the potential availability of securing land interests.

ASSESSMENT OF SITE OPTIONS

19. The seven options identified by Baker Rose lie in a corridor running from the north-east to the south-west of Leicester along the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway, which affords the following operational advantages.

- The preferred site is located on a main rail freight corridor identified by Network Rail (known as the Felixstowe to Nuneaton or 'F2N' Route). Locally this route carries only two passenger trains per hour, providing substantial capacity for freight. There is capacity on the section between Nuneaton and Leicester to be able to accommodate

the Midland Engine's aspirations for significantly increased passenger services [6].

- The railway between Felixstowe and Nuneaton was upgraded in 2014 to the W10 gauge described above, enabling containers up to 2.9 metres high to be carried on standard flat wagons from Felixstowe to the Midlands directly. This means that intermodal trains can travel to the region from all the UK deep sea ports and every major city in Britain with standard wagons carrying 2.9 metre high containers.

- Network Rail is implementing a phased series of improvements to this route, which will increase the maximum train length from 600 metres - the standard intermodal train length - to 775 metres.

- The Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway aligns with a significant economic growth corridor identified by the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership, as set out above.

20. The seven potential SRFI site options identified by db symmetry will now be described in turn. A location plan is provided for each option with the general core area of the location indicated by a mauve circle of standard size. **Please note that these circles are diagrammatic only and provide no indication of the area or shape of land that would be required or available should a SRFI be proposed at that location.**

1. Brooksby

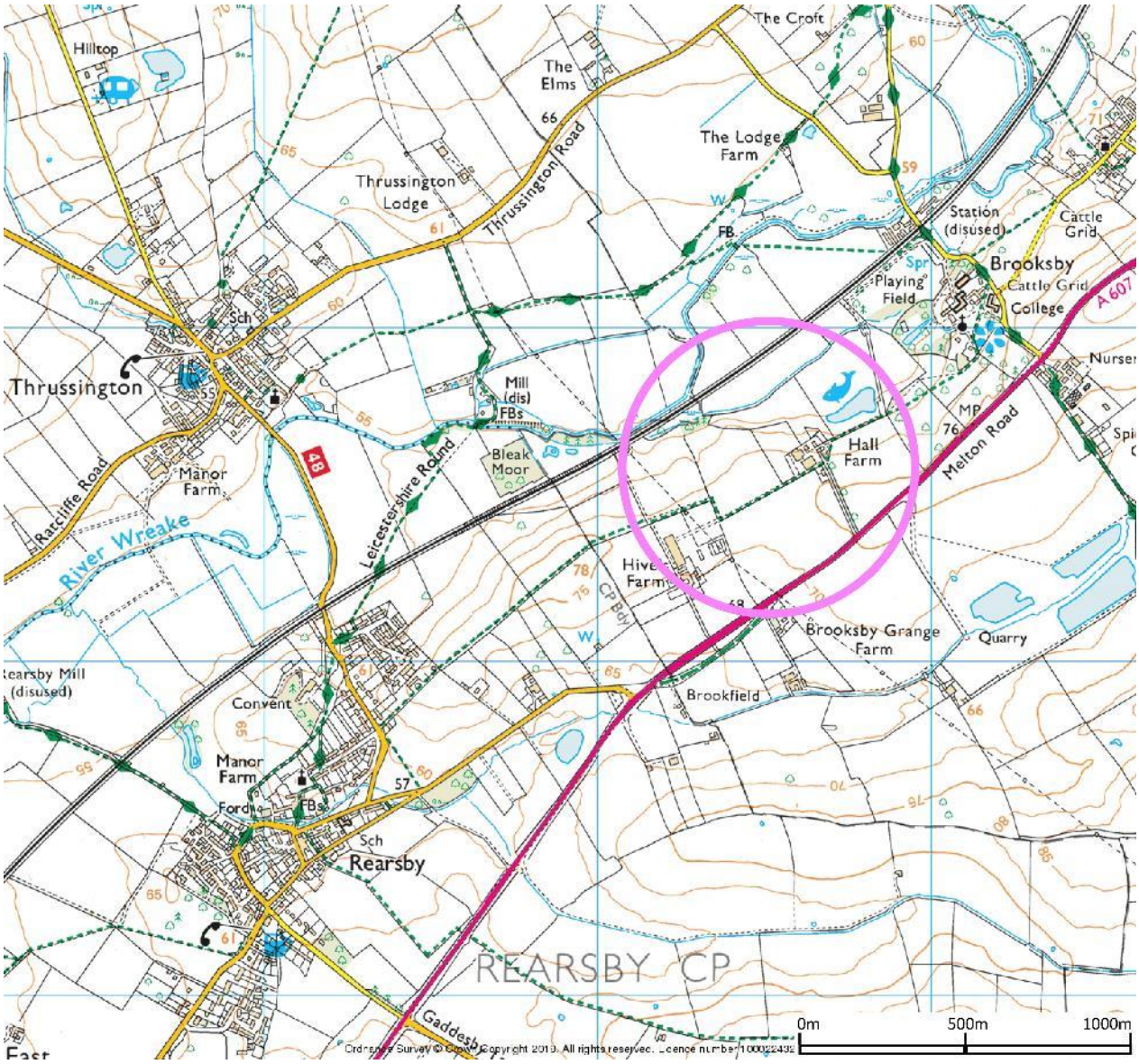
21. This option lies on farmland in the valley of the River Wreake to the west of Brooksby, in an area where the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway passes close to the A607 Leicester to Melton Mowbray road. Immediately to the west of the area of interest is Brooksby Melton College, an agricultural college. Its grade II listed railway station closed in 1964. The villages of Thrussington and Rearsby lie at a distance of 1.5 km to the west and south-west respectively. The locality is in the Borough of Melton.

22. The land to the south-east rises to a low ridge, along which the A607 runs. The railway itself is on a low embankment, in part because the land on both sides of the railway is in the functional flood plain of the River Wreake with extensive areas in Flood Zone 3, meaning that it has been assessed by the Environment Agency as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding. The government's *National Policy Statement for National Networks* (2014, paras. 5.105-5.109) only supports infrastructure development in Flood Zone 3 if a project constitutes 'essential infrastructure' affords wider sustainability benefits and there is no acceptable alternative site. Sections of the River Wreake and its banks are also designated as a local wildlife site.

[6] The Midlands Engine is a coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), Universities and businesses across the region, working to build a collective identity that will enable its members to present the Midlands as a competitive and compelling offer that is attractive to inward investment.

23. However, the principal reasons why the option is not the preferred location are its relatively poor access to the strategic highway network and its location outside of the identified LLEP Growth Areas shown in figure 1 (above). The A607 is a single-carriageway road, connecting to the dual carriageway A46 ring road on the northern edge of Leicester. The site is c. 17 km from the nearest motorway junction - M1 Junction 21A to the west of Leicester that serves traffic to and from the south only - and is c. 22 km from M1 Junction 22, which provides access in both northerly and southerly directions. Such a remote location would not meet occupier requirements for direct strategic road access, adding to road haulage operating costs and the associated environmental impacts.

Figure 3: Option 1 - Brooksby



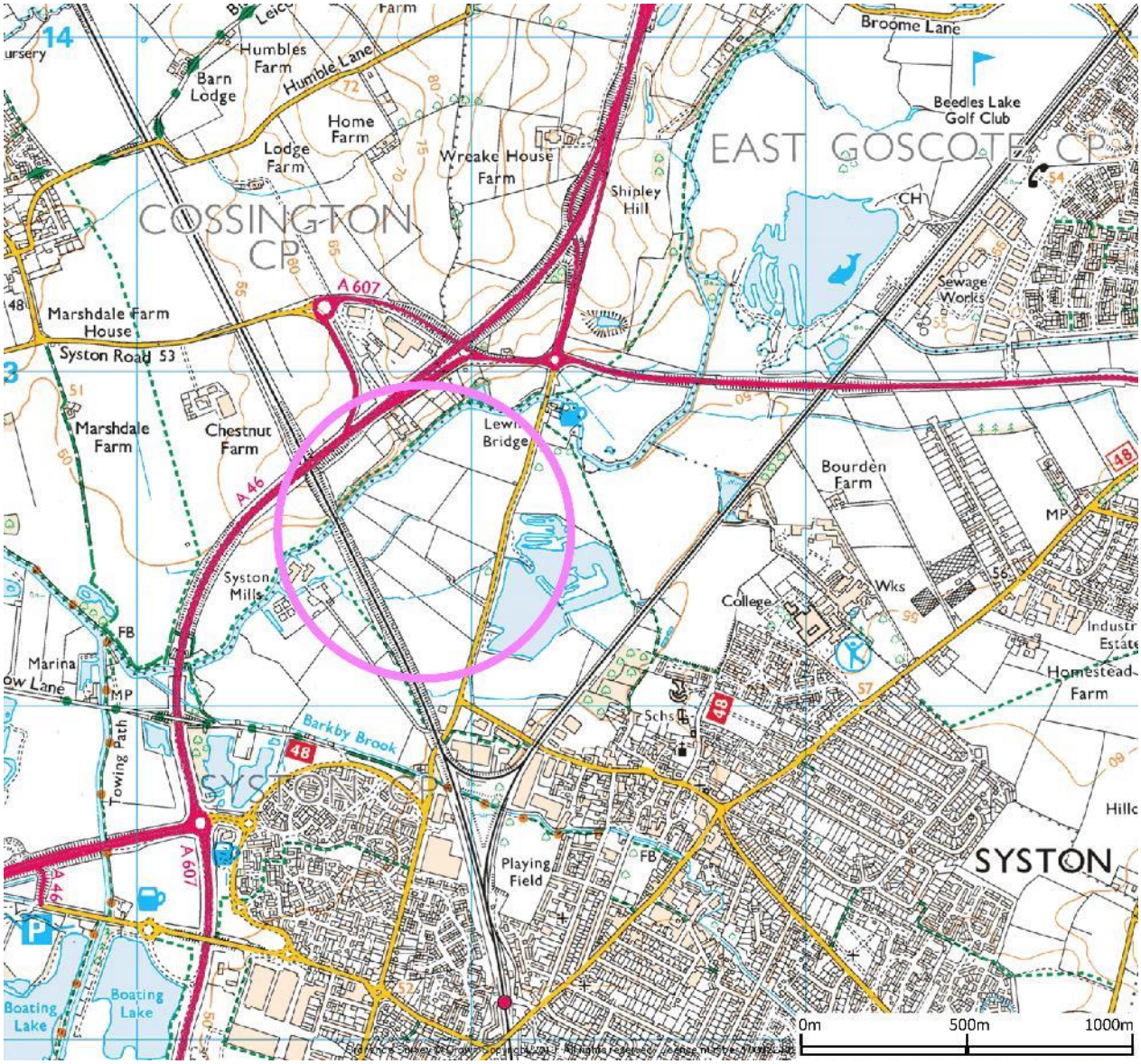
2. Syston Junction / Fosse Way

24. The second option is located on the north-western edge of Syston, on land inside the 'Y' formed where the Felixstowe to Nuneaton and Leicester–Nottingham Midland Main Line railways branch. The site is in Charnwood Borough. The A46 dual carriageway bounds the site to the west and the A607 to the north. Charnwood Edge Business Park lies across the A46 to the north-west, and lakes used by the Roundhill Sailing Association and for angling lie immediately to the south-east. Syston is a historic town with numerous listed buildings in its centre.

25. The site itself is level and in agricultural use. The River Wreake runs inside the north-western and northern boundaries of site and the whole site is in Flood Zone 3, having the highest flood risk. The Fosse Way – a Roman Road and nowadays a secondary road at this location - crosses the middle of the site and provides a link from the A46 to the western part of Syston.

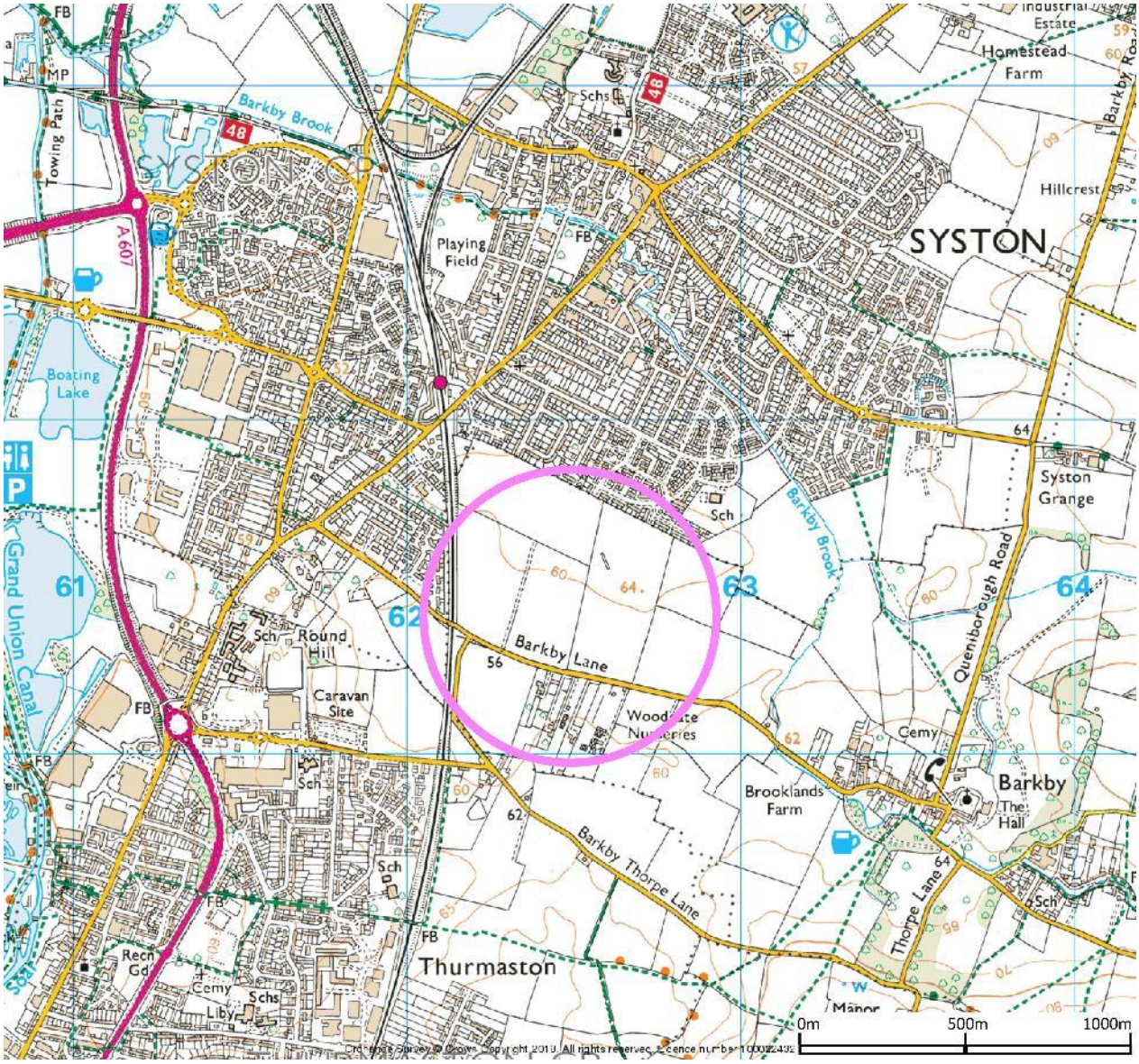
26. The site is 11km from M1 Junction 21A and 16 km from M1 Junction 22, with dual carriageway links via the A46 and A50. It is outside the identified LLEP Growth Areas. For this reason but principally in view of the identified adverse flood risk the location was not investigated further.

Figure 4: Option 2 - Syston Junction / Fosse Way


Broome Lane
Beedles Lake Golf Club
EAST GOSCOTE CP
COSSINGTON CP
SYSTON CP
SYSTON
Humbles Farm
Humble Lane
Barn Lodge
Home Farm
Lodge Farm
Wreake House Farm
Shipley Hill
CH
Sewage Works
A 607
Marshdale Farm House
Syston Road
Marshdale Farm
Chestnut Farm
Lewin Bridge
A 46
Bourden Farm
MP
Syston Mills
College
Wks
FB
Marina
MP
Towing Path
Barkby Brook
Schs
Homestead Farm
Playing Field
Boating Lake
Boating Lake
0m
500m
1000m

3. Barkby Lane

Figure 5: Option 3 – Barkby Lane



27. A spur from the Felixstowe to Nuneaton to railway would be required to provide access to this area of open and broadly level farmland to the south of Syston, between the residential suburb of Thurmaston to the west and the villages of Barkby and Barkby Thorpe to the north-east.

28. The site is in Charnwood Borough. The Local Plan identifies the land as countryside in a green wedge – a local plan designation that seeks to maintain open land between urban settlements, so preserving their separate identity. The site lies outside of the LLEP's identified Growth Areas.

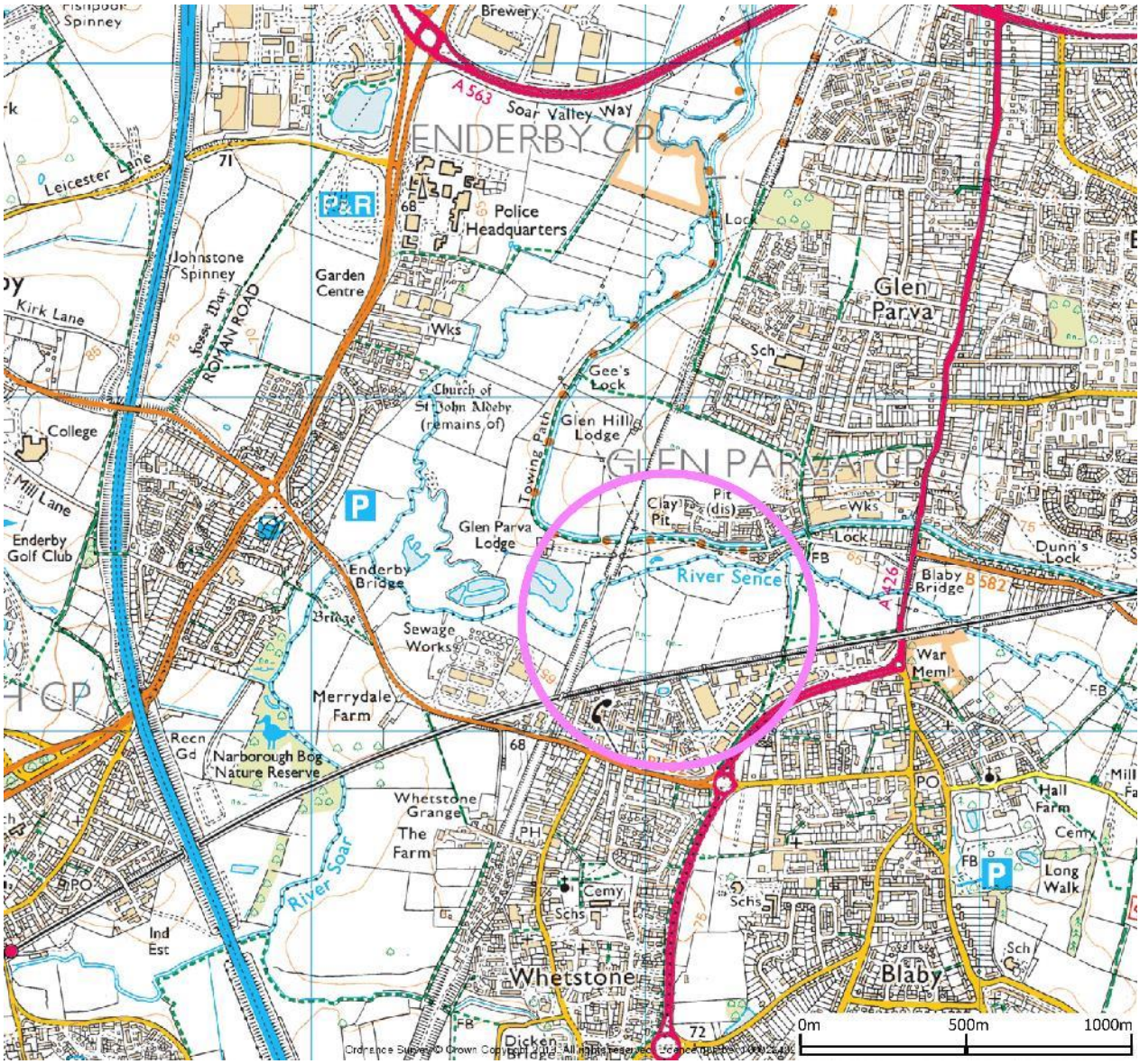
29. In view of its poor road access, gained via local roads to the dualled A607 Newark Road

and thence to the M1 motorway via the A46 northern ring road, and the need for a rail spur, the site was not selected as the preferred location. By this route the site is 14 km from M1 Junction 21A and 19 km from M1 Junction 22, and would not suit occupier requirements.

30. Other constraints include the proximity of residential neighbourhoods to the west and north-east, giving rise to amenity concerns, and an extensive area of land in Flood Zone 2, assessed by the Environment Agency as having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding

4. Whetstone

Figure 6: Option 4 – Whetstone



31. This option lies on the northern side of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway in Blaby District on the southern edge of Leicester. Whetstone and Blaby lie to the south and the suburb of Glen Parva is to the north. The River Sence forms the northern edge of the site and the Enderby Road industrial estate lies to the west. The land is used currently for grazing and is identified as a green wedge in the submission version of the Blaby District Local Plan. The site lies in the LLEP's South-West Leicestershire Growth Area.

32. Junction 21 of the M1, into which the M69 motorway connects, lies only 2.5 km to the north-west as the crow flies, but access from the site to this Junction would at first be by single-carriageway urban roads - the B582 Enderby Road to the west or the A426 Leicester Road to the east - which connect respectively to the B4114 and A563 dual-carriageways on the approach to Junction 21.

33. The railway passes the site on an embankment, presenting engineering and operational challenges in terms of terrain and gradient. The site itself is limited in size and lies in flood zone 3. The development would be close to residential neighbourhoods and would cause the urban coalescence of adjacent settlements – in direct conflict with the purpose of a green wedge. For these reasons the option was not selected as the preferred location.

5. Littlethorpe

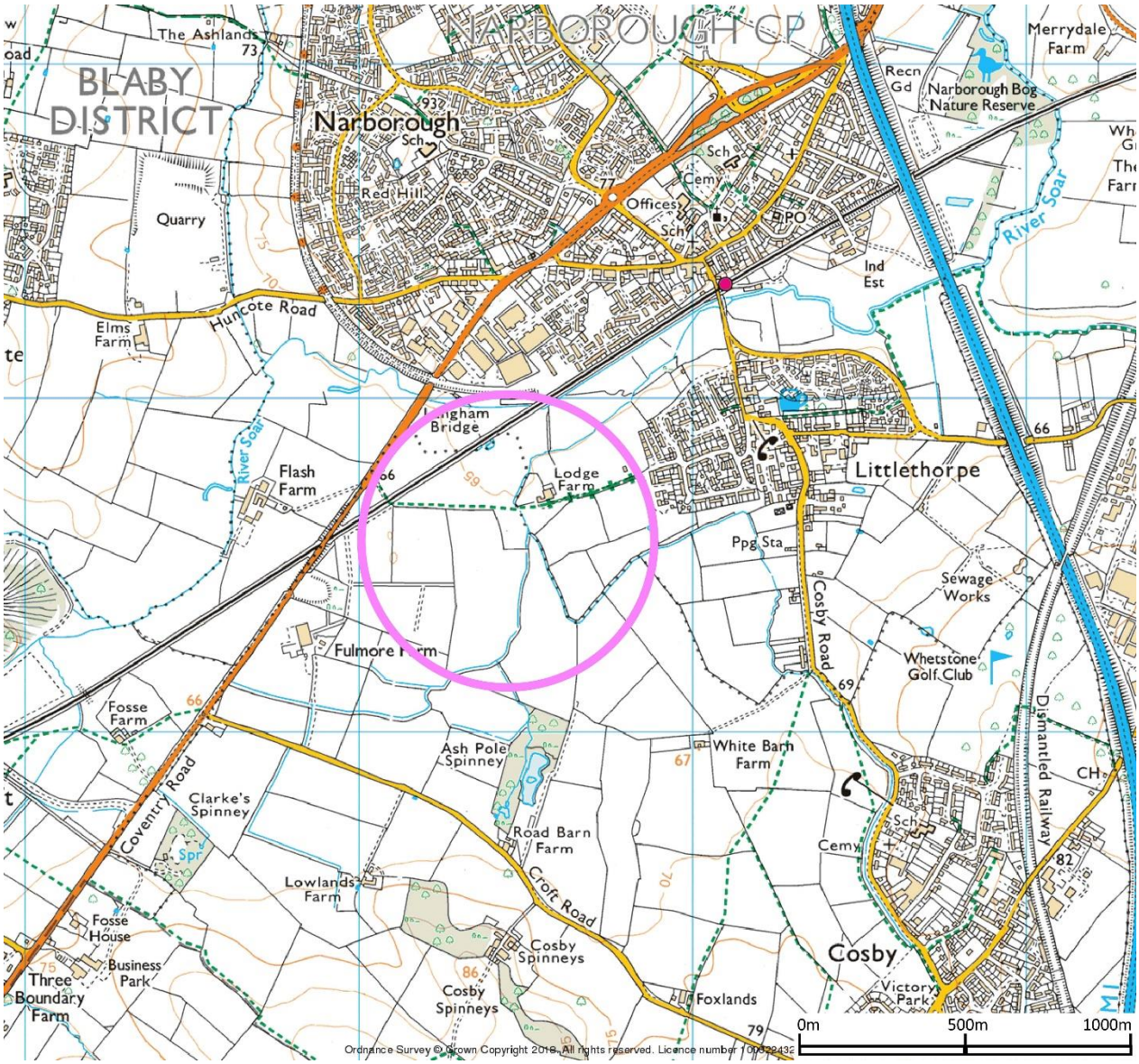
34. South of Narborough to the south-west of Leicester, the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway passes a level area of open farmland, which forms option 5. The village of Littlethorpe lies to the north-east and the larger settlement of Cosby to the south-east. The River Soar passes close to the northern edge of the site. Existing development on the site is limited to two farms, Fulmore Farm in the south-west and Lodge Farm in the north-east.

35. The area is subject to countryside protection policies in the submission version of the Blaby District Local Plan, but is within the LLEP's South-West Leicestershire Growth Area.

36. Rail access is likely to be achievable only as a spur with a single aspect access. Road access is restricted, being via the B4114 Coventry Road towards Junction 21 of the M1 motorway, a distance of c. 7 km. From the site, the first 2.5 km of this route is single carriageway and for much of its route this road passes through urban residential areas, raising amenity concerns.

37. The site has an extensive network of drainage ditches that generally follow field boundaries. Although a central area of the site is in Flood Zone 1 (i.e. land with a low probability of flooding), much of the remainder is in Flood Zones 2 and 3, placing a significant restriction on the potential for development. For reasons relating to the adequacy of the highway network, the impact upon residential amenity and the limited area of land available in Flood Zone 1, this site was excluded from further consideration.

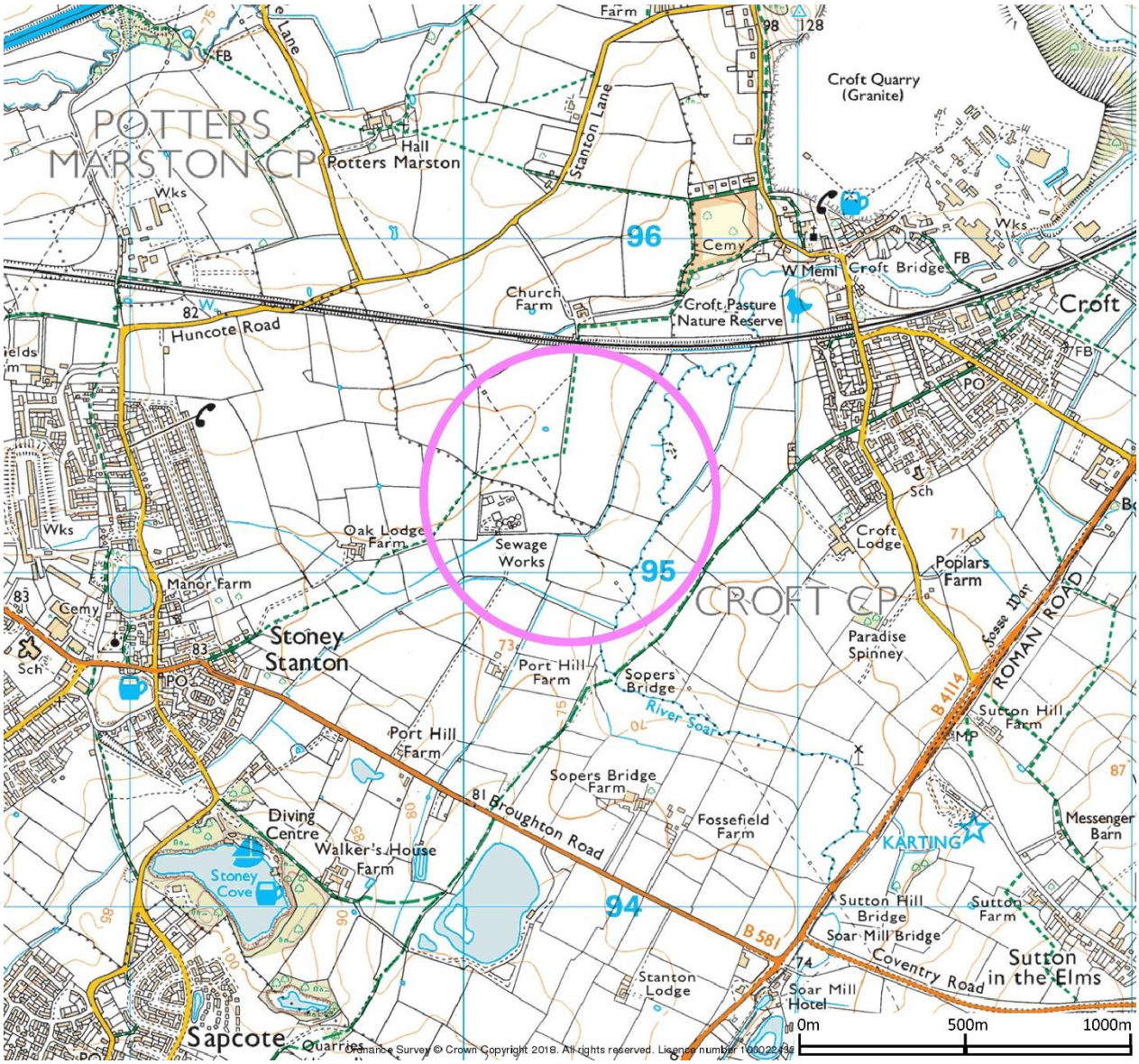
Figure 7: Option 5 – Littlethorpe



6. Croft

38. This is an extensive area of level and low-lying open farmland beside the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway in the Soar valley, in Blaby District. The River Soar meanders across the site and is fed by minor tributaries and a swathe of land along the river corridor is in Flood Zone 3. The village of Croft lies to the east and Stoney Stanton to the west. There are several farmsteads on the site and these would be displaced as a consequence of the development. The site is subject to countryside protection policies in the submission version of the Blaby District Local Plan, and is in the LLEP's South-West Leicestershire Growth Area.

Figure 8: Option 6 – Croft



39. High voltage electricity transmission lines cross from north-west to south-east over the centre of the site and there is also a small wastewater treatment works at the centre of the site, although a SRFI could be developed around these features. However, a major British Gas pipeline crosses the northern half of the site broadly from south-east to north-west, and the Blaby District Local Plan identifies a broad hazard consultation zone along the pipeline corridor.

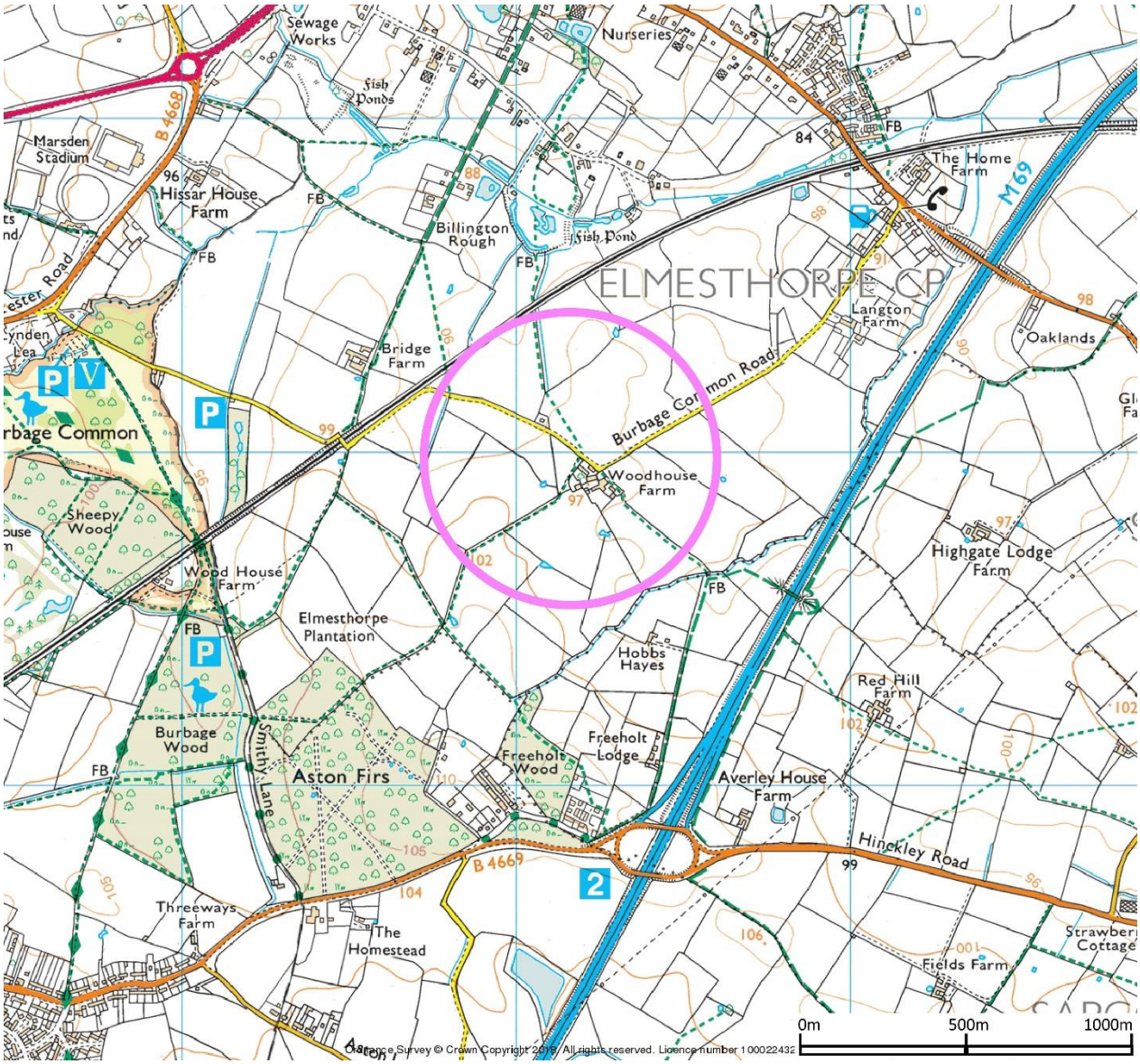
40. The railway passes the northern site in a combination of cutting and embankment with only a limited at-grade section in between. Rail access might need to be by means of a single spur.

41. As with the previous option, road access would be via the B4114 Coventry Road towards Junction 21 of the M1 motorway, a distance of c. 9.5 km. From the site, the first 5 km of this route is a single carriageway and for much of its route this road passes through urban residential areas, raising potential amenity concerns.

42. In view of the limited road and rail access, the flood and pipeline constraints and the fact that the site is 'pinched' between neighbouring villages. This option was not pursued as a preferred option.

7. Hinckley/Burbage

Figure 8: Option 7 – Hinckley / Burbage



43. This option lies at the south-western end of db symmetry's search corridor, in Blaby District. It comprises an extensive area of level and open farmland beside the Nuneaton to Felixstowe railway. The railway is almost at grade with the site and affords a long frontage, enabling 'on-off' sidings to be constructed if required.

44. Within the area of interest are a few farmsteads and the closest settlements are the village of Elmesthorpe to the north and two traveller settlements to the south. The site is subject to countryside protection policies in the in the submission version of the Blaby District Local Plan. However, from an economic development perspective it is in the LLEP's South-West Leicestershire Growth Area and is also lies within 'Key Opportunity Area A' for rail and road-linked distribution hubs in the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Sector Study (2014)

45. Settlements in the wider locality include Burbage and Hinckley to the south-west, Barwell and East Shilton to the north and Stoney Stanton and Sapcote to the east. The site is crossed by a public highway, Burbage Common Road. The site itself is free of environmental designations, although woodland SSSIs lay beyond the south-western boundary. The site is entirely in Flood Zone 1, in which the probability of flooding is low.

46. The M69 motorway forms the eastern boundary of the site and links the M6 and A5 to the south-west with the M1 to the north-east. M69 Junction 2 lies at the southern edge of the site and affords potential for direct access to the motorway network. However, Junction 2 is currently a limited access junction and lacks slip-roads to and from the M69 southwards towards Coventry and the M6. This is capable of being improved in line with the LLEP Growth Strategy for better access to the M69.

47. For this combination of reasons the site went forward for further assessment.

ASSESSMENT AND THE CHOICE OF SITE

48. By definition a SRFI needs direct rail access, which constrains the site search to railway corridors that were identified originally by the Victorian engineers and surveyors who designed most of the UK's railway network. To optimise locomotive performance and to minimise the need for expensive cuttings, tunnels, embankments and bridges, these engineers favoured level routes in low-lying river valleys. Railway lines were protected from flood risk through a combination of clever routing and the use of low embankments.

49. This legacy is clearly evident in db symmetry's review of potential SRFI sites along the Felixstowe to Nuneaton railway in Leicestershire. Most of the trackside sites that were reviewed are in areas at high risk of flooding, rendering them unsuitable for development. Only one of the potential locations reviewed presented the opportunity to avoid land in Flood Zones 3 and 2 – option 7: Hinckley/Burbage.

50. Aside from its low flood risk, Option 7 offers an optimum balance of advantages, including:

i). an ample area of open level land;
ii). a long at-grade rail frontage;
iii). the potential for direct road access to the strategic highway network from M69 Junction 2, with scope to add southbound slips to the Junction;
iv). suitable separation from existing residential settlements;
v). few environmental designations;
iv). a location within the LLEP's designated South-West Leicestershire Growth Area.

51. db symmetry commissioned environmental consultants EDP to undertake an environmental appraisal of the Hinckley/Burbage option, including landscape, biodiversity and heritage considerations. Initial sketch schemes for a potential SRFI included land to the west and east of the M69. However, EDP considered that development to the east of the M69 would have a greater effect on landscape character and visual amenity than the land contained by roads, the railway and woodland to the west.

52. On this basis, db symmetry concluded that the site for the SRFI should be focused upon land between the railway and the M69, which affords the best opportunity to bring forward a SRFI meeting the policy requirements of the National Networks NPS and the practical potential to deliver a site of the scale required. Specifically the site:

- includes an 'in-out' rail connection to a line accessible from a range of the UK's leading freight ports, with potential for future electrification;
- would be capable of handling over four trains per day;
- would be able to accommodate trains up to 775 metres long with minimal shunting;
- offers ample space for an intermodal terminal for rail handling and storage;
- can include a number of rail connected or rail accessible buildings with all building users having access to the intermodal rail terminal.

DESIGN OPTIONS

53. Having identified a preferred location, db symmetry is testing a range of technology, design and layout options for the site, having regard to the following requirements identified in chapter four of the National Networks NPS, including:

- criteria for 'good design' for national network infrastructure (NPS pp. 36-37);
- climate change adaptation (NPS pp. 37-39);
- pollution control and other environmental protection regimes (NPS pp. 39-41);

- the identification and mitigation of potential statutory nuisances (NPS p. 41);

- safety, security and health (NPS pp. 41-44).

54. Aspects currently under review include:

- layout options for specific parts of the site, including rail connectivity and accessibility options, the road junction on the M69 motorway, landscape and amenity areas, public rights of way and roads including the Burbage Common Road bridge over the railway, drainage and environmental mitigation.

- technology options including methods of unloading, loading and transporting freight containers around the site. At a time of technological change, db symmetry wants to ensure that the Hinckley NRFI is as far as possible 'future-proofed' and capable of serving the Midlands economy effectively in the long term.

- scale and phasing options for the development.

55. In considering design options, db symmetry will have continuing regard to the emerging findings of the EIA for the project and feedback from stakeholder consultations. ◆

Savills ◆ October 2018

Appendix:
National policy for strategic rail freight interchanges

Assessment principles set out in paragraphs 4.83 to 4.89 of the National Policy Statement for National Networks, December 2014

Strategic rail freight interchanges

Rail freight interchange function

4.83 Rail freight interchanges are not only locations for freight access to the railway but also locations for businesses, capable now or in the future, of supporting their commercial activities by rail. Therefore, from the outset, a rail freight interchange (RFI) should be developed in a form that can accommodate both rail and non-rail activities.

Transport links and location requirements

4.84 Given the strategic nature of large rail freight interchanges it is important that new SRFIs or proposed extensions to RFIs upgrading them to SRFIs, are appropriately located relative to the markets they will serve, which will focus largely on major urban centres, or groups of centres, and key supply chain routes. Because the vast majority of freight in the UK is moved by road, proposed new rail freight interchanges should have good road access as this will allow rail to effectively compete with, and work alongside, road freight to achieve a modal shift to rail. Due to these requirements, it may be that countryside locations are required for SRFIs.

4.85 Adequate links to the rail and road networks are essential. Rail access will vary between rail lines, both in the number of services that can be accommodated, and the physical characteristics such as the train length and, for intermodal services, the size of intermodal units that can be carried (the 'loading gauge'). As a minimum a SRFI should ideally be located on a route with a gauge capability of W8 or more, or capable of enhancement to a suitable gauge. For road links, the Government's policy is set out in Circular 02/2013 *The Strategic Road Network and the delivery of sustainable development*.

4.86 SRFIs tend to be large scale commercial operations, which are most likely to need continuous working arrangements (up to 24 hours). By necessity they involve large structures, buildings and the operation of heavy machinery. In terms of location therefore, they often may not be considered suitable adjacent to residential areas or environmentally sensitive areas such as National Parks, the Broads and AONBs, which may be sensitive to the impact of noise and

movements. However, depending on the particular circumstances involved, appropriate mitigation measures may be available to limit the impacts of noise and light.

4.87 SFRIs can provide many benefits for the local economy. For example because many of the on-site functions of major distribution operations are relatively labour intensive, this can create many new job opportunities. The existence of an available and economic local workforce will therefore be an important consideration for the applicant.

Scale and design

4.88 Applications for a proposed SRFI should provide for a number of rail connected or rail accessible buildings for initial take up, plus rail infrastructure to allow more extensive rail connection within the site in the longer term. The initial stages of the development must provide an operational rail network connection and areas for intermodal handling and container storage. It is not essential for all buildings on the site to be rail connected from the outset, but a significant element should be.

4.89 As a minimum, a SRFI should be capable of handling four trains per day and, where possible, be capable of increasing the number of trains handled. SRFIs should, where possible, have the capability to handle 775 metre trains with appropriately configured on-site infrastructure and layout. This should seek to minimise the need for on-site rail shunting and provide for a configuration which, ideally, will allow main line access for trains from either direction.