



DCO Submission

# Consultation Report

On behalf of  
**Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited**

**Document 5.1**

Prepared by Oxalis Planning Ltd  
Revision B  
**March 2026**

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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited (the ‘Applicant’) to fulfil the requirements of Section 37(3)(c) of the Planning Act 2008 (‘the Act’). It is submitted in support of the application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) and associated infrastructure. A fuller description of the proposals is given below.

1.1.2 The proposed development is referred to as the ‘Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange’ (‘OxSRFI’) – and also referred to in this report as ‘the Proposed Development’ and is defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) by the Act.

1.1.3 This consultation report sets out how the Applicant has carried out pre-application engagement and consultation on the proposals, and how this consultation complies with the requirements set out in the Act. It contains details of the responses received by the Applicant and how the Applicant took account of those responses in developing the proposals.

1.1.4 A summary of the Proposed Development comprises:

- An intermodal rail freight terminal, including rail connections and improvements to the Chiltern Main Line including works to Ardley Tunnel, rail sidings, container storage, HGV parking and associated buildings;
- Up to 603,850 sqm (approx. 6.5 million square feet) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, plus up to 201,283 sqm of additional floorspace in the form of mezzanines;
- The retention, rejuvenation and re-use of Ashgrove Farm and associated buildings, including Ashgrove Cottages as part of a ‘Central Hub’ to provide estate management, training and communal facilities to serve the site;
- A secure, dedicated HGV Parking area including driver welfare facilities;
- New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including improvements to M40 J10 and junctions on the A43 provision of the principal site access and associated works on the B430, a bypass to the village of Ardley linking the site directly with M40 J10, a relief road around the north eastern side of the village of Middleton Stoney, a link road connecting the B430 to Camp Road, improvements to M40 J9 and

other highway improvements at junctions on the local highway network and related traffic management measures;

- New and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure both on the Main Site and in the surrounding area connecting the Main Site to local communities;
- Demolition of existing structures within the Application Site – the IVC Facility will be demolished after the lease ends in 2030;
- Earthworks to create development areas, construct the rail freight terminal and connections to the Mainline and form landscape screen mounding;
- The retention of key landscape features together with new strategic landscaping, general planting and biodiversity enhancements.
- On and off site works associated with utilities including for foul drainage connections.

## 1.2 Engagement and Consultation Undertaken

1.2.1 The Applicant has, in addition to its ongoing engagement with interested parties, the local community and local authorities, undertaken two ‘formal’ rounds of consultation, which is explained in detail in this report. In summary these are:

- The Stage 1 (non-statutory) consultation which was held from 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 until 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022.
- The Stage 2 (statutory) consultation which was held from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 until 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

1.2.2 A wide range of local and statutory bodies have been engaged in dialogue which has had a direct influence on the nature and form of the submitted proposals. This dialogue has taken a number of forms of consultation and engagement, and taken place over an extended period of time. This has included informal and ad hoc dialogue and engagement about the emerging proposals which has been a regular and ongoing feature of the Applicant’s approach. This engagement both preceded and followed the non-statutory Stage 1 consultation in 2022, and engagement and discussion with a range of consultee bodies and groups has continued since then and beyond the statutory Stage 2 consultation undertaken in 2025. Later sections of this Report draw attention to this informal but important engagement which forms part of the wider consultation activity undertaken by the Applicant.

- 1.2.3 The ‘Stage 1’ consultation included four public exhibitions and two webinar sessions all held in May 2022, with one additional exhibition in June 2022. Key messages received from this process helped inform the design and detail of the Proposed Development at the Stage 2 Consultation, and informed the continued evolution of the proposals alongside ongoing technical and environmental assessment work at that time. The Stage 1 Consultation is detailed in sections 3.0 and 4.0 of this report.
- 1.2.4 Although not a formal requirement for non-statutory consultation, a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was agreed with the relevant local authorities in April 2022 in advance of the formal Stage 1 (non-statutory) consultation process, and consultation was then carried out in accordance with the SoCC. The Stage 1 SoCC is enclosed at **Appendix 1**. Further detail including the approach to preparation of the agreed Stage 1 SoCC is explained in Section 3.0 of this report. **Appendix 2** includes a summary of how the activity undertaken complied with the key actions and commitments as set out in the agreed SoCC.
- 1.2.5 After the Stage 1 Consultation, the preparation of the Stage 2 Consultation and formal preparation of the OxSRFI application was ‘paused’ in April 2023 by the Applicant in order for a review of the Proposed Development to be undertaken. During that time, the Applicant undertook a detailed review of the proposals to ensure that the highway works in particular were appropriate. Ecological surveys were also undertaken to ensure consistent baseline information was gathered. Public facing work on the application re-started in September 2024 albeit internal project work did not pause during that time.
- 1.2.6 In advance of the start of the formal Stage 2 (statutory) consultation the project website ([www.oxsrfi.co.uk](http://www.oxsrfi.co.uk)) was updated to inform viewers of the upcoming statutory consultation process. In addition, and prior to the start of the Stage 2 consultation, the SoCC was updated and published by the Applicant on the project website ([www.oxsrfi.co.uk](http://www.oxsrfi.co.uk)) in September 2025. This followed consultation and dialogue with Cherwell District Council (CDC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), including consultation on a draft SoCC. The final SoCC reflected comments and suggestions from the Councils – this included:
- extending the ‘consultation area’ to communities in the vicinity of the proposed (relatively modest) highways mitigation works around M40 J9
  - providing an additional public exhibition at a venue closer to Bicester to ensure those with an interest in works including M40 J9 had easy access to an exhibition, and

- increasing the number of webinars (from one to two).

1.2.7 The Stage 2 SoCC (also referred to as the ‘Final SoCC’) is enclosed at **Appendix 18**. Further detail including the approach to preparation of the agreed Stage 2 SoCC is explained in Sections 5.0 – 9.0 of this Report. **Appendix 19** includes a summary of how the activity undertaken complied with the key actions and commitments as set out in the Final SoCC.

1.2.8 Following the formal Stage 2 consultation, additional targeted consultation has also been held in relation to minor post-Stage 2 consultation changes to the Order Limits (note: the Order Limits are shown on the Site Location Plan, Document 2.4). The relevant interested parties were consulted as part of each targeted consultation, with further information set out in Section 8.0 of this report.

### 1.3 Consultation Outcomes

1.3.1 Non-statutory pre-application engagement and consultation has been undertaken over a prolonged period with initial informal dialogue and engagement on the emerging OxSRFI proposals first undertaken in 2019 with various bodies. This first dialogue focused on briefings provided to officers and members of Cherwell District Council (CDC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), now known as ‘Enterprise Oxfordshire’.

1.3.2 The Applicant’s extensive engagement and consultation has ensured that the local communities, statutory bodies and other interested parties have been made aware of, and actively involved in the evolution of, the OxSRFI development proposals. The consultation process as a whole has made a positive contribution to the proposals, with the input and feedback received from consultees resulting in a number of alterations and modifications to the Proposed Development. The process is summarised in this report with relevant detail also provided in the attached appendices.

1.3.3 This Consultation Report provides details of the consultation responses received, and seeks to capture the main issues which arose through consultation. It also provides information about the way the proposals have changed over time in response to the input and comments, including some concerns or objections, of local communities and bodies. Many aspects of the evolution of the scheme are also described in part in the three separate Design

Approach Documents<sup>1</sup> which cover (1) the proposed ‘Main Site’, (2) the highways works and (3) the Central Hub.

1.3.4 The Stage 1 and Stage 2 S42 and S47 List of Consultees and Applicant Responses provided in the schedules at **Appendices 3 and 4** for Stage 1, and **Appendices 20 and 35** for Stage 2 summarises the relevant consultation and associated comments during each stage of consultation, with responses provided by the Applicant. The narrative in later sections of this Report also provides details of how the Applicant has considered or taken account of those responses, and includes a fuller response to key issues or themes emerging from the consultation process.

1.3.5 Particular themes arose from the various consultation and engagement exercises – the most common issues included:

- Concerns about traffic impacts and transport issues (including proposed highways works) particularly at M40 J10 but also on local roads, particularly through Middleton Stoney and potential effects on Heyford Park residents.
- Some responses recognised the existing traffic issues and problems around M40 J10 and therefore welcome the proposals to improve the junction.
- Local effects and amenity impacts (particularly noise and dust, and effects from HGVs) during the construction phase of the development.
- Potential cumulative impacts resulting from the Proposed Development with other potential developments proposed<sup>2</sup> but not all consented or determined at M40 J10 (by Albion Land and Tritax), the Heyford Park ‘new town’ proposals, and the Puy du Fou leisure proposals.
- Comments about the scope and likely effectiveness of sustainable travel measures proposed by the OxSRFI scheme which includes new and improved footway/cycleway/bridleway connections, as well as the provision for new bus services.
- Concerns about the loss of countryside (and farmland) and ‘industrialisation’ of the local area, including when considered alongside other proposals for employment development around M40 J10.
- Potential implications relating to emerging proposals for a new passenger station at Ardley.

<sup>1</sup> The Document Reference Numbers for the Design Approach Documents (DADs) are: Main Site – 5.5A, Central Hub – 5.5B, Highways Works – 5.5C

<sup>2</sup> Please see ES Chapter 1 (Introduction) for more information on the list of cumulative sites.

- Concerns about the impacts on movement north of Middleton Stoney from the proposed bus gate on the B430 (this was an issue from Stage 1 only).
- Some responses, including from some residents, recognised a need to reduce HGVs on the highways network and therefore supported the modal shift of freight from road to rail.
- Questions about the evidence of market need, and the suitability of the location of the Proposed Development, and whether it would help reduce HGVs on the highways network.
- Concerns about the impact on local existing wildlife and ecology within and around the site from the Proposed Development.
- Concerns about potential impacts on noise and lighting effects within the local area from the Proposed Development.
- Concerns about landscape and visual impacts from the proposed buildings and likely effects on local residents, including future residents at development planned at Heyford Park.

1.3.6 Key examples of ways in which the Proposed Development has been amended or revised as a result of comments received during the consultation process as a whole include:

- In response to comments and a clear concern by local residents during the Stage 1 consultation, the bus gate initially proposed on the B430 was removed from the OxSRFI scheme.
- The earthworks, landscape and green infrastructure strategy is based around the objective of substantially screening the Main Site and buildings from outside view - this is to minimise or eliminate visual and lighting effects, and to aid mitigation of other potential impacts (including noise). This aspiration and principle was in place from the earliest stages of the design but the strategy has been revisited and enhanced with increased depth of green infrastructure towards the southern boundary of the OxSRFI site, in part in response to input from local people and Parish Councils.
- Similarly, following concerns regarding potential future visual and noise issues, and in dialogue with Dorchester Living (the promoter of the Heyford Park development), the landscaping around the western boundary of the site with Heyford Park was enhanced, and the building parameters (including max. building heights) were reduced in the adjacent zones of the Proposed Development

- The bund height towards the north-west corner of the OxSRFI, at the end of the former Upper Heyford Airfield was reduced to half-height, and with no planting, in response to Stage 1 Consultation comments and dialogue with Historic England and Cherwell District Council’s Conservation Officer. The half-height of the bund and reduced planting enables historic views from the runway to be retained, and likely effects of the Proposed Development mitigated.
- The highways strategy and Transport Assessment (TA) has been informed by extensive discussions with the Transport Working Group (TWG) since 2020. The strategy and highways works have evolved substantially over that period, directly informed by the input of the highways bodies (National Highways, and OCC), and local planning authority (Cherwell District Council). The strategy mitigates the likely effects of traffic associated with the Proposed Development and in doing so improves key strategic routes to attract traffic away from local roads, reducing the impact of through-traffic on existing communities such as Ardley and Middleton Stoney, while ensuring efficient access to and from the Proposed Development. As a direct response to local discussions, this includes restricting the secondary access from the south of the Main Site to pedestrians, cyclists and buses, thereby directing HGVs and cars to the main access off the Ardley Bypass.
- Inclusion of a HGV routeing strategy to restrict HGVs from travelling to and from the south of the Main Site on the B430.
- The Walking, Cycling and Public Rights of Way Strategy will deliver improved and new footway/cycleway/bridleway links in and around the vicinity of the Main Site, with connections to Heyford Park and Bicester. The details of the proposed strategy have been informed both by the TWG, and comments from and dialogue with local people and other stakeholders.
- Further to dialogue with Historic England and Cherwell Council Conservation Officer, the application includes the retention of Ashgrove Farm as a ‘Central Hub’ for estate management and communal facilities for the other development on the Main Site. Further to comments from the Stage 1 consultation, the Ashgrove Farm Cottages are also being retained for re-use for rail and estate management and other facilities.

- Sustainability – incorporating measures to which target an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ‘A+’ rating and BREEAM ‘Excellent’ rating for warehouses, includes designing warehouse buildings to accommodate 100% solar PV coverage on available roof space.
- Despite not being mandatory, in dialogue with Cherwell District Council, OCC, and Natural England, the Proposed Development includes measures which will deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

## 1.4 Conclusion

1.4.1 The Applicant is satisfied that the consultation process undertaken has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation and the duty to have regard to relevant responses pursuant to the Act. The consultation undertaken was in line with the advice and guidance provided by the Planning Inspectorate<sup>3</sup>.

1.4.2 Indeed, in response to the Stage 2 consultation, the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum, who cover several local Parish Councils in the wider area, stated the following which confirms the approach to consultation with local residents and communities was appropriate:

*“In respect of the thoroughness, reach and range of ORL Stage 2 Public Consultation, we consider the approach to have been comprehensive and well-advertised. It provided local parishes with full access to understand the proposal at its current development stage, including the information provided on OxSRFI website, the in-person exhibition events (both Stage 1 and Stage 2), the materials provided (on memory sticks) to Parish Clerks and the Webinar’s undertaken.”*

1.4.3 Significantly, the consultation undertaken was also consistent with the agreed Final SoCC (**Appendix 19**). Further targeted consultation in relation to the minor changes to the Order Limits after Stage 2 were undertaken with the relevant interested parties and as far as relevant, practicable and proportionate, in accordance with the principles set out in the Final SoCC (**Appendix 19**).

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<sup>3</sup> See the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-on-the-consultation-report#purpose-of-the-consultation-report>

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- 1.4.4 The Applicant is satisfied that the issues raised by consultees have been considered and addressed throughout the evolution of the proposals. There has been an iterative process of design evolution, informed by both consultation dialogue, and the technical and assessment work undertaken. Local people and representative bodies have engaged throughout the consultation process to raise comments and concerns or objections to the principle or the detail of the Proposed Development, and these comments have been noted and responded to, as summarised in this report.
- 1.4.5 However, where possible, through design evolution and other amendments, the proposals have been adapted or changed throughout the process to help minimise the local negative effects, and maximise the positive effects of the proposals.

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## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1. Background**

2.1.1. The proposal is for the development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) located on a site in Cherwell District south of the village of Ardley and M40 J10.

2.1.2. The Applicant is Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited, a company set up to promote and develop the Proposed Development. If approved the development will be delivered by Mountpark – a leading developer with a proven track record in delivering high quality logistics developments across the UK/Ireland and Europe.

2.1.3. A summary of the proposals are:

- An intermodal rail freight terminal, including rail connections and improvements to the Chiltern Main Line including works to Ardley Tunnel, rail sidings, container storage, HGV parking and associated buildings;
- Up to 603,850 sqm (approx. 6.5 million square feet) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, plus up to 201,283 sqm of additional floorspace in the form of mezzanines;
- The retention, rejuvenation and re-use of Ashgrove Farm and associated buildings, including Ashgrove Cottages as part of a ‘Central Hub’ to provide estate management, training and communal facilities to serve the site;
- A secure, dedicated HGV Parking area including driver welfare facilities;
- New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including improvements to M40 J10 and junctions on the A43 provision of the principal site access and associated works on the B430, a bypass to the village of Ardley linking the site directly with M40 J10, a relief road around the north eastern side of the village of Middleton Stoney, a link road connecting the B430 to Camp Road, improvements to M40 J9 and other highway improvements at junctions on the local highway network and related traffic management measures;
- New and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure both on the Main Site and in the surrounding area connecting the Main Site to local communities;
- Demolition of existing structures within the Application Site – the IVC Facility will be demolished after the lease ends in 2030;

- Earthworks to create development areas, construct the rail freight terminal and connections to the Mainline and form landscape screen mounding;
- The retention of key landscape features together with new strategic landscaping, general planting and biodiversity enhancements.
- On and off site works associated with utilities including for foul drainage connections.

## 2.2. Site Location

- 2.2.1. The OxSRFI proposal is located in a highly accessible location and as described above consists of a number of related but distinct components. To aid communication and presentation and to ensure clarity about the location of Proposed Development (and the associated potential environmental effects) different parts and parcels of land have been identified and referred to in the application documents. This is explained in further detail in the Guide to Application (Document 1.3), the Project Overview Document (Appendix 37) and the Description of Development Chapter of the Environmental Statement ('ES') (Chapter 2). It is also shown on the plan titled 'Components of the Proposed Development' (Document 2.13).
- 2.2.2. The proposed OxSRFI site is also referred to as the 'Main Site', and includes works to provide new access arrangements (the 'Principal Access') via the new Ardley Bypass. The package of highways development includes the M40 J9 Highway Improvements, the M40 J10 Highway Improvements, Ardley Bypass, Principal Access, Middleton Stoney Relief Road, Heyford Park Link Road, Secondary Access and Other Local Highway Works – these are referred to as "highway works"<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.2.3. The OxSRFI Main Site is located between the B430 and the former Upper Heyford Airfield, which is located to the west and it is immediately south of the Chiltern Main Line. The village of Ardley is located to the north of the Main Site and north of the Chiltern Main Line and separated from the Main Site by intervening agricultural land and established woodland.
- 2.2.4. The M40 motorway runs nearby to the east of the Main Site, as well as to the east of both Ardley and Middleton Stoney, with the town of Bicester beyond the M40 in a south-easterly direction from the Main Site. The Heyford Park

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<sup>4</sup> The series of Highways General Arrangement Plans can be found within Document 2.7.

redevelopment at the former Upper Heyford Airfield is immediately to the west, and Middleton Stoney village is approximately 1.5km to the south of the Main Site.

- 2.2.5. The proximity of the OxSRFI site to the M40 J10, the A43 to the north-west and A34 to the south provides access to the south-coast and Midlands. The OxSRFI site also has access to urban centres and markets such as Oxford, as well as Bicester and Banbury, which includes areas subject to significant planned growth in adopted and draft Local Plans<sup>5</sup>. The OxSRFI site is also within 4.5 hours drive of a large proportion (around 75%) of the UK population and is located at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor with significant economic potential.
- 2.2.6. The OxSRFI site is therefore located in a strategic location on the road and rail networks, with access to key road links via the M40, A43 and A34, as well as connectivity to the national rail freight network. Further information can be found in ES Chapter 2 (Description of Development and Alternatives).

## 2.3 Purpose of this Report

- 2.3.1 The purpose of this Report is to identify the consultation processes and outcomes which have informed the preparation and evolution of the proposals and the DCO application. It sets out the various elements and stages of the consultation process which have been undertaken, including the non-statutory engagement and consultation activity which ran for a prolonged period before the more formal statutory process was undertaken in 2025. Table 1 below provides some details of the structure, but in general terms, the key stages are as follows:

### Stage 1 – Non-Statutory Consultation

- Informal and non-statutory engagement and consultation with various bodies and communities has been underway since 2019, starting with but not limited to CDC and OCC. This took the form of meetings (in person and virtual), and briefings about the emerging OxSRFI proposals.
- The report describes the key activities and outcomes from this informal engagement and consultation.

<sup>5</sup> The Cherwell Local Plan (adopted in 2015), and the draft Local Plan which was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in July 2025.

- A Transport Working Group (TWG) was established early in the project (2020) to steer and inform the preparation of the Highways mitigation strategy and Transport Assessment (TA). See Section 3.0 of this Report for details.
- Stage 1 saw a series of public consultation exhibitions held in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in addition to a leaflet/newsletter postal ‘drop’, and two online webinar sessions.

### Stage 2 – Statutory Consultation

- This focuses on the formal consultation processes in compliance with Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Act in relation to the preparation of the DCO application – these were undertaken in September to November 2025.
- This Report provides a summary and overview of the responses and input received from the public and technical stakeholders (and other prescribed persons).
- The account taken of any ‘relevant response’, including where comments have led to changes in the submitted application. Every response received has been considered, including those received outside the deadline for representations.
- This Report also includes additional targeted consultation with relevant interested parties in relation to minor changes to the Order Limits after the close of the Stage 2 consultation.

*Table 1: Consultation Undertaken – quick reference guide*

<b>Consultation Stage</b>	<b>Purpose/intended outcomes</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Report Section</b>
Non-Statutory Consultation	<p>Earlier dialogue and discussions were held regarding potential development in this location 2019. This was followed by more specific consultation and dialogue to raise awareness of the emerging proposals, and seek informal input and views from partners including local communities, local authorities and statutory agencies.</p> <p>Although non-statutory, this Stage 1 consultation was undertaken in the same manner as statutory consultation, in accordance with an agreed SoCC and in accordance with</p>	<p>Stage 1 consultation                      9th May 2022 until                      4th July 2022                      (Stage 1)</p>	3.0 and 4.0

Consultation Stage	Purpose/intended outcomes	Timing	Report Section
	the principles of s42, s47 and s48 of the Act.		
Section 47	Duty to Consult Local Community Consultation with local community and ‘people living in the vicinity of the land’.	23rd September 2025 until 4th November 2025 (Stage 2)	5.0 and 6.0 and 8.0
Section 42	Duty to Consult Consultation conducted with statutory and technical stakeholders. Including local authorities under s43 and parties with an interest in land under s44.	23rd September 2025 until 4th November 2025 (Stage 2)	7.0 and 8.0
Section 48	Duty to Publicise Notices were placed in the Guardian national newspaper, the London Gazette, the Bicester Advertiser and Oxford Mail	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 (Stage 2)	9.0

2.3.2. In preparing this Consultation Report due regard by the Applicant has been had to the relevant Planning Inspectorate (PINS) guidance<sup>6</sup> on compiling the Consultation Report. The guidance informed the key elements and content expected or preferred for inclusion by PINS. In particular, the approach taken reflects the advice from PINS that:

- There is no standard format for a Consultation Report;
- The main aim of the consultation report is to provide clarity on what consultation has been done and how the applicant has taken feedback into account;
- The report does not need to include an excessively detailed description of every element of the consultation programme;
- Each stage of non-statutory and statutory consultation should be presented and explained chronologically in separate chapters or sections of the report;
- Copies of relevant notices, letters, and other examples should be appended to the Consultation Report;
- The Report should include an explanation of how the consultation process complied with the SoCC, as well as a description for how the SoCC was advertised; and
- Reporting the responses received can be dealt with in a number

<sup>6</sup> Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Consultation Report, last updated 24 March 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-on-the-consultation-report>

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of different ways, including either on an ‘issues’ basis, or based around summaries of responses. It is important to be clear what regard has been had to comments received and identify if changes were made as a result, as well as explaining where no change was made as a result of responses received.

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## 3.0 STAGE 1 - NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION

### 3.1 Summary of Consultation history, methodology and objectives

- 3.1.1 Ahead of the requisite statutory consultation process, and from the early stages of the evolution of the proposals, the Applicant informally consulted with a number of stakeholders regarding the emerging scheme. This engagement began on a relatively small scale initially but has been an ongoing feature of the Proposed Development as it has evolved, with informal and non-statutory engagement and dialogue also continuing throughout the pre-application period.
- 3.1.2 **Appendix 5** provides a summary of the range of meetings and other engagement held with local and statutory bodies since early 2019<sup>7</sup>.
- 3.1.3 Initial informal dialogue and engagement on the emerging proposals for the OxSRFI was first undertaken in 2019 with various bodies. This first focused on briefings provided to officers and members of CDC and OCC, and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP, now Enterprise Oxfordshire), with informal briefings held in 2020 and 2021.
- 3.1.4 Engagement with Network Rail has been vital to the development of the OxSRFI scheme. Initial meetings began in 2020 and engagement has continued throughout the preparation of the proposed development, with the only break in formal dialogue being during the ‘pause’ in the scheme. The list of meetings is included within **Appendix 5**.
- 3.1.5 A project Transport Working Group (“TWG”) was established in 2020 which involves representatives from CDC as local planning authority and OCC as local highways authority, as well as National Highways as the statutory undertaker for the strategic road network (SRN). West Northamptonshire Council, as the neighbouring highway authority closest to the site, was also invited to the TWG and although it does not attend, is issued with minutes of the TWG meetings. A wide range of technical highways matters have been discussed throughout the development of the emerging scheme, including key technical methodology, data and assumptions to underpin the Transport Assessment which forms part of the final application. A record of these meetings is included as **Appendix 7** to this Report (and included in ES Chapter 3). Also see Section 3.2 below.

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<sup>7</sup> Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of all meetings and engagements

3.1.6 Initial contact was made in early 2021 with the local MP for North Oxfordshire, and following that, with individual Parish Councils. A briefing document was prepared and used to inform discussions with local Ward Councillors and Parish Councils. This was shared with nearby Parish Councils in June 2021 to provide an overview of the emerging proposals and followed a letter and site location plan sent to them in May 2021 to give notice of the ES Scoping process. The briefing document was also sent to the Chair of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum which represents 11 Parish Councils including a number within the core consultation area for the Proposed Development. The Parish Councils contacted directly by the Applicant were:

- Ardley with Fewcott
- Bucknell
- Middleton Stoney
- Heyford Park
- Stoke Lyne
- Upper Heyford

3.1.7 The project website was created and launched in June 2021 with initial project information including that relating to the ES Scoping process. The website provided a way for comments and questions to be submitted by interested parties, including local residents. Its content was expanded as work to prepare the application progressed and as more information became available, including information regarding public consultation and engagement.

3.1.8 An Environmental Impact Assessment ‘Scoping Opinion; request for the proposed SRFI was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in June 2021. As part of the process, several consultees provided comments to the Planning Inspectorate before the Scoping Opinion was provided in July 2021. These consultees included the local authorities - CDC and OCC, two local Parish Councils, statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency and Historic England, and non-statutory interested parties such as Royal Mail. A full list of the parties consulted by the Planning Inspectorate as part of the ES scoping process is included in **Appendix 6**.

3.1.9 Further to the initial start of the project and informal consultation process, informal engagement and consultation was held with a range of relevant bodies, including:

- Local Authorities, including CDC and OCC;
- Parish Councils;

- Local MPs (for local constituencies);
- The Local Enterprise Partnership for Oxfordshire (OxLEP) – now referred to as Enterprise Oxfordshire;
- Network Rail;
- Bus companies and operators;
- National Highways;
- Utilities providers;
- The Environment Agency;
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Neighbouring land-owners;
- Potential occupiers of the OxSRFI site, and potential operators of the rail freight terminal.

3.1.10 The informal engagement allowed those involved to comment on the emerging scheme and have a valuable if informal input into its evolution. The input and comments received during the non-statutory stage led directly to alterations and amendments as part of the evolution of the scheme – later sections of this Report provide more details about the evolution of the proposals through the stages of consultation. Engagement and consultation with various bodies throughout the application preparation process ensured that they were kept up to date with progress on the Proposed Development and how the proposals were developing.

## **3.2 Creation of the Transport Working Group**

3.2.1 An early action in response to non-statutory consultation and dialogue was the creation of the TWG. It was understood from the outset that the highways and wider transport agenda would be fundamental to the Proposed Development as a whole. With this in mind, it was determined that there would be mutual advantages to working closely with key consultees on a technical level to progress core elements of the transport assessment work associated with the transport and traffic modelling.

3.2.2 The TWG provided a forum for discussion and agreement, and was formed in order to provide a collaborative approach to transport issues. It had input to, and oversight of, the technical work being undertaken to ensure consistency of approach and methodology, and also to ensure appropriate data and assumptions were used by the Applicant in preparing the Transport Assessment (TA). This has included some over-sight and review function of the associated traffic modelling which has been undertaken using the Bicester Transport Model (“BTM”) as delivered by OCC’s consultants (Tetra-

Tech). This modelling then formed a direct input to developing the package of highways mitigation works which has also been assessed and debated by the TWG.

3.2.3 The TWG first met in November 2020 and has met approximately every month or six weeks since then. The core membership of the TWG, in addition to representatives of the Applicant, are:

- OCC Highways
- National Highways (NH)
- AECOM as NH's consultants
- CDC as local planning authority

3.2.4 West Northamptonshire Council as the closest<sup>8</sup> neighbouring Local Highways Authority are also invited to the meetings and sent the meeting notes.

3.2.5 The TWG has been an essential part of the engagement and consultation undertaken by the Applicant regarding highways and transport issues. It served to discuss and ensure appropriate understanding by the Applicant of key priorities and any concerns of these key consultees. The TWG not only enabled agreement to a wide range of technical issues associated with the TA, but also directly helped shape and inform key elements of the Proposed Development itself, including the form, scope and extent of mitigation proposed. A summary of the TWG meetings held are enclosed as **Appendix 7**.

### 3.3 Engagement with local and political stakeholders

3.3.1 Engagement with representatives of the relevant local authorities was seen as an initial priority. The earliest meetings with OCC and CDC were with senior officers, and during these meetings the Applicant presented and discussed the emerging OxSRFI scheme. Engaging with the LEP (now Enterprise Oxfordshire) was also seen as an appropriate early action given its role in bringing together local authorities and business representatives, and to take a strategic role in promoting and supporting economic development.

3.3.2 The non-statutory period of engagement and consultation also saw the start of more formal and structured pre-application advice processes held with both the local planning authorities (OCC and CDC). This pre-application

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<sup>8</sup> Closest to the OxSRFI Main Site

dialogue began on a more formal basis through a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which was first agreed in March 2022. As part of the PPA the Applicant helped fund CDC and OCC's technical support and advice to ensure they were able to respond fully and in an informed way to consultation, including draft ES chapters and other technical documents. Therefore, while the day to day contacts were with the CDC Planning department, the PPA enabled access and dialogue with other technical leads within the Council as required to inform work by the Applicant in taking forward the emerging development scheme and preparation of the application. For example, under the PPA, contact was made with Environmental Protection, Drainage, Waste, Landscape, and Conservation/Heritage officers within CDC and/or OCC.

- 3.3.3 Update meetings with CDC Planning and OCC Officers were held as required, or as requested by either party, but were not held on a regular schedule. In the interim, phone-calls and emails were exchanged more regularly between the CDC and OCC officers and the Applicant's team.
- 3.3.4 Through officers of the Councils, appropriate briefings or dialogue with relevant local Members (Councillors) of the two Councils were also offered and held when considered appropriate (see **Appendix 5** for further details).
- 3.3.5 Engagement with Parish Council's began in 2021 with the 11 Parish Council's covered by the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum<sup>9</sup> in the form of a letter in May 2021 from the Applicant advising of the emerging proposals. Following this letter a meeting with Middleton Stoney Parish Council was held to discuss the proposals and impacts on the village further, as well as considering the emerging proposals for a Middleton Stoney Relief Road. Additional meetings with Middleton Stoney and Chesterton Parish's were held prior to the formal Stage 1 Consultation.
- 3.3.6 Engagement with local MPs was also considered important – the Main Site is within the Bicester and Woodstock constituency but is also within close proximity to the Banbury constituency to the west. A meeting with the Banbury MP was held prior to the formal Stage 1 Consultation in 2022.
- 3.3.7 The above engagement, meetings and discussions with the political stakeholders provided an opportunity for them to informally raise any

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<sup>9</sup> The 11 Parish Councils within the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum comprise the following: Lower Heyford Parish Council, Upper Heyford Parish Council, Steeple Aston Parish Council, Middle Aston Parish Meeting, North Aston Parish Meeting, Somerton Parish Council, Middleton Stoney Parish Council, Fritwell Parish Council, Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council, Kirtlington Parish Council, and Duns Tew Parish Council

objections or concerns about the potential impacts of the Proposed Development. These comments have helped to ensure at all stages that the Applicant is fully aware of the priorities and main concerns of political stakeholders and the communities they represent. This awareness was directly relevant to decisions taken about the technical work undertaken as part of the ES and other supporting documents, and has also informed some aspects of the Proposed Development.

3.3.8 To provide a framework and context for key elements of the non-statutory Stage 1 Consultation a SoCC document was prepared and shared for discussion with the local authorities (OCC and CDC) in March 2022 and then finalised in April 2022 following comments from the local authorities (see **Appendix 1**). A notable update to the final SoCC for the Stage 1 Consultation was in relation to a wider ‘Core Consultation Area’ as requested by CDC.

3.3.9 For further details on engagement meetings and correspondence, please see **Appendix 5**.

### 3.4 Stage 1 (Non-Statutory) Consultation Strategy and process

3.4.1 Further to comments from CDC, the ‘Core Consultation Area’ for Stage 1 was extended and included all, or part, of the communities of the following parishes set out in Table 2 below<sup>10</sup>. Where the Core Consultation Area was adjacent to a Parish boundary, the Parish Council was still included as part of the consultation to ensure widespread awareness.

*Table 2: Parish Councils within the Stage 1 Core Consultation Area*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ardley with Fewcott (Cherwell)</li> <li>• North Aston (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Middle Aston (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Steeple Aston (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Bucknell (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Fritwell (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Heyford Park (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Lower Heyford (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Middleton Stoney (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Upper Heyford (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Somerton (Cherwell)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stoke Lyne (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Chesterton (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Hardwick with Tusmore (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Souldern (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Fringford (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Caversfield (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Bicester Town (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Kirtlington (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Hethe (Cherwell)</li> <li>• Tackley (West Oxfordshire)</li> <li>• Rousham (West Oxfordshire)</li> </ul>
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<sup>10</sup> Refer to the Stage 1 consultation SoCC and Appendix Six which shows the Core Consultation Area Map

3.4.2 Parish Councils within the Core Consultation Area were used as a key point of contact to help encourage wider awareness within local communities. As part of this approach, the project team informed local elected members, CDC and OCC Councillors whose divisions include part of the Core Consultation Area, and Parish Councillors within the Core Consultation Area of key dates and information about the consultation process. This was largely through e-mail correspondence (but with some letters and newsletters posted where email was not an option) – see **Appendix 8** for example letter.

3.4.3 Whilst the Stage 1 consultation was non-statutory, the Stage 1 consultation strategy also included consultation with all parties who are required to be consulted for statutory consultation under the Act. This included:

- Writing to the prescribed consultees pursuant to S42(1)(a) of the Act (as prescribed Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (“APFP Regulations”)) (a copy of the list is attached as **Appendix 9** and a copy of the letter sent is attached at **Appendix 11**);
- Writing to the relevant local authorities set out in S43, pursuant to S42(1)(b) of the Act (a copy of the list is attached as **Appendix 10** and a copy of the letter sent is attached at **Appendix 11**);
- Writing to persons with an interest in the land as set out in S44, pursuant to S42(1)(d) of the Act and erecting site notices for any unknown or unregistered interests (the list of s44 parties is not included due to Data Protection), with a copy of the letter sent attached at **Appendix 11**;
- Publishing newspaper notices in the Bicester Advertiser and Oxford Mail, the Guardian and the London Gazette (a copy of the press releases are attached at **Appendix 12**); and
- A plan and site notices for landowners or parties where unknown interests were identified, displayed within the vicinity of the OxSRFI site (an example copy of the notices are shown in **Appendix 13**).

3.4.4 In advance of Stage 1 commencing, leaflets (**Appendix 14**) were distributed by post to 4,011 addresses within the Core Consultation Area, and posters with details about the exhibition events were also attached to posts on and around the close vicinity of the OxSRFI Application Site, including in Ardley and Middleton Stoney villages (a copy of the posters displayed in 12 total locations on and around the OxSRFI site for Stage 1 are shown in **Appendices 15a and 15b**, and a plan of the site notices displayed are shown in **Appendices 15c and d**).

- 3.4.5 It should be noted that notices for the Middleton Stoney exhibition event were displayed in four new locations in Middleton Stoney in advance of that event to help inform local residents, on the basis that it was an additionally planned event.
- 3.4.6 In addition, as mentioned above, letters were sent to interested parties and consultees replicating a statutory (S42) consultation process. This ensured wider awareness of the process and increased the chances of the Applicant receiving responses from a range of bodies at this early, non-statutory stage.
- 3.4.7 A focal element of the Stage 1 Consultation process was the ‘Comments Form’ **Appendix 16**. Attendees to the exhibitions described below were invited to fill out a Comments Form, and the project website also included the same questions for residents and interested parties to fill out. The questions on the Comments Form are set out in Table 3 below.

*Table 3: Stage 1 Consultation Comments Form*

Question number	Question
1	Do you think the reasons for proposing a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange in this location are clearly explained? Please give reasons for your answer.
2	What do you think of the emerging proposals for improvements to M40 Junction 10?
3	Do you have any comments about other elements of the Highways Works proposed, including the Ardley Bypass or Middleton Stoney Relief Road?
4	What do you think of the emerging landscaping and earthworks strategy for the Main Site including the boundary mounding/bunding and extensive tree planting?
5	We will be holding further consultation planned for late 2022 when the technical work has progressed – is there any specific information you would find helpful at the next exhibitions?
N/A – general comments	Please give us your comments on the proposals

- 3.4.8 The Stage 1 consultation for the Proposed Development involved a series of public exhibition events held across May and June 2022 as follows:
- Exhibition 1: Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (13:30 – 19:30) at Heyford Park Chapel, OX25 5TE;
  - Exhibition 2: Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (12:00 – 17:00) at Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall, OX27 7PA;

- Exhibition 3: Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (13:30 – 19:30) at Heyford Park Chapel, OX25 5TE;
- Exhibition 4: Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May (13:30 – 19:30) at Upper Heyford Village Hall, OX25 5LB; and
- Exhibition 5: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June (13:30 – 19:30) at Middleton Stoney Village Hall, OX25 4AN.

- 3.4.9 As set out in the Stage 1 SOCC (**Appendix 1**), originally 4 exhibition events were planned at the venues in Ardley with Fewcott, Heyford Park and Upper Heyford. These above venues were chosen given their proximity to the application site, as well as their size, suitable parking arrangements and available on-site amenities. The hall at Middleton Stoney was slightly more constrained in size and with regard to car parking but on request by Middleton Stoney Parish Council, the Applicant agreed to an additional exhibition (Exhibition 5) targeted at people who live in the village.
- 3.4.10 There were also two webinars hosted on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May (18:00 – 20:00) and Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May (18:00 – 20:00). During each webinar session a presentation was presented by the Applicant and a small team of representatives of the Applicant, which included members of the consultant team who advised and led on the preparation of the consultation material. Questions pre-submitted or asked live during the webinar sessions were answered by the Applicant and their representatives as required. The full recording from the second webinar session was posted on the project website.
- 3.4.11 The documents consulted on for the Stage 1 consultation focused on Preliminary Environmental Information Reports (PEIR), in the form of draft ES chapters which were all available for review and comment on the project website. Draft plans of the Proposed Development, including the Illustrative Masterplan and Parameters Plan, amongst others were also on the project website. The draft ES chapters did not contain full impact assessments for Stage 1 as further work was ongoing at this stage. The full list of Stage 1 consultation documents is included in **Appendix 17**.
- 3.4.12 The Applicant raised awareness in advance of the planned Stage 1 consultation period and events in updates to local Parish Councils by email. Similarly, key local CDC and OCC Council members were also informed of the consultation process in advance.
- 3.4.13 The project website was updated to provide details well in advance of the consultation period beginning with information about the consultation process,

including exhibition dates and venues. All the material used as part of the Stage 1 consultation was made available via the website from the beginning of the formal consultation period, including PDF copies of the exhibition boards. Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter (now 'X'), Instagram) were used to advertise the Stage 1 consultation and direct the public to the project website.

3.4.14 The exhibitions were manned by a team of representatives of the Applicant, including many of the consultant team to ensure it was possible to provide technical information and explanation about the emerging proposals, and planned or ongoing technical and assessment work, as required.

3.4.15 Consultees and members of the public were able to make their representations and comments on the proposals via one of the following methods:

- Online via the project website which contained an electronic comments form: [www.oxsrfi.co.uk](http://www.oxsrfi.co.uk);
- By e-mail: [oxsrfi@havingyoursay.co.uk](mailto:oxsrfi@havingyoursay.co.uk);
- By telephone using the project phone line: 0333 358 0502
- By post to a dedicated Freepost PO Box address
- Social media platforms:
  - Facebook ([www.facebook.com/OxSRFI](https://www.facebook.com/OxSRFI)),
  - Twitter (now 'X') ([www.twitter.com/OxSRFI](https://www.twitter.com/OxSRFI)), and
  - Instagram ([www.instagram.com/Ox.SRFI](https://www.instagram.com/Ox.SRFI)).
- In person (verbally) at the public exhibitions in dialogue with the team and Applicant.

3.4.16 The consultation period was held over an 8-week period from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 until Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Although not a 'statutory' consultation, this exceeded the minimum requirement for a 30-day period to ensure local people, groups and bodies had time to review and comment on the consultation material.

### 3.5 Stage 1 Exhibition Event attendance and responses

3.5.1 The total number of people that attended the 5 public exhibition events was 330 (please note this number includes some individuals who attended more than one event). Table 4 below shows the split of that total across each venue, and the number of comments forms submitted at each.

*Table 4: Stage 1 attendees and comments at exhibition events*

Venue and date	Number of attendees	Comments received
<b>Heyford Park Chapel</b> on Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 (13:30 – 19:30)	69	8
<b>Ardley with Fewcott</b> on Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 (12:00 – 17:00)	89	5
<b>Heyford Park Chapel</b> on Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> May (13:30 – 19:30)	52	10
<b>Upper Heyford Village Hall</b> on Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 (13:30 – 19:30)	66	7
<b>Middleton Stoney Village Hall</b> on Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> June 2022 (13:30 – 19:30)	54	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>36</b>

3.5.2 Table 5 below summarises the number of responses received, between the date the leaflets were posted out to addresses within the Core Consultation Area and up until the time of writing this Consultation Report, against each consultation opportunity offered.

*Table 5: Stage 1 overview of method of responses received*

Source	No. of responses
Public Exhibition Events (x5) – hard copy forms	36
Online comment forms	26
E-mails	68*
Post	0
Calls	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>134<sup>11</sup></b>

### 3.6 Webinar Sessions

3.6.1 In terms of webinar attendance, 7 attended the first session on 17<sup>th</sup> May, with 9 attending the second session on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. More people for both sessions registered, with 17 registering for the first sessions and 16 for the second session. No emails were received highlighting issues with logging in to either session. During each session the project team and Applicant first gave a presentation for approximately 30 minutes which explained the Stage 1 OxSRFI proposals, and then addressed any pre-submitted questions. Additional questions by attendees were then responded to.

<sup>11</sup> \*Note – this is the total number of emails received and includes multiple emails by some of the same correspondents. Some emails were not providing comment about the draft proposals but were raising other queries such as seeking opportunities regarding future employment, or regarding business and supply chain opportunities.

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- 3.6.2 A response to the general points raised during the webinar are covered below in Section 4.0 in terms of the general topics and issues raised during the Stage 1 consultation process.

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## 4.0 KEY THEMES AND TOPICS RAISED DURING THE STAGE 1 CONSULTATION AND THE APPLICANTS RESPONSE

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The themes and topics raised in the Stage 1 consultation responses have been split into two broad categories below: residents/public, and consultees/other stakeholders.

4.1.2 A full summary of the responses and comments received can be found in the Stage 1 Section 42 and Section 47 Consultation Schedules (see **Appendices 3 and 4**). These schedules include responses to comments received by the Applicant, and where relevant details of any changes made in response to the specific issues raised in the comments. Section 6.0 of this Report also provides analysis and responses to the key issues raised during Stage 2 of the consultation process, some of which relate directly to some of the earlier input received at Stage 1 with an ongoing dialogue and narrative between some issues across the two consultation Stages. To prevent duplication and repetition some issues are dealt with briefly below and in more detail later in Section 6.0.

### 4.2 Resident/public response

4.2.1 This summary of issues draws largely on the written responses received (comments forms and letters or emails), but also on verbal discussions had with visitors to the exhibitions, not all of which resulted in comments being submitted in writing.

4.2.2 The summary of the key themes and topics raised below sets the issues out in an approximate order which represents the frequency with which they were referred to:

#### Traffic and Transport

4.2.3 Traffic impact and transport was the most dominant theme within the responses. The most frequently raised issue, including some concern, within this theme was the potential for the Proposed Development to cause an increase in road traffic in the area, both in terms of at M40 J10 but also on local roads, particularly through the villages of Middleton Stoney and Heyford Park. However, many respondents also acknowledged existing traffic problems in the area, particularly at J10 which many local people feel needs

improvement, and as a result a notable proportion of respondents were generally welcoming of the proposed improvements to it. A few people did however note that J10 has been subject to a number of previous alterations in the past, conveying a lack of confidence that the proposed works will solve the problems.

- 4.2.4 In terms of local transport effects and issues, a high number of respondents expressed specific concern about the proposed 'Bus Gate' element of the proposed highways works. Several respondents either stated that there is not a need for it or questioned the case or justification for it. Many raised concerns that it would make journey times longer for local residents, and that it didn't make sense for the area.

#### Loss of Countryside / Industrialisation of Area, and Principle of Greenfield Development

- 4.2.5 A significant number of respondents objected in principle to, or raised concern about, the loss of countryside and/or industrialisation of the area as a result of the Proposed Development. This concern was further explained by some in terms of losing access to the countryside (e.g., for walking), concerns about a transformation of the area from rural to urban, general environmental impacts of development, and concerns relating to climate change and/or landscape impact.
- 4.2.6 Some also referred to other, unrelated proposals for warehouse development in the vicinity of the site around M40 J10 and expressed concerns relating to the potential for cumulative impacts from these other schemes.
- 4.2.7 There were also a number of concerns raised about the principle of developing greenfield / farming land, and subsequent questions about why the Proposed Development cannot be developed on brownfield land – an example given being the redundant runways and buildings associated with the adjacent former RAF Upper Heyford Airbase (included as part of the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area).
- 4.2.8 A notable number of respondents were significantly opposed to the principle of developing farmland in the context of concerns about food security and the need to be self-sufficient from a broader political and environmental perspective.

### Need for an SRFI

- 4.2.9 Another question or concern within the public responses was around the evidence of need for the proposed development of an SRFI. The majority of people did not accept the need for the Proposed Development as set out in the consultation material or considered that more explanation to justify the Proposed Development was required. A few inferred that the need argument did not make sense; for example, some viewed the introduction of a rail freight interchange as likely to increase HGV traffic on the roads, mostly referenced as increases on local roads, rather than reducing HGV travel.
- 4.2.10 A smaller number of people were however explicitly in agreement that there was an identified need for the development in terms of the benefits of moving freight from road to rail, and recognised that the Application Site has the required access to both road and rail. Some respondents who accepted the need for SRFIs in general did question whether the Application Site is the right place for it. A few comments asked about alternative sites considered for a potential new SRFI in the area (also see below re: alternatives).

### Impact on wildlife/ecology

- 4.2.11 General concern or questions were raised about the impact of the Proposed Development on local wildlife and ecology. Some respondents described their understanding of existing wildlife on or around the site. Some highlighted concern about loss of habitats and the impact of noise, light, and air pollution on flora and fauna.

### Noise and Light pollution

- 4.2.12 A number of respondents expressed general concerns about potential noise and light pollution arising from the SRFI, with examples of the sorts of noise of particular concern including HGVs, movement of containers, and trains.

### Visual and landscape impacts

- 4.2.13 Landscape/visual impact was another concern raised through comments received. A number of people commented that the proposed mitigation measures would be insufficient or not make a meaningful difference. However, several people also left positive comments about the proposed landscaping strategy which seeks to substantially screen the site and much of the proposed new building from outside view.

### Alternatives or other SRFIs

- 4.2.14 A few responses asked what assessment has been undertaken of alternative sites, with a small number of people specifically asking what other sites had been assessed and wanting detailed information on the outcome of that process and why they were not more suitable.

### Other issues raised

- 4.2.15 Various other comments were raised within the responses, albeit less frequently than the issues set out above, including:

- Concern about construction impacts on the local area
- Positivity/support for the choice of location given access to rail and road networks
- Positivity/support for the concept of an SRFI here
- Positivity about the need for the scheme and the benefits of enabling freight to move to rail
- Positivity about the walking routes/footpaths proposed as part of the wider 'green infrastructure' and transport strategies
- Concern about lack of benefit for Heyford Park residents
- Positivity about new job creation
- Concern about scale of development
- Concern about current lack of public transport to the Main Site and questions over the future strategy
- Concern about impact on property values
- Concern about how the jobs will be filled.

## **4.3 Consultee/Other Stakeholder Responses**

- 4.3.1 A range of consultees provided responses and comments on the Stage 1 consultation material. This section provides a list of those bodies which commented, and provides a summary of key issues or questions raised.

- 4.3.2 Responses were received from:

- Cherwell District Council (CDC)
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)
- CPRE (Cherwell District)
- British Horse Society

- Berks, Becks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Dorchester Living (comments by Pegasus Group on their behalf)
- Albion Land (AL)
- Severn Trent Green Power
- Historic England
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Royal Mail
- Middleton Stoney Parish Council
- Upper Heyford Parish
- Kirtlington Parish Council
- Lower Heyford Parish
- Chesterton Parish
- Steeple Aston and Middle Aston
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum

4.3.3 Both the responses received by CDC and OCC were received after the Stage 1 Consultation period closed but this timing was agreed with the Applicant and therefore still considered as part of the Stage 1 process.

4.3.4 A range of issues and topics are covered by the comments or queries received, and some of the key questions and issues include the following:

Need and ‘case’ for the SRFI as proposed

4.3.5 Consultees were keen to better understand the case for the proposed SRFI and the evidence of market demand for large-scale distribution operations in this location, including detail of any potential alternatives considered. Further explanation of why and how the proposals are ‘strategic’ were sought by one consultee.

4.3.6 Some offered scepticism that a rail terminal would be delivered or used, and see the proposals as a being only about warehousing.

1.1 While the potential economic benefits (employment, GVA, etc) were recognised by some, the scale of the Proposed Development, and the ‘case’ for the infrastructure (particularly new road building) proposed requires further justification and evidence that it is required or essential. Others were keen to better understand the assumptions and likely labour/workforce implications, including regarding likely travel to work.

### Accessibility and transport, including rail

- 1.2 There were concerns raised about the impact on nearby roads and communities, focused on the B430, and M40 J10. Some welcomed the emerging highways mitigation proposals in general, and require more detail as it becomes available. Others with development interests nearby are keen to understand the interaction with other parts of the network, and other sites, as the Transport Assessment work progresses. Some local consultees were frustrated by the current lack of detail regarding the transport and traffic effects at this stage in the process, but have concerns that the mitigation measures emerging will not be adequate.
- 4.3.7 Questions about how the Main Site would be accessed by employees, and where those employees are coming from, were raised by some consultees in the context of the ongoing Transport Assessment. This included interest in whether the Proposed Development could help safeguard or deliver a future passenger rail station at Ardley, and whether that may form part of a longer-term public transport strategy for employees to access the site.
- 1.3 How the emerging transport strategy fits with the OCC Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 5 (2022)<sup>12</sup>, as well as the proposed headline targets for the reduction of car trips, were raised as queries for further work. Further explanation as to how an SRFI helps deliver a reduction in HGV traffic, as well as further detail regarding the Chiltern Main Line's capacity to accommodate freight traffic, were also sought from a number of consultees.
- 4.3.8 There were a range of views on the proposed new or diverted footpaths and bridleways, with a general welcoming of extensions proposed to the bridleway network, but with details sought about specific routes, surfaces, and crossing points to ensure safe and useable routes.
- 4.3.9 Several consultees indicated an interest in seeing and commenting on the next stages of the Transport Assessment once complete and available.

### Local and environmental potential impacts (including heritage)

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<sup>12</sup> The OCC Local Transport and Connectivity Plan – available at:  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel)

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- 4.3.10 There were general comments and concerns about the impact on local wildlife, and on existing habitats or wildlife sites and species located in the area, including how proposed foot or cycle routes may interact or effect existing sites or species. The relationship with, and impact on, the Conservation Target Area<sup>13</sup> and the neighbouring SSSI was also raised as an area of concern and where further detail will be required. One respondent urged the Applicant to deliver a 20% net gain in biodiversity and go beyond emerging national policy at the time.
- 4.3.11 The loss of greenfield and of agricultural land was raised as a concern by some local consultees. Others welcome the delivery of new woodland and are keen to see existing woodland within the Main Site retained and protected within the development, with opportunities taken to enhance the landscaping and buffers provided.
- 4.3.12 The potential for harm caused on local visual impacts on nearby existing or planned communities, and the wider landscape was raised by some local consultees. Neighbouring landowners, developers and businesses are keen to fully understand the interactions with and any potential impacts on their planned or existing operations. Other local bodies were interested in better understanding the scope for noise, air quality and lighting effects and any potential impact on local health or amenity.
- 4.3.13 A couple of consultees also raised concerns about the impacts on nearby heritage assets, in particular the former Heyford Airbase and how the Proposed Development would alter historic views from the end of the runway.
- 4.3.14 Many consultees indicated an interest in seeing and commenting on the next stages of the ES and the further developed assessments across a wide range of topics, including landscape and visual, heritage, and ecology, as well as air quality, noise and lighting.

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<sup>13</sup> Conservation Target Areas have been identified in Cherwell and form a key part of the Nature Recovery Network core and recovery zones and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Draft Cherwell Local 2025)

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## 4.4 Applicant's actions and responses to issues raised at the Stage 1 Consultation

4.4.1 This section sets out the Applicant's response to the topics and issues raised during the Stage 1 Consultation. A table at the end of the section summarises how the comments influenced the design of the scheme.

### Traffic impacts and transport issues (including the proposed Highways Works and sustainable travel opportunities);

4.4.2 The design of the Highways Works has evolved since the Stage 1 consultation, and this has been influenced by several factors. Engagement with the Transport Working Group (TWG), which includes the local highways authority and National Highways, has informed the proposed design of the Highways Works, along with highways modelling and assessment which has progressed since the Stage 1 consultation.

4.4.3 The approach to the Highways Works has been to divert traffic off local roads, particularly HGVs, and away from the local village centres of Ardley and Middleton Stoney, and direct traffic to access the Main Site via the strategic highways network. As a result, the design of the Highways Works continues to include the Ardley Bypass, Middleton Stoney Relief Road, and other changes to the B430 such as the stopping of motor vehicles south of the rail line. Environmental weight restrictions for vehicles in the Ardley with Fewcott and Bucknell areas are also proposed. The M40 J10 Improvement Works have been amended since the Stage 1 consultation in response to further modelling and assessment work, which also includes the coordination of other proposed employment schemes around M40 J10 – the design of the M40 J10 Improvement Works will increase the capacity of the junction, which is an identified issue, and enable the junction to accommodate the Proposed Development.

4.4.4 The bus gate, which was proposed along the B430 north of Middleton Stoney, has been removed from the Proposed Development as a result of concerns raised by residents during the Stage 1 consultation. This will remove concerns raised in relation to the impact the bus gate would have had on movement between Middleton Stoney and Heyford Park (and other communities beyond).

4.4.5 The Proposed Development now includes the proposal to reduce the speed limit along the B4030 east of Middleton Stoney, which will help with safety for users of this road by cyclists.

- 4.4.6 Since the Stage 1 consultation, and with the benefit of further modelling and assessment work having been undertaken, impacts on off-site junctions are better understood and minor works are now proposed at junctions which were not previously proposed. This includes improvement works to M40 J9, and also potential works at the A4095 / B4030 roundabout west of Bicester. As a result of these proposals and potential works, the red line boundary was extended to include these areas as part of OxSRFI scheme.
- 4.4.7 In terms of sustainable travel opportunities, the Proposed Development includes the provision for new rights of way connections through the area, as well as bus provision connecting between Heyford Park and Bicester. With regards to a passenger station at Ardley, the OxSRFI scheme will not prejudice the delivery of a station should it come forward in the future in the same location as the former station.

Loss of countryside / industrialisation of area, and principle of greenfield development

- 4.4.8 As shown on the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5), the Proposed Development will include a significant proportion (around 50%) of green infrastructure and landscaping within the Main Site. This will include public footpath connections and space for ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain (BNG) to mitigate impacts on local wildlife and ecology.
- 4.4.9 The National Planning Statement National Networks ('NPS')<sup>14</sup> acknowledges that due to the locational requirements of SRFIs, i.e., the need for close proximity to strategic rail and road networks, the number of suitable locations for SRFIs will be limited<sup>15</sup> and that:

*“Due to their requirements, it may be that countryside locations are required for SRFIs”<sup>16</sup>*

- 4.4.10 As such, the NPS acknowledges the principle that land within the countryside will be required to deliver SRFIs across the Country.

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<sup>14</sup> The Stage 1 consultation proposals were progressed and consulted upon whilst the previous NPS (2014) was extant, an updated NPS was published in March 2024 and therefore at the time of having regard to feedback, progressing the proposals and the Stage 1 consultation, the March 2024 NPS applies

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 3.103 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

<sup>16</sup> Paragraph 4.81 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

- 4.4.11 In terms of the extent of development at M40 J10, it is acknowledged that proposals for employment development by Albion Land and Tritax have been refused by CDC but with the appeal process underway<sup>17</sup>. Each application, including the OxSRFI, is considered on its own merit but with an assessment of the cumulative impacts of other developments in the vicinity of the area. ES Chapter 16 (Cumulative Effects) has been updated, including a narrative relating to the potential cumulative impacts associated with the Albion Land and Tritax schemes.
- 4.4.12 With regards to the use of the Upper Heyford Airfield for the OxSRFI, this site is allocated for a residential led mix-use development in the Local Plan, and that allocation is retained in the draft Local Plan<sup>18</sup>. In addition, a new application for 9,000 homes was submitted to CDC prior to the Stage 2 consultation<sup>19</sup>. The delivery of the site is already well underway and therefore the site is not available or suitable for a SRFI development within its boundaries.

#### Need for the proposed SRFI

- 4.4.13 The NPS makes it clear that the Government is committed to supporting the ongoing growth of rail freight due to the environmental and economic benefits of the sector. With regard to the need for SRFIs, the NPS states there is a ‘compelling need’<sup>20</sup> for more SRFIs due to their importance in reducing costs, and reducing road mileage, while facilitating important trade links and international connectivity. This is contextualised with reference to the wider importance of the logistics industry to the UK economy and its role in delivering warehousing and distribution networks for UK manufacturers, importers and retailers. The network of distribution and warehousing sites across the UK are described as:

*“vital hubs supporting efficient aggregation, disaggregation, and distribution of goods. SRFIs are a key part of this infrastructure, providing both storage processing facilities and onward connectivity to support the cross modal transfer of goods in order to deliver the full range of benefits rail freight can provide.”<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> See Albion Land CDC application references: 21/03266/F (infrastructure only), 21/03267/OUT (east of the A43), 21/03268/OUT (west of the A43), and Tritax CDC application reference: 22/01340/OUT

<sup>18</sup> CDC Adopted Local Plan Policy 5 and draft Local Plan Policy HEY 1.

<sup>19</sup> CDC application reference: 25/02190/HYBRID

<sup>20</sup> Paragraph 3.103 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

<sup>21</sup> Paragraph 3.86 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

4.4.14 The NPS also states that SRFI capacity needs to be provided:

*“at a wide range of locations, both in regions where they are currently located and, more broadly, to provide the flexibility needed to match the changing demands of the market, possibly with traffic moving from existing Rail Freight Interchange to new larger facilities.”<sup>22</sup>*

4.4.15 Further detail about the need for SRFIs is provided in Section 6.0

#### Location of the Proposed Development

4.4.16 In terms of the locational requirements for SRFIs, the NPS sets out that SRFIs should ideally be located on a route which can accommodate larger freight wagons, ideally on a route with a gauge clearance of W8 or more, or capable of enhancement to a suitable gauge<sup>23</sup>. In terms of road links, SRFIs must have good connectivity to the strategic road network<sup>24</sup>. The OxSRFI site is adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line which is part of the Strategic Freight Network and can accommodate a W8 gauge.

4.4.17 The NPS also notes that SRFIs involve large structures, buildings, and the operation of heavy machinery, which can require continuous working arrangements. In terms of appropriate locations, the NPS therefore acknowledges that SRFIs often may not be suitable adjacent to residential areas or environmentally sensitive locations such as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The NPS goes on to clarify however, that depending on circumstances, appropriate mitigation measures may be available to limit the impacts of visual intrusion, noise and light<sup>25</sup>. The OxSRFI site is not located adjacent to an environmentally sensitive location and is of a size that it can accommodate large structures and earthworks to mitigate amenity impacts on residential properties in the area. This accords with paragraph 4.83 of the NPS which also states:

*“depending on circumstances, appropriate mitigation measures may be available to limit the impacts of visual intrusion, noise and light”*

4.4.18 The proximity of the OxSRFI site to the M40 J10, the A43 to the north-west and A34 to the south provides access to the south-coast and Midlands. The OxSRFI site also has access to urban centres and markets such as Oxford,

<sup>22</sup> Paragraph 3.105 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

<sup>23</sup> Paragraph 4.89 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

<sup>24</sup> Paragraph 1.5, footnote b of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

<sup>25</sup> Paragraph 4.83 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

as well as Bicester and Banbury, which includes areas subject to significant planned growth in adopted and draft Local Plans<sup>26</sup>. The OxSRFI site is also within 4.5 hours drive of a large proportion (around 75%) of the UK population and is located at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor with significant economic potential.

- 4.4.19 The OxSRFI site is therefore located in a strategic location on the road and rail networks, with access to key road links via the M40, A43 and A34, as well as connectivity to the national rail freight network, which makes it suitable for the proposed SRFI development.

#### Impacts on wildlife/ecology

- 4.4.20 The OxSRFI site has been designed to mitigate impacts on local ecology and wildlife through measures which will enhance opportunities for habitats and protected species on-site. Since the Stage 1 consultation the Proposed Development has also progressed to now deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain as part of the Proposed Development and include the planting of approximately over 150,000 new native trees and over 13km of new hedgerow. Additional land in the vicinity of the Main Site has also been included within the OxSRFI scheme to strengthen the extent of ecological mitigation delivered by the development, which resulted in a change to the red line plan since the Stage 1 consultation.

#### Noise and light impacts

- 4.4.21 The Proposed Development includes noise mitigation measures which have been embedded within the design of the scheme, principally the proposed landscaping and bunding around the Main Site. The earthworks strategy will also reduce the ground levels and sink much of the built development area into the landscape. Furthermore, a noise barrier north of the rail terminal<sup>27</sup> is also proposed to minimise noise levels from the rail operations, and this will be secured through the DCO requirements.
- 4.4.22 The OxSRFI scheme will help deliver reductions in traffic noise in both Ardley and Middleton Stoney village centres as a result of the proposed new roads (the Ardley Bypass and Middleton Stoney Relief Road), which will see reductions in traffic movement through those villages.

<sup>26</sup> The Cherwell Local Plan (adopted in 2015), and the draft Local Plan which was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in July 2025.

<sup>27</sup> See the Main Site Design Approach Document (Document 5.5A) and ES Chapter 5 (Noise and Vibration) for further details

4.4.23 In terms of light impacts, the Proposed Development includes a lighting strategy (see ES Chapter 8 (Lighting)) which has been designed to prevent glare and light spill to locations off-site, including upward light that can contribute to sky glow. The landscaping and earthworks strategy will also screen much of the lighting on the Main Site from being directly visible from outside, and so also forms part of the mitigation for lighting.

#### Landscape and visual impacts

4.4.24 The landscape strategy devised for the Main Site utilises the existing topography of which generally falls from north to south, and also from its eastern and western sides, and when coupled with new perimeter mounding as part of the Proposed Development will provide the opportunity to substantially screen the development and minimise any landscape and visual impacts upon the surrounding settlements and areas.

4.4.25 The landscape strategy also maximises the opportunities afforded by existing features on the ground and the Main Site's characteristics to deliver a suitably strong landscape boundary to the west, south and north in particular. Therefore, while the Proposed Development will result in permanent change to the existing landscape, the effects will be minimised, and both landscape and visual effects will reduce over-time as the new landscaping matures.

4.4.26 Following the Stage 1 consultation, the IVC Facility was removed from the OxSRFI scheme. The IVC Facility lease finishes in 2030 and the operator will vacate the site at that time if the OxSRFI scheme has been approved. The operations would cease on-site and buildings and structures would be demolished as part of delivering OxSRFI. The removal of the IVC Facility from the OxSRFI scheme has provided the opportunity for the southern end of the Main Site to increase the space for landscaping and green infrastructure, strengthening the mitigation for views to the south in this area.

#### Local and environmental potential impacts (including heritage)

4.4.27 Impacts on the amenity of local communities are proposed to be mitigated through a mixture of measures described above, such as the landscape strategy which includes significant earthworks and bunds and will minimise views of the Proposed Development, and Highways Works which direct traffic (and particularly HGVs), away from the village centres of Ardley and Middleton Stoney. A lighting strategy (see ES Chapter 8 (Lighting)) will also be employed to reduce light spill and minimise impacts.

- 4.4.28 Air Quality impacts during construction and from rail operations have been assessed and determined to not be significant in terms of effects. Impacts from operational traffic, with measures from the Travel Plan (ES Appendix 3.2) in place, will cause a ‘minor adverse’ effect at worst.
- 4.4.29 In regards to heritage impacts, the impacts on the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area have been carefully considered, and following the Stage 1 consultation and dialogue with consultees, the bunds at the end of the runway have been reduced to a half height (see Parameters Plan, Document 2.5). This amendment to the scheme is proposed to help preserve historic context and views of the landscape from the runway.

#### Alternatives or other SRFIs

- 4.4.30 An Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA) (ES Appendix 2.4) to ES Chapter 2 (Description of Development and Alternatives) assesses several sites within a defined search area along the M40 corridor in Oxfordshire, and demonstrates that the OxSRFI site is the most preferable site within the established search area for the delivery of a SRFI.

#### Other matters

- 4.4.31 Other matters not covered by the above points were raised during the Stage 1 consultation which included:
- Impacts during construction – the ES Chapters assess the impacts during the construction process and set out how best practice measures, which will include a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (ES Appendix 2.3), will help to mitigate and minimise effects from construction.
  - Concern about how the jobs will be filled – ES Chapter 12 (Socio-economics) highlights the proposed housing growth in Cherwell (particularly at Heyford Park and around Bicester) and also the issue with out-commuting of residents for work. The OxSRFI proposals will therefore provide job opportunities to accommodate the proposed housing growth and reduce out-commuting in the District, which will be a benefit to local residents.

Summary of updates and amendments to the OxSRFI proposals following the issues and comments received during the Stage 1 consultation

4.4.32 Table 6 below sets out a summary of the updates and amendments to the OxSRFI proposals following the issues and comments received during the Stage 1 consultation.

*Table 6: Summary of changes to the Proposed Development after the Stage 1 consultation*

<b>Issue raised during the Stage 1 consultation</b>	<b>Relevant change to the scheme</b>
Concerns about the impacts of the proposed bus gate on the B4030	The bus gate has been removed from the OxSRFI scheme in direct response to comments received by residents.
Impacts on the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Airbase, particularly the runway	Bunds at the end of the runway have been reduced to a 'half height' to preserve the historical context and views from the runway.
Visual impacts	With the IVC Facility no longer forming part of the OxSRFI scheme, additional bunding to the south of the Heyford Park Link Road has been included to strengthen the landscaping proposed and further minimise views from the south
Highways impacts	With the benefit of further modelling and assessment work since Stage 1, amendments have been made to the proposed Highways Works forming part of the OxSRFI scheme. This includes the J10 Improvement Works (with a coordination of other M40 J10 development), and the inclusion of minor works to M40 J9 and potentially to the A4095 / B4030 roundabout west of Bicester. The inclusion of additional highways works also extended the red line boundary of the Proposed Development. A HGV routing strategy (see ES Appendix 3.1 for further details) to restrict HGVs from travelling to and from the south of the Main Site on the B430 is also included as part of the proposals.
Impacts on wildlife and ecology	Since the Stage 1 consultation the Proposed Development has also progressed and will deliver a 10% BNG, and includes the planting of approximately over 150,000 new native trees and over 13km of new hedgerow. Additional land in the vicinity of the Main Site has also been included within the OxSRFI scheme to strengthen the extent of ecological mitigation delivered by the development, which also resulted in a change to the red line boundary.
Sustainable travel opportunities	Further improvements to the pedestrian and cycle arrangements, particularly in respect of connections to Bicester, as well as the inclusion of a bus provision between Heyford Park and Bicester.

4.4.33 The above changes reflect some of the comments made during the Stage 1 consultation. The ES Chapters progressed following Stage 1 with further details in terms of the Applicant's response to Stage 2 in Section 6.0.

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## 5.0 STAGE 2 – SECTION 47 (DUTY TO CONSULT LOCAL COMMUNITIES)

5.0.1 This section of the Report describes the statutory local and public consultation processes and activities. It provides details of the procedural steps taken, the ways in which the Applicant engaged with local people and communities, and also provides details of the material consulted upon.

### 5.1 Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

5.1.1 Section 47(2) of the Act requires the Applicant to consult relevant local authorities about the content of a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). The relevant local authorities with regard to consultation about the SoCC for the OxSRFI scheme are Cherwell District Council (CDC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

5.1.2 It is noted that the Applicant is not required to agree a SoCC with the local authorities, but is required to consult them and consider their comments in preparing a SoCC.

5.1.3 As described in Section 3.3, dialogue and engagement regarding the first SoCC was held with CDC and OCC prior to the start of the Stage 1 (non-statutory) consultation progress commencing and the Stage 1 SoCC (**Appendix 3**) was updated to reflect some of the comments received, particularly in relation to the extent of the Core Consultation Area used for consultation.

5.1.4 Following the public ‘pause’ in the preparation of the OxSRFI scheme from April 2023 to September 2024, the SoCC was updated and a draft version was shared with OCC and CDC in July 2025 (see **Appendix 21**) ahead of the start of the Stage 2 (statutory) consultation. Responses to the draft SoCC were provided by CDC and OCC within the required 28-day period, and the SoCC was finalised and published by the Applicant on the project website ([www.oxsrfi.co.uk](http://www.oxsrfi.co.uk)) in September 2025. A copy of the Final SoCC is attached to this Report at **Appendix 18**. Comments contained in the written response from OCC included several suggestions which the Applicant reflected through changes made to the final SoCC – these included extending the consultation area to communities in the vicinity of the proposed (relatively modest) highways mitigation works around M40 J9, providing an exhibition venue closer to Bicester, and increasing the number of webinars (from one to two). **Appendix 19** includes a summary of how the Stage 2 consultation activity

undertaken complied with the key actions and commitments as set out in the Final SoCC.

## 5.2 Stage 2 Consultation – strategy and overview

5.2.1 The Statutory Consultation process followed a very similar approach to that taken for the Stage 1 consultation process as described above.

5.2.2 Consistent with the guidance, and with the approach taken to Stage 1, the consultation strategy focused on raising awareness about the proposals and consultation process with communities and people who both live and work within the local community of the proposed development. While there was a focus on those living and working within the identified ‘Core Consultation Area’ defined in the Final SoCC, the Applicant also undertook engagement and awareness raising activities which extended outside of that area.

### Stage 2 – Consultation Material

5.2.3 The Stage 2 consultation consulted on updated PEIR (in the form of draft ES chapters) which contained further progressed results or conclusions from the EIA process. The PEIR contained an updated draft assessment of likely impacts as well as information about the proposed mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate them. Additional draft plans/drawings, including the Parameters Plan and works plans, as well as documents outside the ES, such as the Design Approach Document (DAD), Planning Statement, Rail Report and Alternative Sites Assessment were also included in the consultation. The full list of documents included in the Stage 2 consultation is found in **Appendix 22**.

5.2.4 It should be noted that although the draft ES and drawings presented were as advanced as able to be presented for the Stage 2 consultation, some assessment work, particularly in relation to highways modelling which also limited the extent of the noise and air quality assessments, remained ongoing. With the highways work ongoing, some impacts and mitigation measures remained undetermined, one particular example was the A4095 / B4030 roundabout west of Bicester, where the mitigation required was uncertain in advance of the Stage 2 consultation and therefore the Applicant included the roundabout within the draft Order Limits to ensure it was included within the consultation material, but whilst also acknowledging that further work on this junction was ongoing.

### Core Consultation Area – Stage 2 updates

- 5.2.5 Further to dialogue with CDC and OCC in preparing the Final SoCC, and to reflect changes to the site location (Order Limits), an extended Core Consultation Area was used for the Stage 2 consultation. In addition to the communities listed in Table 2 above, the Core Consultation Area was extended to also include addresses in Wendlebury, Little Chesterton, and Weston on the Green to reflect the proposal for highway works at M40 J9.
- 5.2.6 In addition, and given that at the time the Final SoCC was published the highways modelling work had not been completed, the potential for additional highways mitigation to be required in the area of the A4095 / B4030 roundabout on the western edge of Bicester was not fully understood. As a result, the Core Consultation Area was extended to ensure leaflets were delivered in the communities closest to that area as well.
- 5.2.7 The full list of communities (all or part) within the Core Consultation Area for the Stage 2 consultation are found in Table 7 below.

*Table 7: Communities within the Core Consultation Area*

Cherwell District	West Oxfordshire District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ardley with Fewcott</li> <li>• North Aston</li> <li>• Middle Aston</li> <li>• Steeple Aston</li> <li>• Bucknell</li> <li>• Fritwell</li> <li>• Lower Heyford and Caulcott</li> <li>• Middleton Stoney</li> <li>• Upper Heyford</li> <li>• Somerton</li> <li>• Stoke Lyne</li> <li>• Chesterton (including Little Chesterton)</li> <li>• Hardwick with Tusmore</li> <li>• Souldern</li> <li>• Fringford</li> <li>• Kirtlington</li> <li>• Hethe</li> <li>• Wendlebury</li> <li>• Weston on the Green</li> <li>• Bicester (communities towards the western edge of the town)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rousham</li> <li>• Tackley</li> </ul>

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- 5.2.8 A map of the updated Core Consultation Area (the area in which leaflets were delivered direct to properties) for the Stage 2 Consultation is at **Appendix 23**.
- 5.2.9 Similar to Stage 1, Parish Councils within the Core Consultation Area were used as a key point of contact to help ensure wider awareness within the local communities in addition to measures and activities to engage directly with local people and communities. As part of this approach, the project team informed local elected members, CDC and OCC Councillors whose divisions included part of the Core Consultation Area, and Parish Councillors within the Core Consultation Area of key dates and information about the consultation process. This was largely through e-mail correspondence (but with some letters and leaflets posted where email was not an option – also see section below) – see **Appendix 24** for an example letter and a list of Counsellors contacted.

#### Section 47 Notices and General Adverts

- 5.2.10 Pursuant to the requirements of the Act, a Section 47 Notice was placed in the Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser newspapers on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to notify the public of the intention to undertake the consultation exercise and to explain where copies of the Final SoCC could be inspected (a copy of the notices are at **Appendix 25**). In addition, general advert newspaper notices were also placed in the Bicester Advertiser and Oxford Mail on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (copies of the adverts are at **Appendix 26**). These newspapers were chosen due to their strong overlap with the Core Consultation Area of the OxSRFI scheme and those communities closest to it and for consistency with the Stage 1 advertisements and notices (see **Appendix 12** for Stage 1 notices).

#### Community Awareness Leaflets, Letters/Emails and Posters

- 5.2.11 As committed to in the Final SoCC, community awareness leaflets (**Appendix 27**) were distributed in early September in advance of the start of the Stage 2 consultation across the extensive Core Consultation Area. In excess of 8,400 community awareness leaflets were distributed to residential and other premises using Royal Mail, notably higher than the number of leaflets distributed for the Stage 1 consultation, which is a reflection of the increased Core Consultation Area following comments by CDC and OCC to the draft Stage 2 SoCC.

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- 5.2.12 The leaflet contained a brief explanation of the scheme and details about the exhibition events and webinars, as well as information about how to comment on the OxSRFI as part of the Stage 2 consultation process.
- 5.2.13 In addition, to further raise awareness of the OxSRFI scheme and Stage 2 consultation process, community awareness leaflets were also posted (and/or emailed) in advance to Parish Council clerks who were encouraged to post or display (physically and/or virtually) the leaflets on local display boards or community online forums. These were sent to all Parish Councils in the Core Consultation Area, plus Evenley Parish Council in West Northamptonshire (located further north along the A43 trunk road).
- 5.2.14 Parish Council Clerks were also offered and sent USBs<sup>28</sup> containing consultation documents for their own use to aid their engagement in the process, as well as to support any local ‘hard to reach’ groups or individuals who might find it harder to access the same information online or via the hard copies deposited in Bicester Library, and at Cherwell District Council’s offices from the first day of the consultation period (see **Appendix 24** for the relevant list).
- 5.2.15 One letter to a local resident, considered within the ‘hard to reach’ category due to difficulties with postal delivery, was hand delivered a letter to ensure the letter was received. The name of the resident is not provided due to Data Protection requirements.
- 5.2.16 Posters with details about the exhibition events were also attached to posts on and around the close vicinity of the OxSRFI Application Site in four general areas, including in Ardley and Middleton Stoney villages, near Chesterton and Bicester Hotel, and in residential areas in western Bicester (a copy of the posters displayed in 20 total locations for Stage 2 are shown in **Appendix 28a**, and plans of where the posters were displayed are shown in **Appendix 28b**). Further details about s42, 43, 44 notices and letters are found in Section 7.0 of this Report.
- 5.2.17 In addition to the above, an email was also sent to 57 recipients who had provided their email address to the Stage 1 consultation and had asked to be informed of further stages of consultation.

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<sup>28</sup> Any exceptions where Parish’s were not sent a USB was a result of no address on the Parish Council website or if a Clerk asked for them not to be sent.

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## Project Website and Social Media

- 5.2.18 The project website ([www.oxsrfi.co.uk](http://www.oxsrfi.co.uk)) was first updated prior to the Stage 2 consultation to inform viewers of the upcoming statutory consultation process.
- 5.2.19 Similar to Stage 1, the project website was used to provide details in advance of the consultation period beginning with information about the consultation process, including exhibition dates and venues. All the material used as part of the Stage 2 consultation, including the draft Environmental Statement aspect chapters and appendices, draft plans and consultation material such as the exhibition boards, was made available to view and download via the website from the beginning of the formal consultation period, including PDF copies of the exhibition boards. A copy of the comments form was also available on the project website (further details in this section below).
- 5.2.20 The project website between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025 received over 5,200 views during the consultation period, with a spike in visitors after the 14/15<sup>th</sup> September 2025, after stakeholders began to be informed of the Stage 2 consultation. The majority of views were on a desktop, and most viewers came direct or via google to the website.
- 5.2.21 In terms of social media platforms, engagement in Stage 1 through ‘X’ and Instagram was low and therefore the Stage 2 draft SoCC proposed to only use Facebook. However, as a result of consultation on the draft SoCC with OCC and CDC and respect of their preferences, the Applicant again used all three platforms for the Stage 2 consultation. The social media platforms were used to advertise the consultation and direct any viewers to the project website where more information was available. Posts were published at start of the Stage 2 consultation on each platform with the project website provided so any interested parties could make comments. It should be noted that there was no public engagement in terms of comments or questions on these platforms during the consultation process.
- 5.2.22 The same accounts were again used for the Stage 2 consultation:
- Facebook – @OxSRFI, [www.facebook.com/OxSRFI](http://www.facebook.com/OxSRFI)
  - ‘X’ (Twitter) – @OxSRFI, [www.x.com/OxSRFI](http://www.x.com/OxSRFI)
  - Instagram - @OxSRFI, [www.instagram.com/ox.srfi](http://www.instagram.com/ox.srfi)

## Methods for providing comments

5.2.23 Members of the public and interested parties were able to make their representations and comments on the proposals via any of the following methods:

- By hand (or post – see below) via a printed comments form available at the public exhibitions.
- Online via the comments form on the project website: <https://oxsrfi.co.uk/>;
- By email: [consultation@oxsrfi.co.uk](mailto:consultation@oxsrfi.co.uk);
- By telephone using a project phone line (charged at standard landline rates): 01865 989650;
- By post to a dedicated Freepost PO Box address;
- In person (verbally) at the public exhibitions in dialogue with the project team and/or the Applicant;
- During the online webinar sessions (further details below).

5.2.24 The email address and phone number for the Stage 2 consultation changed from the Stage 1 consultation. Emails from the Stage 1 consultation email address were still forwarded on to the Applicant during the consultation process.

5.2.25 A focal element of the Stage 2 Consultation process was the ‘Comments Form’ **Appendix 29**. Attendees to the exhibitions described below were invited to fill out a Comments Form, and the project website also included the same questions for residents and interested parties to fill out. The questions were set out to purposely encourage the responder to set out their opinions on the OxSRFI scheme and thereby avoid ‘quantitative’ only answers. The questions on the Comments Form are set out in Table 8 below.

*Table 8: Stage 2 Consultation Comments Form*

Question number	Question
1	We have summarised Government Policy regarding SRFIs. Do you think our explanation for proposing a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange in this location is clear? Please give reasons for your answer.
2	Since the Stage 1 consultation the highways mitigation works at Junction 10 have changed, in part in response to other development proposals nearby. Do you have any comments about the proposed improvements at M40 Junction 10?
3	The proposals include a comprehensive draft sustainable transport strategy, and public transport strategy with extensive measures to enable bus transport to the site

	as well as cycling and walking – do you have any comments about this element of the proposals?
4	Other changes have also been made, including removal of the relocated green waste (In-Vessel Composting) facility, and removal of the initially proposed bus-gate west of Middleton Stoney. Do you have any comments about the current proposals as now amended?
5	Our strategy for landscaping and earthworks on the Main Site includes boundary mounding/bunding and extensive tree planting and would deliver biodiversity net gain – do you have any comments about this element of the scheme?
General	Please give us your comments on the proposals not covered by the above questions.

5.2.26 The Stage 2 consultation period was held over a 6-week period from 23<sup>rd</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 which is beyond the 28-day minimum period. The majority of comments, particularly from consultees, came towards the end of the process. In addition, some comments were accepted after the close of the consultation in an effort by the Applicant to allow all comments from interested parties to be taken into consideration; this included comments by Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council.

### 5.3 Stage 2 Public Exhibitions, Webinars and Town/Parish Council Meetings

#### Public Exhibitions

5.3.1 Public exhibitions were held in venues with a relationship to the Main Site and highways works and which could accommodate large-scale exhibition boards. Three of the same venues as used during Stage 1 which are within close proximity to the Main Site and Highways Works – Heyford Park Chapel, Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall, and Middleton Stoney Village Hall – were also used for the Stage 2 Consultation process. An addition, and to reflect comments from OCC and CDC during the consultation on the draft SoCC, the works at M40 J9, and works at the A4095 / B4030 roundabout, an exhibition was also included closer to communities to the west of Bicester. The dates and venues for the consultation events proposed are set out below:

- Wednesday 1st October – Middleton Stoney Village Hall, OX25 4AN
- Friday 3rd October – Heyford Park Chapel, OX25 5TE
- Saturday 11th October – Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall, OX27 7PA
- Thursday 16th October – Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa, OX26 1TH

5.3.2 Similar to Stage 1, the exhibitions on a weekday ran from 1.30pm until 7.30pm, with the Saturday exhibition from 12noon until 5pm. The dates of the exhibitions were spread across several weeks to increase opportunities for interested people to fit attendance around work or holiday commitments.

- 5.3.3 Each exhibition event was staffed by members of the project team covering different disciplines such as town planning, rail, transport, infrastructure engineering, drainage, and landscape and visual aspects. The Applicant was also in attendance.
- 5.3.4 Attendees to the events were able to study and review the detail provided on the 14 Stage 2 exhibition boards (**Appendix 30**), as well as review an interactive digital model of the Main Site which provided key viewpoints of the OxSRFI scheme in stages and after the development and landscaping had been completed and matured after 15 years. Attendees could also speak to members of the project team and/or Applicant. Attendees were also invited to fill out comments forms and deposit them in a comments form box at the event, or respond to the comments form online.
- 5.3.5 The total number of people that attended the 4 public exhibition events was 184 (please note this number will include some individuals more than once who attended more than one event). Table 9 below shows the split of that total across each venue, and the number of comments forms submitted at each.

*Table 9: Stage 2 attendees and comments at exhibition events*

Venue and date	Number of attendees	Comments received
<b>Middleton Stoney Village Hall</b> on Wednesday 1st October (13:30 – 19:30)	50	3
<b>Heyford Park Chapel</b> on Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October (13:30 – 19:30)	42	3
<b>Ardley with Fewcott</b> on Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> October (12:00 – 17:00)	71	1
<b>Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa</b> on Thursday 16th October (13:30 – 19:30)	21	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>7</b>

- 5.3.6 As Table 10 demonstrates, the number of attendees who filled out comments forms at the events was relatively low. The number of attendees at all events was lower when compared with the Stage 1 consultation, with attendance at the fourth event at the Bicester Hotel which is further away from the Main Site, notably lower than the first three events which are all closer to the Main Site.

### Webinars

- 5.3.7 There were also two webinars on zoom during the Stage 2 consultation. The draft updated SoCC proposed only one webinar as the Applicant considered

that attendance was likely to be low, based on the Stage 1 webinar attendance, but further to discussion with OCC and CDC, an additional session was included which also reflects the approach to the Stage 1 consultation.

- 5.3.8 Each webinar sessions was hosted for one hour from 7-8pm on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025. During the session a 30 minute presentation was given by the Applicant and members of the project team involved in the draft ES. Questions pre-submitted or asked live during the webinar sessions were answered by the Applicant and their representatives as required. A full recording from each webinar session was posted on the project website for any visitors to view and watch in their own time.
- 5.3.9 The number of attendees from members of the public on each webinar was lower than the Stage 1 consultation, with 4 on the first webinar and 5 on the second webinar. One attendee contacted the Applicant prior to the first webinar to report an issue with the link for the event, but this was resolved and no further issues were reported.

#### Town/Parish Council Meetings

- 5.3.10 In addition to the above, during the consultation process the Applicant accepted invitations to present to two Town/Parish meetings – one for Bicester Town Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, and the other for Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> November – to present information about the OxSRFI scheme and answer questions from members in attendance.
- 5.3.11 It is noted that the Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council meeting was after the close of the Stage 2 consultation, however the meeting was arranged to suit availabilities of the Parish Council and representatives for the Applicant, and therefore the Applicant agreed to the meeting date.
- 5.3.12 The programme of the Bicester Town Council meeting only allowed a couple of minutes for questions and discussion after the presentation. However, the Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council meeting provided more time for questions from members and local residents in attendance. The meeting also helped to inform comments from the Parish Council which came after the close of the Stage 2 consultation.

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## 5.4 Direct Engagement with Local Residents

- 5.4.1 From relatively early in the Stage 2 consultation period, comments and queries were received by email. Although not in high volumes, some of these raised questions or sought clarifications to which it seemed a response was needed to assist the preparation of a final response.
- 5.4.2 In cases where it was clear that questions sent were not rhetorical, and where considered appropriate to do so, specific responses were prepared and sent. This process was overseen by project team members involved in organising and attending the consultation process who were receiving any emails sent via the website. Queries requiring technical input were shared with the relevant members of the wider project team before a response was sent back, usually by email.
- 5.4.3 As revealed by responses in the Section 47 Consultation Schedule (**Appendix 20**), some individuals and organisations submitted more than one set of comments or questions, including sometimes specific technical questions or requests for clarification, resulting in a dialogue exchanging explanations or further information, where relevant, to address the questions asked. This included correspondence as follows:
- North Oxfordshire Field Target Club (NOFTC) about the use of the woodland and within the Application Site and realignment of a bridleway to allow members of NOFTC to safely accommodate their shooting practice.
  - Ardley Rescue Kennels, off Ardley Road, and concerns about the impacts of the proposed Ardley Bypass and desire for further mitigation to minimise impacts.
  - Phone calls with members of the public concerned about impacts from the OxSRFI on local communities within Weston on the Green, and Fritwell.
- 5.4.4 Some comments received only verbally during the exhibition events have been considered further by the Applicant and project team. For example, during the Middleton Stoney exhibition, a local resident requested consideration be given for a verge to provide a footway on the south side of the B4030 from the signal junction to School Lane, covering a distance of approximately 80m. At the same event, another local resident who resides south of the B4030 in a property which was previously a restaurant, raised concerns that the property was not going to be assessed as a residential

receptor in the ES with resident impacts missed. On agreement with the local resident, members of the project team visited the property during the exhibition event to understand the nature of the property and its relationship with the OxSRFI scheme.

- 5.4.5 Comments which included fairly generic and commonly raised issues or queries were noted but not generally responded to individually – this applies to the majority of comments provided. However, the issues or queries raised during the consultation period were considered, and helped inform how some information has been articulated or presented in the application. Section 6.0 of this Report describes the issues raised most frequently and provides a response to them with reference to the submitted DCO Application details where relevant. Responses are also provided to each comment received in the Schedule at **Appendix 20** which includes summaries of emails received, as well as the comments forms completed online or in person at the Stage 2 exhibitions.
- 5.4.5 It is important to note that some local residents were consulted through more than one route or under more than one requirement of the Act. In particular, some local interested parties or parties with an interest in land who also live within the consultation area would have been consulted both under s47 (via the community awareness leaflets), as well as under s42 through consultation letters sent to them direct by post. Therefore, some consultees are technically within the s47 category and also Section 42 category because they are a “*person with an interest in the land*” (“PIL”) under s44.
- 5.4.6 While some of these consultees chose only to comment on legal or ownership issues associated with land included within the Order Limits, others also (or only) made comments about the OxSRFI scheme and submitted them to the Applicant. In addition, the Applicant erected site notices at various locations around the site because the ownership of some small parcels of land or interests within some land is unknown (please see **Appendix 31** and section 7.0 for further details).
- 5.4.7 A distinction between the various reasons or procedure which prompted responses about the OxSRFI scheme is, in a sense, unimportant, in terms of how the responses were received and treated by the Applicant. The key is that the Applicant considered all comments regardless of why or how that response was submitted. A summary of comments received about the proposals are recorded in the appended schedules (**Appendices 20 and 35**).

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5.4.8 However, PINS Advice Note 14 requires the Applicant to make it clear which category each responder is in. Therefore, the response schedules seek to make it clear where comments were received by local landowners and other parties who are relevant to both s44 (as parties with an interest in land) as well as s47 as local residents.

## 6.0 Stage 2 – Issues arising from Local Statutory Consultation and the Applicant’s responses

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 As referred to above, the Applicant notified a wide range of consultee groups and bodies, as well as raising awareness about the proposals direct with the communities surrounding and in the vicinity of the proposed development.

6.1.2 The statutory consultation process generated the following by way of Section 47 responses as set out in Table 10 below.

*Table 10: Stage 2 overview of responses received*

Source for each respondent	No. of responses
Public Exhibition Events (x5) – hard copy forms	7
Online comment forms	14
E-mails from residents and/or local businesses	62*
Post	0
Calls	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>93<sup>29</sup></b>

6.1.3 This section of the report provides a summary of the main themes and topics raised by Section 47 respondents to the Stage 2 consultation.

### 6.2 Resident/public response

6.2.1 The issues set out in this Section are drawn largely on the written responses received (comments forms or emails), but also on verbal discussions had with visitors to the exhibitions, not all of which resulted in comments being submitted in writing. These verbal as well as written points are considered relevant and useful in understanding, in general terms, those issues and themes most commonly raised through the consultation process.

6.2.2 The issues are set out in an approximate order to indicate the frequency with which they were referred to (with the most frequently cited issues listed towards the top of the list):

- Potential future cumulative effects with other proposed developments nearby, if all were approved;

<sup>29</sup> \*Please note – this can include multiple emails from the same correspondent who is still recorded in the Schedule in Appendix 20 as one respondent

- Traffic and transport issues (including from construction traffic) and proposed OxSRFI highways mitigation works;
- Concerns raised about environmental impacts including on local biodiversity, noise, local heritage assets;
- Potential impacts on current (and future) residents of Heyford Park;
- Change to rural landscape and character, including reference to general landscape and visual change).

### Potential future cumulative impacts

- 6.2.3 One of the most prominent themes from the comments received was that of questions and some concerns from local people regarding the potential for significant future impacts should a number of current proposals, including OxSRFI, be approved and delivered. In particular, the two main proposals noted are that of the proposed ‘new town’ at Heyford Park<sup>30</sup> (on the site of the former RAF Upper Heyford) and the Puy du Fou leisure/tourism proposal. Both of these schemes are in the vicinity of the OxSRFI scheme, albeit the Heyford Park proposals are considerably more proximate and share much of the OxSRFI Main Site’s western boundary. The Puy du Fou<sup>31</sup> scheme is on the opposite (eastern) side of the M40 motorway, close to the village of Bucknell, but would be primarily accessed via the Baynard’s Green roundabout which forms a wider part of the M40 J10 complex. In addition, two further emerging proposals (by Albion Land, and Tritax) for distribution warehousing schemes to the north of M40 J10 were still being considered by CDC at the time of the Stage 2 consultation<sup>32</sup>.
- 6.2.4 Notwithstanding the fact that the OxSRFI scheme has been in the public domain since 2021, many of the comments received during the Stage 2 consultation reflected the fact that the Heyford Park new town<sup>33</sup>, and Puy du Fou leisure park proposals were subject of live planning applications submitted to CDC during 2025. As at the date of submission of the DCO Application, these applications are still undetermined and the timescales for

<sup>30</sup> Heyford Park CDC reference: 25/02190/HYBRID

<sup>31</sup> Puy du Fou CDC reference: 25/02232/OUT

<sup>32</sup> The Albion Land (CDC references: 21/03266/F, 21/03267/OUT, and 21/03268/OUT) and Tritax (CDC reference: 22/01340/OUT) applications have been refused by CDC but with the appeal process underway for both schemes.

<sup>33</sup> Some new town references included both the new planning application referenced above in (30), but also included the potential for a ‘new town’ at Heyford Park as announced by government. However since the Stage 2 consultation, it should be noted that the government has more recently announced that Heyford Park will not be taken forward at this stage as one of the seven ‘new town’ proposals – see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/seven-new-towns-proposed-to-kickstart-housebuilding-push>

decisions, the outcomes of those decisions, and the timing of delivery of any of these schemes, if approved, has not yet been confirmed by CDC. It is known that both the Heyford Park and Puy du Fou schemes would have relatively long, phased construction periods (the new town would take well in excess of a decade to complete). However, the Stage 2 comments revealed local concerns regarding the potential for overlapping or simultaneous construction periods of more than one of these major projects and the potential for disruption and disturbance from construction traffic, but also potentially from construction activity itself.

- 6.2.5 Comments received also refer to other potential issues (beyond highways and construction), including for example the cumulative effects on local communities from any combined effects from lighting at these various sites once operational, and general comments about the cumulative landscape effects of development across all of these sites.

#### *Applicant Response*

- 6.2.6 The ES includes a consideration of the likely cumulative effects of the proposals with other known ‘committed’ and planned schemes which may share ‘receptors’ with the OxSRFI scheme<sup>34</sup> – in other words, other development proposals which could have an impact or effect (positive or negative) on some of the environmental features, communities, or locations as OxSRFI might. As required by the standard approach to EIA, these committed projects are defined as those with planning permission, or allocated for development in the local plan (or via some other formal public programme). The list of suitable sites for the cumulative assessment in the ES was agreed with CDC, and is presented in ‘matrices’ favoured by the Planning Inspectorate within ES Chapter 16.
- 6.2.7 ES Chapter 16 acknowledges that be some additional minor adverse effects from the cumulative schemes, such as light glow when fully operational. Some beneficial effects are also anticipated in terms of employment opportunities and local economic output. The ES Chapter concludes that no additional significant cumulative effects are anticipated from the cumulative list of schemes included within the assessment.
- 6.2.8 The Heyford Park ‘new town’ proposals and Puy du Fou scheme are not commitments – they are planning applications which remain yet to be determined, and neither are subject to a local plan allocation. As such, neither

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<sup>34</sup> In particular, please refer to ES Chapter 16 (Cumulative Effects)

has any formal status in planning terms. Indeed, at the time of writing, both are subject to outstanding objections from statutory consultees, and from the wider community, which are yet to be resolved. In this context, it is entirely consistent with best practice and the EIA regulations not to include them in the formal assessment. Indeed, given the ongoing and incomplete nature of the planning processes associated with both and the uncertainty about whether, and when, either might be approved, it would be complex and speculative to attempt to incorporate them.

- 6.2.9 However, leaving aside the various issues above, the questions raised about the potential future cumulative implications are not wholly unreasonable, and a natural focus of local interest (and some concern). The proximity of these two current proposals to the OxSRFI Main Site, and the additional presence of the further progressed – but still not committed – Albion Land and Tritax proposals close to M40 J10 – raise in particular potential questions about the cumulative impacts of traffic on a relatively small part of the local and strategic highways networks. The OxSRFI Transport Assessment (TA) (ES Appendix 3.1) includes modelling which includes a wide range of committed sites and developments, including the sites allocated and included in the Cherwell Local Plan, as well as a very long list of sites with planning permission across Cherwell District. The approach taken, and the list of sites included, was agreed by the TWG (referred to above). In addition, given the indications from CDC’s Planning Committee in the summer of 2025, the Albion Land site is included as a commitment, and the TA also includes consideration of the impacts should the Tritax scheme at M40 J10 also be approved.
- 6.2.10 In light of the legitimate interest expressed in understanding likely cumulative issues were one or both of these additional major proposals (Heyford Park and Puy du Fou) approved, the final ES, includes an additional narrative to provide judgements about the potential for cumulative effects of the OxSRFI scheme when considered alongside both the current Heyford Park and Puy du Fou proposals. Given their status, this has been a proportionate, largely non-technical element of the ES, but provides information in response to the issues raised by local residents.
- 6.2.11 This proportionate cumulative assessment in ES Chapter 16 acknowledges some additional adverse effects such as construction noise, if the schemes are being developed concurrently, or on viewpoints from a relatively limited number of properties. However, again, no additional adverse significant cumulative effects are anticipated.

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## Traffic and Transport

- 6.2.12 Traffic and transport impacts and issues was one of the most dominant themes within the responses, and as described above, there is some overlap with more general comments made about the potential for future cumulative effects from the OxSRFI scheme and other currently proposed schemes which could feasibly be approved over a similar timeframe to the determination of the OxSRFI project.
- 6.2.13 There were several frequently raised issues under the broad heading of traffic and transport. These are set out below.
- *Impacts on local roads*
- 6.2.14 This included some concern and objection regarding the potential for the proposed development to cause an increase in road traffic to the detriment of local communities nearby. For example, there were responses from residents in Middleton Stoney, Heyford Park, Ardley, Somerton and North Aston raising concerns about the potential for increased through-traffic or ‘rat-running’ as a consequence of the development proposed. In many cases comments raised about traffic were focused more on concerns about potential cumulative effects (of OxSRFI with other sites), than on the individual effects of the OxSRFI scheme alone. See above regarding other comments received on cumulative issues.
- 6.2.15 Many comments sought reassurance regarding HGV routeing (and preventing HGVs from using local, village roads) as a way to minimise impacts from the scheme and retain traffic on the main roads. Also linked to ‘rat-running’ concerns, some comments suggested traffic calming measures should be introduced in a number of villages. The proposed HGV routeing and enforcement measures, including use of physical measures and ANPR to prevent HGVs arriving and leaving the site south on the B430 was welcomed by some.
- 6.2.16 Another frequently cited reference was to the diversion of traffic onto the B430 corridor during very busy times (or closures) on the M40 and A34.
- *OxSRFI M40 J10 proposed improvements (the focus of Question 2 on the comments forms)*

6.2.17 Many responses acknowledged the severity of existing traffic problems in the area of M40 J10 of the M40, and some referred to previous attempts to improve M40 J10 and reluctance to see further disruption caused by additional construction works. However, as a result of the existing challenges (likely to get worse with additional development) some respondents were generally welcoming of the proposed improvements to M40 J10. Others suggested the proposed improvements to M40 J10 do not go far enough, and that a more comprehensive scheme should be proposed. For example, there were suggestions that a new motorway junction is required, or that the proposals should include additional new highways capacity and links beyond those currently proposed.

- *Proposed new OxSRFI Sustainable Transport initiatives (the focus of Question 3 on the comments forms)*

6.2.18 The Stage 2 consultation material included considerable new information about elements of the OxSRFI scheme relating to sustainable travel, including ‘active travel’ (cycling and walking), and public transport accessibility. This received a range of responses from local residents, with many acknowledging the need and opportunity to provide improvements in accessibility but expressing some scepticism as to whether they will be delivered effectively. Other comments expressed no confidence that bus access would be used by employees of the OxSRFI site, even if the bus routes and facilities are delivered as proposed.

#### *Applicant response*

6.2.19 The high level of local interest in highways and traffic issues was clear from the Stage 1 consultation process, and this remained through Stage 2. It is understandable for local communities to have such an interest, and common for local people to have a particular perspective on local transport issues and problems. It is also acknowledged that at the time of the Stage 2 consultation, the highways modelling work and assessment was ongoing and therefore, with final transport effects and conclusions not able to be set out within the consultation material.

6.2.20 Highways and traffic remain a key focus for the Applicant as part of the TWG which has helped steer and review work required to prepare the Transport Assessment (TA) (ES Appendix 3.1). The Stage 2 consultation material was informed by early outputs from the ongoing highways modelling using the OCC owned Bicester Transport Model (BTM) which has been updated and

verified to inform the TA (ES Appendix 3.1). The outputs of the modelling have determined that the OxSRFI scheme would deliver a betterment to the performance of M40 J10 over the situation expected without OxSRFI. The modelling also demonstrates that the proposed package of Highways Works – including the M40 J10 improvements, the Ardley Bypass, the Middleton Stoney Relief Road and M40 J9 improvements – are successful in attracting traffic back to the strategic road network and off of other, less suitable and local routes, therefore directly and positively responding to one of the issues raised by local people.

- 6.2.21 Some of the issues raised in response to the Stage 2 consultation are beyond the direct scope of the OxSRFI scheme – for example, concerns about the B430 traffic diversion route when the M40 and/or A34 are closed which is the preferred and official diversion route used by National Highways currently. However, many other issues are understood to be of direct relevance and importance to how the OxSRFI scheme would be delivered, including HGV routeing to ensure heavy traffic accessing the Main Site avoids local communities and local roads. A HGV Routeing Strategy (included within ES Appendix 3.1) is included within the DCO application and this sets out that ANPR cameras are proposed to help deliver restrict HGVs from travelling to and from the south of the Main Site on the B430.
- 6.2.22 In response to request by a local resident for a footway on the south side of the B4030 in Middleton Stoney (see paragraph 5.4.4 of this Report) – the project team assessed the width of the verge and noted a notable pinch point. On this basis the project team have concluded that it would be difficult to justify such a footway as it would remain narrow and also require the reprofiling the road.
- 6.2.23 The sustainable transport strategy evolved considerably between the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultation processes, including in response to direct input from the TWG. Although not taken into account in assessing ‘worst-case’ traffic impacts in the TA (ES Appendix 3.1), the strategy remains a key part of ensuring the OxSRFI Man Site is accessible by a range of modes of travel, as well as forming part of the wider ‘place-making’ and design agenda with walking and cycling forming part of the extensive green infrastructure as part of the proposals. Delivery of the measures proposed will be explicitly required through the DCO, which includes a requirement for a Sustainable Transport Working Group to help steer ongoing management and delivery of the strategy post-approval and as part of the delivery of the OxSRFI scheme. The Framework Travel Plan (ES Appendix 3.2) sets out how the Section 106 Agreement (Document 3.4) would make a significant Bus Service Contribution

over £3.2 million to improve two services between Bicester-OxSRFI-Heyford Park, and Banbury-OxSRFI.

### Local environmental impacts

6.2.24 The issues raised regarding a number a potential environmental effects cover a range of ES topics. A number of particular points emerge among the most frequently cited concerns, and these are summarised below:

- *Impact on wildlife/ecology*

6.2.25 General concerns or questions were raised about the impact of the development on local wildlife and ecology, partly linked to the loss of currently green, agricultural land (also see separate points below regarding landscape issues). Some highlighted concern about the impact of any increases in noise, light, and air pollution on flora and fauna.

6.2.26 Notwithstanding this, some comments acknowledged and expressed some interest in the proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity through the OxSRFI scheme.

- *Increased local noise, air quality and light pollution*

6.2.27 Comments made about increased ‘pollution’ generally included remarks about at least two if not all three of these issues. Usually tied to broader points about development of currently countryside (agricultural), where raised these were general concerns expressed about the potential adverse effects on nearby villages (and local wildlife – see above) of increases in noise and lighting associated with the potential for ‘24 hour’ operations on the OxSRFI site, and worsening air quality as a result of additional traffic.

### *Applicant response*

6.2.28 The Ecology Chapter (ES Chapter 6) sets out the results and findings following an extensive range of surveys of all relevant species undertaken over several years. ES Chapter 6 sets out that in general terms, the OxSRFI Application Site contains few notable species or habitats and is in many ways typical for agricultural land. While this largely limits the range of species and habitats found, the site is known to contain a number of species of interest, and the proposals include considerable design and mitigation measures to limit harm and deliver benefits. This includes a number of retained areas protected from

built development, as well as provision of extensive new planting and other new habitats to enable delivery of ecological mitigation and a gain in biodiversity. This includes measures specifically targeted at farmland birds, as well as other protected species known to be present, or to make use of, areas of the Application Site.

- 6.2.29 The Noise and Vibration (ES Chapter 5) and Air Quality and Odour (ES Chapter 4) Chapter have been informed by the completion of the transport modelling post the Stage 2 consultation.
- 6.2.30 In terms of noise, during the construction phase the ES Chapter sets out that no significant adverse effects are predicted from the OxSRFI scheme as result of mitigation measures being employed within the CEMP (ES Appendix 2.3). During the operational phase no significant adverse effects are predicted with respect of railway noise or vibration from additional trains travelling on the Chiltern Main Line, operational noise from the Main Site, and daytime road traffic noise. No significant adverse effects are also predicted from night-time road traffic noise at all receptors, with the exception of some properties in western Bicester which are adjacent to the B4030, on the north. Mitigation measures to limit noise levels in bedrooms at night in these properties will be offered through the S106 Agreement for these properties.
- 6.2.31 Further to comments during the consultation, the Noise and Vibration (ES Chapter 5) Chapter was updated to include receptors within Fritwell to assess impacts on residents. The ES Chapter confirms no significant effects in terms of noise levels during the construction and operational phases of development.
- 6.2.32 With regards to Air Quality and Odour, the Chapter explains that odour from the proposed landfill works during the construction phase can be mitigated through an Odour Management Plan which will be secured through the DCO requirement for phase specific CEMPs. There are no significant adverse effects predicted on air quality during the operational phase of the OxSRFI scheme.
- 6.2.33 The Lighting Chapter (ES Chapter 8) includes details of the implementation of the lighting strategy ES Appendix 8.1, and as a result, there will not be any significant adverse effects of lighting on the identified receptors in the area. The Chapter does acknowledge that there will be an increase in the lighting baseline and an increase in the visibility of lighting in the landscape, however this will not alter the environmental zone of the area which will remain as is assessed.

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### Change to rural landscape and character

- 6.2.34 Impacts on the local landscape and local character was a general concern raised through comments received. In some cases, this included specific comments that the proposed mitigation measures (of mounding and planting) would be insufficient to minimise the likely effects on the landscape.
- 6.2.35 Such comments often included reference to concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land as a result of the proposed development, and a consequential change to the character of the site and immediate surrounding area. Related issues raised in comments refer to a perceived loss of access to the countryside from nearby communities.
- 6.2.36 As above, some of the comments made about landscape and local character change were made with reference to other sites either already approved or allocated, or new (speculative) schemes currently subject to live planning applications in the vicinity of the OxSRFI Main Site, including significant new development proposed at Heyford Park and other distribution warehousing sites close to M40 J10.

### *Applicant response*

- 6.2.37 The tone and nature of many of the comments received suggest an ‘in principle’ set of concerns about the loss of current countryside to development and to broader change in the wider local context. The focus of comments was largely on wider landscape change as opposed to specific concerns about visual effects from specific viewpoints or properties, which the Applicant considers reflective of the success of the proposed mitigation (earthworks and landscaping) which will limit views to only relatively limited and filtered views of new buildings once in place. However, the Applicant accepts there will inevitably be landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, and is continuing to review and consider the proposed mitigation to ensure those effects are minimised.
- 6.2.38 In relation to the local resident who during the Middleton Stoney exhibition raised concerns about their residential property south of the B4030 in Middleton Stoney (see paragraph 5.4.4 of this Report) – following consideration of this residential receptor, changes were made to the proposed landscaping and earthworks on the western edge of the Middleton Stoney Relief Road to increase screening, avoiding direct views of the new road, and minimising the likely visual effects. Direct consideration by wider ES team also

considered noise effects and confirmed the changes also ensured significant adverse effects will be avoided.

- 6.2.39 In addition to comments about impacts on the Ardley Rescue Kennels, the bunding has been slightly extended in this locality to help strengthen the mitigation and reduce visibility from headlights on this property.
- 6.2.40 With regards to the loss of agricultural land, ES Chapter 14 (Soil Resources and Agricultural Land) acknowledges a significant impact in respect of policy, however it also notes that in terms of ‘best and most versatile’ (BMV) land, only a small proportion of total OxSRFI Application Site – 37.7 ha / 8% - is classed as BMV. This outcome aligns with point 5.189 of the NPS, which states that “*applicants should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality*”.
- 6.2.41 The Applicant notes that a small number of comments refer to concerns about impact of the proposals under the misunderstanding that the site is in the Green Belt – it is not.

#### Potential future impacts on Heyford Park

- 6.2.42 Heyford Park sits immediately adjacent to (to the west of) the OxSRFI Main Site. A number of almost identical responses were received from some residents of Heyford Park raising issues regarding potential effects on current residents, but also explicitly on potential future residents. This second category of issue was raised in the context of already approved future phases of development, as well as recently proposed – but not determined - additional residential led ‘new town’ development on the former Upper Heyford Airfield<sup>35</sup>.
- 6.2.43 These responses were apparently coordinated via the Heyford Park Community Action Group (see Section 7.0 for further information) and so follow a very similar format and content, and refer to a number of issues which in summary are:
- Loss of greenspace and open countryside, reducing access to the countryside with potential impacts on worsening mental health;

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<sup>35</sup> Heyford Park CDC reference: 25/02190/HYBRID - and see also recent announcement by government that Heyford Park will not be taken forward at this stage as one of the seven ‘new town’ proposals – see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/seven-new-towns-proposed-to-kickstart-housebuilding-push>

- Impact on the historic environment of the former RAF Upper Heyford base which is a conservation area – a unique and historical landscape will be damaged;
- Adverse impacts from a long construction period if OxSRFI is approved – noise, air pollution and traffic;
- Impacts on local transport links from new employees at OxSRFI, and concerns that OxSRFI would prevent future plans for a passenger station on the site of the former Ardley station to the north which is considered needed for Heyford Park residents;
- Environmental impacts of the OxSRFI scheme, namely on biodiversity, air quality, noise and light pollution;
- Cumulative impacts with numerous other sites including Heyford Park, plus Puy du Fou and other proposed warehousing schemes.

6.2.44 These comments are concluded with an overall view that concerns about these issues are not outweighed by the benefits of the OxSRFI scheme.

#### *Applicant response*

6.2.45 The Applicant is aware of the importance of ensuring an appropriate and acceptable relationship between the OxSRFI scheme and neighbouring communities. Indeed, through the proposed significant improvements to local highways as well as cycling and walking routes, and further investment in bus accessibility, it is considered there are likely to be significant benefits to many local residents in existing communities nearby. However, as referred to above in response to similar issues raised, the Applicant remains focused on seeking to minimise as far as possible any likely residual effects, including with regard to issues such as noise, and lighting effects.

6.2.46 The Applicant has been in dialogue with Historic England (and CDC conservation officers) regarding the relationship between OxSRFI and the heritage assets on the former Upper Heyford Airfield (an important example of a Cold War airbase in Europe)<sup>36</sup>. As a result of this dialogue, the Applicant has adapted some of the proposed mitigation in direct response to the preferences and advice of these consultees to ensure minimised, ‘less than substantial’ harm to any heritage assets or their setting.

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<sup>36</sup> Please see ES Chapter 10 (Heritage: built and archaeology) for further details on the dialogue with Historic England and CDC Conservation Officers

- 6.2.47 It is the Applicant's view that there are potentially significant synergies between the OxSRFI scheme and major residential led growth adjacent at Heyford Park and as a result the Applicant has engaged with Dorchester Living since early in the development of the proposed development on a range of issues including landscaping, highways, ecology and residential amenity (see **Appendix 5** for further details). Following comments received from Dorchester Living (the promoter of the Heyford Park development) and as part of direct dialogue by the Applicant with Dorchester Living, changes were made to help minimise any likely residual adverse effects. Since the Stage 2 consultation the proposed development parameters (as set out on the Parameters Plan, Document 2.5) have been amended on the south-western corner of the OxSRFI Main Site adjacent to both existing consented, and potential future phases of development within Heyford Park. Specifically, changes were made to increase the bund heights and widths, with the maximum building heights also reduced in this part of the Proposed Development (refer to ES Chapter 2 (Description of Development and Alternatives), and the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5) for further details).
- 6.2.48 The potential interest in a future new passenger railway station as part of the Heyford Park 'new town' is understood by the Applicant. Indeed it is understood to form an important part of the proposed accessibility strategy for the proposed new town. It is also an ambition set out in the OCC 'OxRail 2040' Rail Strategy. At the time of writing, a location (as well as funding, or rail business case) for any new Station remains to be confirmed, albeit there are expectations that it may be located on the site of the former Ardley Station. However, notwithstanding the extensive uncertainty associated with this, the Applicant has considered the potential for a new Station nearby, and undertaken assessment work which confirms the OxSRFI scheme would not prejudice delivery should it be located on the site of the former Ardley Station. Indeed, the OxSRFI scheme would deliver new infrastructure which could enable a station in that location if the rail case and funding were secured by others<sup>37</sup>.
- 6.2.49 It is considered that the issues raised by some residents of Heyford Park raise interesting contradictions given the proposals for a major 'new town' on the site of the former Upper Heyford Airfield, particularly regarding concerns regarding heritage and landscape and visual issues. The new town

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<sup>37</sup> Please refer to Appendix 3 (Passenger Rail Station Note – Document 5.4C) of the Planning Statement (Document 5.4) and Rail Report (Document 7.2A) for further information.

development scheme<sup>38</sup> would, if approved, see much of the existing conservation area (and setting of listed buildings, and scheduled monuments) considerably changed by around 9,000, but potentially up to 13,000, new homes plus other commercial and town centre uses. The new town would have a much more direct relationship with heritage assets than the OxSRFI scheme, and include buildings and wind turbines significantly taller (around 100m tall) than the proposed OxSRFI warehouses.

- 6.2.50 Similarly, the OxSRFI construction period is anticipated to be up to 7 years from start to completion (with later phases of that period focused on specific building plots within the site). A new town of 9,000 (or 13,000) new homes would see construction over a considerably longer period (potentially decades), with associated construction traffic and noise throughout that period.
- 6.2.51 As above, although dialogue with local consultees and residents often directly links the potential for a new passenger station to the potential development of the Heyford Park ‘new town’, the new town planning application does not make any provision for a new rail station.
- 6.2.52 The issue of cumulative impacts is noted, and referred to above – ES Chapter 16 (Cumulative Effects) includes a consideration not only of the approved ‘committed’ developments, but in light of dialogue with consultees, also consider potential future (but currently not confirmed or approved) schemes including Heyford Park. It is anticipated that other live applications, including Heyford Park, will similarly be asked to provide an appropriate consideration and assessment of cumulative effects with other known or potential major schemes.

#### Other issues raised

- 6.2.53 Various other comments were raised within the responses, albeit less frequently than the issues set out above, including the following:
- Positivity/support for the proposed rail freight terminal, recognising the importance of enabling a shift of freight from road (HGVs) to rail and understanding the OxSRFI Main Site’s locational credentials in relation to road and rail access.

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<sup>38</sup> Heyford Park CDC reference: 25/02190/HYBRID

- Assurances sought regarding delivery of the rail freight terminal as opposed to only delivering warehousing.
- Acknowledgement of the significant investment in local highways infrastructure as part of the OxSRFI proposals (even if accompanied by the view that more may be required in the future if all potential development schemes are approved).
- Comments and correspondence from the North Oxfordshire Field Target Club (NOFTC) about the impacts of the OxSRFI scheme on their activity.

### *Applicant response*

- 6.2.54 In response to the above points – the Applicant acknowledges the positive support relating to modal shift the OxSRFI scheme will deliver, the extent of highways works proposed as part of the Proposed Development, and also the opportunities for road and rail access which the OxSRFI Main Site provides.
- 6.2.55 The delivery of the rail terminal is secured through the DCO which is a statutory instrument determined by the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 6.2.56 In relation to comments and a request by NOFTC, the Applicant has agreed to the continued use of the woodland and movement of a nearby bridleway north-west of the OxSRFI Main Site to accommodate their existing activities.

## **7.0 Stage 2 – Section 42 (Duty to Consult), including Applicant’s responses to key issues raised**

### **7.1 Section 42 Consultation**

7.1.1 This section provides an overview of the formal consultation required by Section 42 of the Act. That section refers to consultation with a range of bodies, organisations and interested parties across a wide range of categories, being

- a. those persons prescribed under section 42 and set out in Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (S41(1)(a));
- b. the local authorities falling within the categories listed in section 43 (S42(1)(b)); and
- c. persons with an interest in the land under one of the categories listed in section 44) (S42(1)(d)).

7.1.2 Details of those consulted pursuant to section 42 under the categories explained at (a) and (b) above are attached at **Appendix 33**. The list of those consulted under s44 is not included due to Data Protection requirements. The identity of the s44 parties was obtained through an extensive land referencing exercise which included the distribution of questionnaires to all those with a known interest in land. As referred to in paragraph 7.1.18, where interests were not known, site notices were erected.

7.1.3 The Applicant also consulted a number of additional specific parties at its discretion, in addition to the statutory requirements. This list is also attached at **Appendix 33**.

7.1.4 An example of the s42 letter sent to all statutory consultees is at **Appendix 33**. The Applicant also erected a number of site notices in respect of small parcels of land, the ownership of which, or interests within which, is unknown. An example site notice together with a list and a plan of where notices were posted is contained at **Appendix 31**.

7.1.5 Local authorities are an important category of s42 consultee, and as required by s43 of the Planning Act, the tables below confirm the ‘status’ of local authorities in the area:

*Table 11: Status of Local and County Authorities*

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Category Status</b>
Cherwell District Council	'B' Authority
Oxford City Council	'A' Authority
Vale of White Horse District Council	'A' Authority
West Oxfordshire District Council	'A' Authority
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	'A' Authority
South Oxfordshire District Council	'A' Authority
West Northamptonshire Council	'A' Authority
Buckinghamshire Council	'A' Authority
Oxfordshire County Council	'C' Authority
Gloucestershire County Council	'D' Authority
Warwickshire County Council	'D' Authority
Wokingham Borough Council	'D' Authority
Reading Borough Council	'D' Authority
West Berkshire Council	'D' Authority
Wiltshire Council	'D' Authority
Swindon Borough Council	'D' Authority

## 7.2 Section 46 (duty to notify the planning inspectorate)

- 7.2.1 The Applicant wrote to the Planning Inspectorate on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 to notify them of the proposed application, pursuant to s 46 of the Act, and of the intention to begin the s42 consultation. The letter included copies of the various s42 consultation letters and the s47 and s48 press notices, and informed the Planning Inspectorate of the consultation period and deadline for responses.
- 7.2.2 The s46 letter sent to the Planning Inspectorate is attached at **Appendix 34**. The Planning Inspectorate confirmed receipt of the notification on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025.

## 7.3 Section 42 Engagement and Process

### Engagement up to and including the Stage 2 consultation

- 7.3.1 This section below describes the s42 process and explains some of the engagement and discussions with relevant authorities and bodies in relation to the s42 process.

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*Network Rail:*

- 7.3.2 Engagement with Network Rail has been vital to the development of the OxSRFI scheme, with the only break in formal dialogue being during the ‘pause’ in the scheme. There has been dialogue and joint working with Network Rail, with technical studies and assessments funded by the Applicant to aid a common understanding of the relevant issues associated with connectivity to the rail network and proposed OxSRFI track layout, gauging and timetabling studies, and wider capacity issues. Regular meetings have been held with key individuals and teams at Network Rail over an extended period which began before Stage 1, and was ongoing up to and after the Stage 2 consultation. Engagement has been positive and extensive and an Agreed Position Statement between the Applicant and Network Rail, covering the key rail elements of the scheme, was made available during the Stage 2 consultation. The list of meetings is included within **Appendix 5**.

*Transport Working Group:*

- 7.3.3 Throughout the public ‘pause’ on the scheme, highways assessment work continued by the Applicant and project team to help ensure that the highway arrangements were appropriate. When the scheme restarted in September 2024, given the nature of the proposals, the views and advice of members of the TWG (see **Appendix 7**) which include National Highways and OCC were important and engagement with both was sought to inform the approach taken to the Traffic Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1). It should also be noted that West Northamptonshire Council have continued to be invited to the TWG and sent the meeting notes, but they have not engaged with the TWG or Applicant separately. However, West Northamptonshire Council did send a response to the Stage 2 consultation in February 2026, which was based on the Stage 2 consultation material and not any updated documentation since that time.
- 7.3.4 In preparation for the Stage 2 consultation, the TWG has informed the modelling work undertaken for the transport assessment, as well as the options for M40 J10 and associated junctions (Padbury Junction and Baynard’s Green), the cumulative implications from other proposed developments in the area (i.e., the Albion Land, Tritax, Puy du Fou and Heyford Park schemes), the HGV routing strategy and the improvement works for M40 J9. In addition, the footway/cycleway/bridleway improvements included within the scheme were also considered and discussed.
- 7.3.5 One issue discussed prior to the Stage 2 consultation which influenced the timing of modelling work being available was the approach to ‘cumulative’

assessment – in summer 2025, members of the TWG advised they were keen to see the Transport Assessment include emerging but non-consented (not ‘committed’) developments being considered<sup>39</sup> – this involved further work to include the Albion Land application and a sensitivity test for the Tritax application.

- 7.3.6 Further to the above, it is acknowledged that at the time of the Stage 2 consultation the highways modelling work was not yet completed and therefore the draft ES Chapter 3 (Transport) presented within the Stage 2 consultation did not present the final effects and conclusions on transport. However, given the ongoing engagement with the TWG which continued meeting during and after the Stage 2 consultation period, the progress and information presented as part of the consultation was well understood by National Highways and OCC.

*Local Authorities – CDC and OCC:*

- 7.3.7 There has also been significant engagement jointly with officers at OCC and CDC, including regular meetings, covering the OxSRFI proposals and a range of environmental topics prior to the submission of the DCO application. Prior to the Stage 2 consultation, these meetings were used to help inform the preparation of the Stage 2 consultation material. For example, in preparation for the Stage 2 consultation, OCC raised the potential for buried palaeontological features within the OxSRFI Main Site given its proximity to Ardley Trackways SSSI. Following additional assessment by the project team (see ES Chapter 11 (Ground) and in particular ES Appendix 11.10) and dialogue with officers, the DCO was amended to include a ‘watching brief’ across relevant areas of the main site as mitigation during the construction phase of the OxSRFI scheme.
- 7.3.8 In addition to meetings and correspondence with officers, a meeting was held with Cllr Gareth Epps and Cllr Will Boucher-Giles in July 2025 to inform and discuss the OxSRFI proposals and upcoming Stage 2 consultation process. Cllr Nigel Simpson and Cllr John Broad also attended consultation events and discussed the OxSRFI scheme with the Applicant and project team.

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<sup>39</sup> In the summer of 2025 neither the Albion Land or Tritax applications had been scheduled for planning committee – Albion Land CDC application references: 21/03266/F, 21/03267/OUT, 21/03268/OUT, and Tritax CDC application reference: 22/01340/OUT

*Other bodies and organisations:*

7.3.9 Dialogue and contact with other bodies such as the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England has been underway for some time. The ES Scoping process was a relatively early process which helped secure some input and provide relevant contact names at key bodies, some of which were followed up by the Applicant’s consultant team with further engagement in preparation for both the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultations. Later contact or meetings focused on more technical work associated with preparation of the EIA and other technical assessments. This included dialogue with:

- Environment Agency – in relation to hydraulic modelling to inform the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy work, as well as discussions relating to the approach and requirements for reprofiling of the landfill.
- Thames Water – regarding the foul water drainage connection to Bicester, and also implications and the relationship of the OxSRFI proposals with the Ardley Reservoir and Water Pumping Station.
- Natural England – regarding the surveys of the OxSRFI Main Site, interactions with, or impacts on, the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, and measures and licenses for protected species.
- Historic England – concerning the heritage impacts on the former Upper Heyford Airbase and opportunities for measures to help preserve the historic context of the former runway.
- Anglian Water – correspondence to explore alternative options to Thames Water for foul drainage connections into Ardley.
- Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council and Bicester Town Council – as noted in paragraphs 5.3.10 to 5.3.12 of this Report, the Applicant and a members of the project team were invited to attend a Town and Parish Council meeting for each authority. Each meeting involved a presentation on the OxSRFI and an opportunity for questions from members.

- Puy du Fou – discussions have been held with the promoters, planning consultants and transport consultants of the Puy du Fou planning application<sup>40</sup>. This engagement was held to discuss primarily to discuss transport implications with modelling information discussed and some details shared in relation to both parties understanding potential highways impacts from cumulative developments in the area of M40 J10.
- 7.3.10 There has also been engagement with local Members of Parliament to inform them of the proposals and explain the benefits which could be delivered by the scheme. This includes meetings with Calum Miller MP (Bicester and Woodstock) and Sean Woodcock (Banbury) in July 2025, and a meeting with a member of staff for Rachel Taylor MP (North Warwickshire and Bedford) in September 2025. A further meeting with Calum Miller MP was held in March 2026.
- 7.3.11 Although not referenced in the s42 list, other relevant parties were also consulted and engaged with during the Stage 2 consultation process. This includes:
- Dorchester Living – adjacent landowners of the former Upper Heyford Airbase and promoters of the residential-led development of the site and potential emerging new town proposals. There has been meetings and correspondence since prior to the Stage 1 consultation and their comments have been taken into account throughout the development of the OxSRFI proposals.
  - Bicester Bike Users Group (BBUG) – further to initial correspondence to the Stage 2 consultation, a teams meeting was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 with relevant members of the project team (i.e., transport, infrastructure and planning) to discuss concerns by BBUG in terms of connectivity on cycleway and bridleways in the vicinity of the OxSRFI Main Site.

#### Section 42 process

- 7.3.12 Section 42 consultation with statutory bodies and other parties began formally on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025. The letter was sent on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 which clearly explained that the consultation began on 23<sup>rd</sup>. As required by s48 of the Act and regulation 4 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications:

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<sup>40</sup> CDC reference: 25/02232/OUT

Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009, press notices were placed in national and local papers – see section 6.3 below for details.<sup>41</sup> A copy of the press notice was enclosed with the s42 letter.

7.3.13 Letters were sent to around 96 consultees (referred to as the “Section 42 Consultees” for ease of reference) with a list contained in **Appendix 32** of this report. This includes consultees in the following broad categories:

- Government agencies and departments, including statutory consultees such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, and others;
- National transport agencies and bodies such as National Highways, Network Rail, and HS2 Ltd;
- Local and County authorities – also see Table 10 above;
- Parish Councils;
- Enterprise Oxfordshire;
- Landowners and others with an interest in the land;
- Utility providers and network operators;
- ‘Prescribed Persons’ which includes a range of bodies including Police and Crime Commissioners, Health (NHS) bodies, and Emergency Services;

7.3.14 The Applicant’s approach to the list of prescribed consultees set out in Schedule 1 of Regulations 2009<sup>42</sup>, has been a targeted one, specifically with regard to the “relevant statutory undertakers” listed under those regulations. Table 2 of PINS Advice Note 33 explains that relevant public gas transporters and relevant electricity licence holders are deemed statutory undertakers. The footnotes to these entries provide a link to Ofgem’s published lists of electricity and gas licence holders. The footnote states that licences are not always restricted to a geographic area and states that PINS will take a precautionary approach and consult all licence holders whose licence cover Great Britain. The Applicant took the approach of reviewing the very long list of bodies and seeking to rule out those where the licence was limited geographically or where it appeared that the entity would not be relevant to OxSRFI (such as “operator of offshore wind farms”). However, where it was not possible to discount an entity, they were included in the consultation list on a precautionary basis. Some responses have been received from such bodies

<sup>41</sup> Please see Section 9 which explains that one notice was published in the local press and not two, as is required by Regulation 4(2)(a)

<sup>42</sup> Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

confirming they do not have an interest, and those bodies were removed from the consultation list for the focussed consultation.

- 7.3.15 There were also site notices erected in 27 locations around the Order limits. These notices specifically related to unknown interests and were addressed to those who might have an interest in the specific area of land to which that notice related. There were plans attached to each notice identifying the parcel of land in which there was an interest which the Applicant had been unable to ascertain. Example notices are attached at **Appendix 31** together with a list and plan showing the location of the relevant notices.
- 7.3.17 All consultees were guided to the project website to review and comment on the updated draft Environmental Statement (ES) Chapters and other information which included draft DCO documentation and plans.

#### The material consulted upon

- 7.3.18 The letters sent to the s42 Consultees included a copy of the s48 Notice. It also contained a summary description of development, and provided a link to the project website where consultees were able to view the draft technical documentation, and also the 'Briefing Document' (summary of the proposals) and other draft DCO documents and plans.
- 7.3.19 The formal s42 consultation process formed a natural continuation of already well-established and ongoing dialogue and engagement with key consultees. For example, with regard to transport and highways issues where there have been regular (approximately monthly) meetings of the project TWG since September 2020.

#### Consultation Method

- 7.3.20 To formally start the s42 consultation process letters were sent on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 to relevant consultees across the range of categories referred to above. The letter advised that the statutory consultation period would commence on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 with the deadline for responses being 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 (being longer than the consultation period required under the Act).
- 7.3.21 The following s47 and s48 Notices were placed in the national and local publications as set out in Table 11 below:

*Table 11: Publication of Section 47 and 48 Notices*

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Type of Notice</b>	<b>Date of Notice</b>
Oxford Mail	Section 47	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Bicester Advertiser	Section 47	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Oxford Mail	Section 48	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Bicester Advertiser	Section 48	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
The Guardian	Section 48	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
London Gazette	Section 48	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2025

7.3.22 The site notices in respect of the unknown interests were erected on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025.

Ongoing engagement following the close of the Stage 2 consultation

7.3.23 Following the close of the Stage 2 consultation there has been significant engagement with Network Rail, the local authorities and highways authorities, as well as the prescribed and other bodies/organisations as set out in **Appendix 5**.

*Network Rail:*

7.3.24 Engagement with Network Rail has continued post the Stage 2 consultation with several meetings involving the Applicant and relevant project team consultants with members of the Network Rail freight team and sponsors. In particular, progress has been made in relation to the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) which is being prepared to demonstrate the positive dialogue relating to the deliverability of the OxSRFI scheme in this location on the Chiltern Main Line.

*Transport Working Group:*

7.3.25 Engagement with the TWG continued post the Stage 2 consultation on the basis that the modelling and assessment work has remained ongoing. As a result of the further work there has been discussions post-Stage 2 relating to the Barley Mow roundabout on the A43 and potential impacts at that junction. In addition, discussions about the A4095 / B4030 roundabout continued with the impacts and mitigation further understood. Discussions about the footway/cycleway/bridleway improvements proposed as part of the OxSRFI also continued after the Stage 2 consultation closed.

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*Local Authorities – CDC and OCC:*

- 7.3.26 Significant joint engagement with OCC and CDC has continued since the close of the Stage 2 consultation. This has included continuing the regular joint meetings which have been used to review comments by OCC and CDC to the Stage 2 consultation. One issue discussed concerns the approach the ES should take to the cumulative assessment with the Puy du Fou and Heyford Park applications, and how the other planning applications in the area are in turn approaching their own cumulative assessments.
- 7.3.27 Where appropriate, additional meetings with specific officers have been held to review the Stage 2 comments in further detail with the relevant technical consultants and officers in attendance. This has included correspondence and meetings with:
- The Environmental Health Officer (EHO) – to discuss noise methodology and impacts, as well as setting out the study area for the air quality assessment following completion of the highways modelling work.
  - Minerals and Waste Officers – discussions relating to concerns raised in relation to the loss of the IVC Facility and minerals safeguarding.
  - Health officers – discussions about the health impact assessment and footway/cycleway connectivity.
  - Landscape and visual officers alongside their external consultants (LUC) – detailed discussions about the assessment work presented in the draft ES Chapter 7 (Landscape and Visual Appraisal) with points raised about the methodology and assessment undertaken, which will be addressed in the final ES Chapter.
- 7.3.28 The local authorities have been provided with a draft Equality Impact Assessment (Document 7.4) which did form part of the Stage 2 consultation, in order for them to have an early review. No comments have been provided at the time of writing.
- 7.3.29 Engagement has occurred in relation to emerging proposals for a new passenger station at Ardley, and its implications and relevance to the area and the proposed ‘new town’ at Heyford Park. Early Discussions were held about the potential proposals for the new station prior to the Stage 2 consultation rail, and these have continued after the close of the consultation. In view of this dialogue, the Applicant submitted a comprehensive response to the OxRAIL 2040 consultation process in January 2026.

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*Other bodies and organisations:*

7.3.30 Dialogue and engagement following the Stage 2 consultation has continued with several other bodies and organisations relating to finalising the OxSRFI scheme. This has included the following:

- Environment Agency – significant dialogue has taken place with the Applicant working under a Discretionary Advisory Service (DAS) arrangement with the Environment Agency. The Applicant has engaged in technical discussions regarding the permitting (regulatory) regime and engineering approach to works required in part of the existing Ardley Landfill site. A series of technical notes and proposals have been shared and discussed to establish the approach to the ‘reprofiling’ of Cells A and B within the landfill area, and the required amendments to the existing permit.
- Valencia – relating to the above issue of reprofiling the landfill, dialogue has been sought regarding an agreed approach to access and the rights required. Numerous meetings and requests for dialogue have been made.
- Natural England – continued dialogue and meeting in relation to the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, and measures and licenses for protected species.
- Dorchester Living – continued engagement as an adjacent landowner. Engagement, with a particular focus on landscaping matters and the impacts from the OxSRFI scheme on potential residents within the Heyford Park site.
- Anglian Water – continued discussions about the potential for a foul drainage connection into Ardley.
- Viridor – engagement in relation to the Order limits being extended to include land within the landfill for the OxSRFI scheme, with a letter of support provided on this matter (see **Appendix 38**).

7.3.29 As the detail for the OxSRFI scheme has been progressed to the stage that appropriate responses can be given, Buckinghamshire County Council have,

for example, also been provided with comments and detail in response to Stage 2 comments, and in advance of the DCO submission.

## 7.4 Responses Received

- 7.4.1 As shown in the s42 Consultation Summary Schedule (**Appendix 35**), the proportion of s42 consultees who provided responses either within the consultation period, or soon afterwards, is relatively limited. 37 responses were received in total from the s42 consultation process (including those on the list and other bodies, and including the late response from West Northamptonshire Council). Some consultees, such as Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council did provide several comments relating to setting up a meeting with the Applicant and members, but their formal comments are only counted as one consultee. The same approach was taken for CDC who asked some early queries prior to their formal joint response with OCC.
- 7.4.2 Many of the responses from national consultees or those based further afield who were legitimately consulted due to the requirements of the regulations but either chose not to respond at all, or provided brief confirmations that they had no comments to make.
- 7.4.3 The responses received are from the following consultees in Table 12 below (see **Appendix 35** for further details):

*Table 12: Consultees who provided comments to the Stage 2 consultation*

<b>Name of Consultee</b>	<b>Date of Response</b>	<b>Status of Consultee</b>
Anglian Water	04/11/2025	Section 42
Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council	11/11/2025	Section 42
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire (BBOWT) Wildlife Trust	03/11/2025	Section 42
Bicester Bike Users Group (BBUG)	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Biffa Waste Services	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Buckinghamshire County Council	04/11/2025	Section 42
Bucknell Parish Council	04/11/2025	Section 42
Calum Miller MP (Liberal Democrat – Bicester & Woodstock)	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Cherwell District Council & Oxfordshire County Council (joint response), includes separate comments from LUC (the appointed landscape and visual consultant for the local authorities) and comments from CDC's EHO	04/11/2025	Section 43 (Oxfordshire also a Section 42 consultee as the Local Highways Authority)
Chiltern Railways	04/11/2025	Section 42

Name of Consultee	Date of Response	Status of Consultee
Councillor Will Boucher-Giles (Liberal Democrat – Oxfordshire County Council, Chesterton & Launton)	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Councillor Gareth Epps (Liberal Democrat – Oxfordshire County Council, Deddington) Deddington Parish Council	03/11/2025	Other consultee
England’s Economic Heartland	05/11/2025	Other consultee
Dorchester Living (comments by Pegasus Group on their behalf)	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Environment Agency	04/11/2025	Section 42
Euro Garages Ltd	05/11/2025	Other consultee
Evenly Parish Council	28/10/2025	Other consultee
Gloucestershire County Council	23/10/2025	Section 43
Heyford Park Community Action Group	04/11/2025	Other consultee
Historic England	03/11/2025	Section 42
Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum <sup>43</sup>	03/11/2025	Section 42
Middleton Stoney Parish Council	01/11/2025	Section 42
Ministry of Defence	08/12/2025	Section 42
National Highways	04/11/2025	Section 42
Natural England	04/11/2025	Section 42
Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society	24/11/2025	Other consultee
Somerton Parish Council	31/10/2025	Section 42
South Oxfordshire District Council	02/10/2025	Section 43
Stratford on Avon District Council	25/09/2025	Section 43
Thames Water	30/10/2025	Section 42
Upper Heyford Parish Council	03/11/2025	Section 42
Viridor	04/11/2025	Section 42
Wendlebury Parish Council	05/11/2025	Other consultee
West Berkshire Council	16/10/2025	Section 43
West Northamptonshire Council	20/02/2025	Section 43
West Oxfordshire Council	18/10/2025	Section 43

7.4.4 A range of issues and topics are covered by the comments or queries received, with some overlap with those raised by the local community. Understandably, the comments from Parish Councils and local politicians in particular tend to reflect the same issues and points as those covered by the responses from residents in the communities they represent.

7.4.5 Some of the key questions and issues raised by consultee bodies include the following main issues set out below – to avoid duplication from some of the comments raised also by local residents, not all points are mentioned below.

<sup>43</sup> The Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum includes the following Parish Councils: Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council (lead parish for legal purposes), Lower Heyford Parish Council, Upper Heyford Parish Council, Steeple Aston Parish Council, Middle Aston Parish Meeting, North Aston Parish Meeting, Somerton Parish Council, Middleton Stoney Parish Council, Fritwell Parish Council, Kirtlington Parish Council, Duns Tew Parish Council

Please note a response to each consultee comment is included within **Appendix 35**.

### Accessibility and transport, including rail

7.4.6 The majority of comments from authorities, bodies and originations raised issues covering transport and rail as part of the Stage 2 consultation process. This includes comments from:

- CDC and OCC (the local highways authority) in their joint response
- National Highways
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum
- Calum Miller MP
- Cllr Gareth Epps
- Cllr Will Boucher-Giles
- Dorchester Living (comments by Pegasus Group on their behalf)
- Chiltern Railways
- Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council
- Middleton Stoney Parish Council
- Somerton Parish Council
- Bucknell Parish Council
- Evenly Parish Council
- Deddington Parish Council
- Wendlebury Parish Council
- Heyford Park Community Action Group
- Bicester Bike Users Group
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Englands Economic Heartland
- Viridor
- Euro Garages

7.4.7 There were concerns raised about the potential impact on nearby roads and communities from additional traffic, and a desire to see traffic retained on strategic routes (focused on the M40) and out of village centres. Some welcomed the highways mitigation proposals in general, but are aware of other sites being proposed in the area for new, additional development, and the need to ensure that cumulative issues associated with a number of relevant planning applications are being considered as part of the wider planning process. Some comments received reflected work which at the time of the

Stage 2 consultation, was being progressed to finalise the Transport Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1) and which now forms part of the DCO application submission.

- 7.4.8 Viridor and Euro Garages both raised queries about access to their sites as a result of the Proposed Development and these points are addressed in **Appendix 35**. Viridor has since also provided a letter of support in relation to the Order limits being extended to include land within the landfill for the OxSRFI scheme (see **Appendix 38**).
- 7.4.9 After the close of the Stage 2 consultation, and as noted in paragraph 7.3.25 of this Report, additional discussion has been held in relation to potential impacts at the Barley Mow roundabout on the A43, and also on impacts and mitigation for the A4095 / B4030 roundabout.
- 7.4.10 Questions included interest in how the OxSRFI scheme might interact with aspirations for a new passenger rail station at Ardley in the future, with some consultees assuming a new Station would be on the site of the former Ardley Station (to the north of the OxSRFI Main Site). Further assurances regarding the Chiltern Main Line's capacity to accommodate freight traffic without adverse impacts on passenger rail capacity was also sought from some consultees.
- 7.4.11 There was positive recognition from some consultees of the efforts made to enhance and improve the local connectivity and quality of cycling and walking routes around the site and beyond. A post Stage 2 request was also made by OCC for solar stud lighting to be provided for those parts of the cycle routes which are away from roads for safety purposes.

#### *Applicant response*

- 7.4.12 The proposed Highways Works being delivered by the OxSRFI scheme, which includes significant improvement works to M40 J10, the Ardley Bypass, Middleton Stoney Relief Road, the Heyford Park Link Road and improvement works to M40 J 9, will help ensure the redistribution (reassignment) of traffic from local roads to the strategic highways network, helping reduce traffic effects (congestion and other) in village centres, including Ardley and Middleton Stoney. For example, the Transport Assessment sets out that the traffic modelling predicts that with Highways Works in place, there will be a 31% reduction in total traffic flows through the centre of Middleton Stoney village. It should also be noted that key elements of the road infrastructure –

such as the Ardley Bypass and some of the M40 J10 works, are being delivered in the first phase of highways works.

- 7.4.13 In terms of access to the Viridor and Euro Garages sites – for Viridor, access either via the existing route (along the B430) and including along the Ardley Bypass once constructed will be provided. For Euro Garages, the proposed improvement works at M40 J10 will help to address existing capacity issues as well as accommodating the proposed OxSRFI development. Access from M40 J10 for Cherwell Services will be retained which signage to guide traffic as required. Details of signage will be required to be agreed with National Highways (and OCC on the local network). During the construction phase, access will be maintained with further detail to follow through the DCO requirements in agreement with National Highways.
- 7.4.14 In relation to the Barley Mow roundabout on the A43, the Applicant and project team has engaged positively in response to comments and suggestions, and concerns, regarding future potential issues at that roundabout linked to the modelled ‘reassignment effects’ of traffic attracted to the A43 corridor following the OxSRFI improvements to M40 J10. A ‘monitor and manage’ approach has been agreed in principle with National Highways, with the Applicant having reviewed the issues and devised a potential mitigation scheme which National Highways could deliver using a proposed S106 Agreement (Document 3.4) contribution from the Applicant, if required to address future effects and if that junction is not improved by any other nearby development in this vicinity.
- 7.4.15 Work has progressed since Stage 2 on the A4095 / B4030 roundabout, with a scheme now proposed which includes works to the roundabout (see Document 2.7E). Works to the B4030/A4095 roundabout are currently included within the Proposed Development but ongoing discussions are being held with Oxfordshire County Council whereby it is proposed that the Applicant will instead provide a financial contribution towards works to be delivered by the Council at that junction. The financial contribution will be secured through a section 106 planning obligation once the level of contribution has been agreed, and it is then intended that these works would be removed from the Proposed Development and potentially from the Order limits.
- 7.4.16 With regards to footways/cycleways/bridleways and general accessibility, both within and outside of formal TWG meetings the Applicant has engaged with the relevant OCC officers to ensure the proposed diversions and improvements to the PROW network, and other proposed foot or cycle links, align with OCC standards and strategic preferences, while also representing a proportionate and deliverable strategy. Changes have been made to the

proposals as a result of this input, including in terms of the general approach taken to connections to Bicester. In addition, following a request by OCC for solar stud lighting on cycle routes away from roads, the Applicant has confirmed the suitability for this measure with the project team in terms of ecology and lighting effects, and therefore this measure is now proposed for safety purposes of network users.

7.4.17 In view of the above, and positive engagement and dialogue with the TWG and other relevant parties, it should be noted that several highways and transport related amendments have been made to the OxSRFI scheme post the Stage 2 consultation. This includes the changes listed in Table 13 below.

*Table 13: Highways/Transport related amendment to the OxSRFI scheme post Stage 2 consultation*

Amendment number (for ease of reference only)	Highways/Transport related amendment to the OxSRFI scheme post Stage 2 consultation
1	Amendment to the part of the above bridleway in the vicinity of the rifle range to avoid potential conflict with rifle range and also avoid the watercourse flood plain
2	ANPR cameras to be provided on the B4100 north of Baynard's Green to provide enforcement against OxSRFI using this non-permitted HGV route.
3	Changes to the Middleton Stoney Relief Road/B4030 roundabout to increase flare length on B4030 westbound approach and length of two lanes exit on the Middleton Stoney Relief Road exit.
4	Reductions to speed limits on various OCC roads, as shown on the updated speed limit plans.
5	Reduction to speed limit to 40mph on the A43 between Ardley and Baynard's Green at M40 J10, as shown on the updated speed limit plans
6	Speed limit reduced to 50mph on the section of A34 approach to M40 J9, which included an extension to the Order limits to deliver this requested change.
7	Agreement to provide S106 Agreement funding to OCC to provide cycle signage and advisory cycle lane on Bicester Road as part of the Bicester to OxSRFI cycling strategy
8	Bicester to OxSRFI bridleway cycleway to be provided with solar stud lighting
9	The proposed bridleway to be provided alongside the Ardley Bypass moved farther from the bypass
10	Point of connection of the above bridleway to Ardley Road moved to match that of 109/26 which will be stopped up
11	The approach has been agreed to allow OCC to provide an active travel and capacity improvement at the A4095 / B4030 roundabout and an active travel improvement on Bicester Road.
12	A package of traffic management measures at the B430 Ardley Station Bridge during the initial construction period, between the start of construction and the opening of the Ardley
13	Increased extent of screening bunding between the Ardley Bypass / Ardley Road and the kennels

Amendment number (for ease of reference only)	Highways/Transport related amendment to the OxSRFI scheme post Stage 2 consultation
14	Screening bunding added at the Middleton Stoney Relief Road roundabout near Middleton Stoney
15	Bus stops added onto the B430 near the Ardley waste recovery facility (in line with the public transport strategy)
16	Banned turn TROs added from the Heyford Park Link Road onto the secondary access into the OxSRFI Main Site
17	No Entry TRO provided at the relocated M40 J10 northbound exit slip at the Ardley junction

7.4.18 Further to comments about the approach to the ‘cumulative’ assessment, the Applicant has instructed the project team preparing ES Chapters to use a proportionate approach in relation to Puy du Fou and the ‘new town’ Heyford Park proposals<sup>44</sup> with the ES being updated from Stage 2 accordingly (see also paragraph 6.2.8 of this Report).

7.4.19 Comments raising queries about capacity on the rail network to accommodate freight on the Chiltern Main Line, are addressed through the Rail Report (Document 7.2A) which sets out that pathing studies have been undertaken by the Applicant and Network Rail pre- and post-COVID using the December 2019, May 2020 and May 2025 timetables. In each case, the studies have identified that there are at least four compliant return paths per day for intermodal rail services to and from the OxSRFI Main Site (i.e. 4 paths into the site and 4 paths out of the site per day). Additional compliant paths have also been found that could be used. The paths identified have been subject to external peer review by GB Railfreight, an external licenced rail freight operating company working on behalf of the Applicant, as well as by Network Rail.

7.4.20 The Rail Report (Document 7.2A) then concludes as follows:

*“Based on this work and having regard to the Governments ambitions for increases in rail freight and Network Rail’s obligations to manage the working timetable to accommodate both passenger and freight services the OXSRFI scheme will be capable of being served by at least four trains a*

<sup>44</sup> See ES Chapter 1 (Introduction) and ES Chapter 16 (Cumulative Effects) – also: Heyford Park CDC reference: 25/02190/HYBRID and Puy du Fou CDC reference: 25/02232/OUT.

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*day, in line with the NPS, the number of trains increasing in future in line with customer demand.” (paragraph 6.4.14)*

7.4.21 In relation to the potential future passenger station at Ardley, the Rail Report (Document 7.2A) sets out that:

*“the siting of the proposed OxSRFI northern and southern main line connections and associated signals would be sufficiently far apart to allow a new station at Ardley to be sited between the two. The new signals would also then have the benefit of allowing services to be held on the main line, which would be important for the operation of a station at Ardley if it were ever to be reinstated. The proposed signalling scheme would also significantly improve the headway over the existing arrangements.” (paragraph 6.8.2).*

7.4.22 The OxSRFI scheme would therefore not prejudice or prevent reinstating a Station at Ardley in its former location, and could support its operation, if taken forward in due course.

#### Impacts on ecology and local biodiversity

7.4.23 A number of bodies and organisations raised queries about impacts on ecology and local biodiversity, including:

- CDC and OCC in their joint response
- Calum Miller MP
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Heyford Park Action Group

7.4.24 There were a number of comments relating to impacts on and off-site ecology and biodiversity, as well as the adjacent (geological, not primarily ecological) Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, with requests for additional explanation and detail about compensation and mitigation for likely impacts associated with delivery of the OxSRFI scheme. Similarly, interest was expressed regarding the potential for impacts on other local sites (designated and other sites) or habitats, including hedgerows.

7.4.25 As part of the Stage 2 consultation, it was noted that biodiversity and landscaping enhancement works in parcels of land to the north-west of the

OxSRFI Main Site were still under review, with either works occurring in no. 29 (west of Aves Ditch) or no. 37 (North of Ardley Road).

### *Applicant response*

7.4.26 The green infrastructure proposals as part of the OxSRFI scheme will create new habitat links and improve habitat connectivity to Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, local LWSs and Ardley Road Verge Nature Reserve and to other habitats beyond the Main Site boundary. The green infrastructure proposals will also contribute towards several of the habitat priorities highlighted within the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), including:

- The creation of calcareous species-rich grasslands, including on the newly exposed subsoils of the railway cutting created on-site;
- The creation of other neutral species-rich grasslands,
- The creation of new woodland, and areas of habitat that contain a matrix of habitat types including small woodland patches, scattered trees, scrub, and grassland;
- The enhancement of watercourse sections and management of riparian habitats to achieve good ecological condition, and creation of new ponds to increase biodiversity and create more clean water habitats.

7.4.27 The OxSRFI scheme will deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), with details provided within the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) (ES Appendix 6.11) which sets out relevant details including the long-term (30 year) management of those habitats.

7.4.28 The Applicant and project team has had extended dialogue with Natural England prior to Stage 1 which has continued post Stage 2. Mitigation proposed as part of the OxSRFI scheme evolved directly in response to the advice and requirements of Natural England including the compensation areas which have been included within the OxSRFI scheme. As noted above, and in response to engagement with Natural England, the OxSRFI scheme will deliver a significant net increase in calcareous grassland, more than off-setting the losses as a result of works for the rail sidings.

7.4.29 In respect of biodiversity and landscaping enhancement works occurring in either no. 29 (west of Aves Ditch) or no. 37 (North of Ardley Road) – post the

Stage 2 consultation the Order Limits within the Site Location Plan (Document 2.4) have been updated and now include both parcels of land as ecological mitigation areas (see the Components of Development Plan, Document 2.13). Both parcels of land are included in response to Natural England's consultation feedback specifically in relation to the farmland bird mitigation proposals.

#### Impacts on landfill, waste capacity and policies

7.4.30 The following consultants have raised queries in relation landfill, waste services and policies:

- CDC and OCC in their joint response
- Environment Agency
- Viridor
- Biffa

7.4.31 Post the Stage 2 consultation there has several discussions with the Environment Agency and Valencia in relation to the Ardley Landfill Site and the reprofiling of Cells A and B within the landfill area.

7.4.32 There has also been post Stage 2 dialogue with OCC in relation to the OxSRFI scheme and the loss of the IVC Facility on site, and the resulting impacts on waste capacity within the County, as well as issues of compliance with the adopted OCC Waste policies.

#### *Applicant response*

7.4.33 As a consequence of the engagement with OCC and the EA relating to the Ardley Landfill Site and reprofiling works, the Applicant extended the Order Limits in early 2026 to ensure an appropriate area both for works and management of the works, including shared use of the existing gas and leachate monitoring systems. Further details about the resulting focused consultation following the increase to the Order Limits post the Stage 2 consultation, can be found in Section 8.0 of this Report.

7.4.34 In terms of the loss of the IVC Facility and impacts on waste policy, ES Chapter 13 (Waste) has been updated to reflect the latest capacity data and sets out that the IVC Facility has a maximum operational capacity of 35,000 tpa, with Oxfordshire County having a total capacity of 239,600 tpa. On this basis, and with the proposed loss of the IVC Facility, the County would have a total

capacity of 204,600 tpa which is sufficient to cover the projected capacity requirement of 171,000 tpa in 2031 (giving a surplus of 33,600 tpa). Discussions between the Applicant and OCC remain ongoing in respect of compliance with waste policies.

#### Landscape and visual impacts from the scheme

7.4.35 Comments from the following consultees about the landscape and visual impacts from the OxSRFI scheme include:

- CDC and OCC in their joint response – including comment from their landscape and visual consultant, LUC
- Cllr Gareth Epps
- Dorchester Living (comments by Pegasus Group on their behalf)
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum
- Upper Heyford Parish Council
- Middleton Stoney Parish Council
- Deddington Parish Council
- Somerton Parish Council
- Heyford Park Community Action Group

7.4.36 CDC and OCC, along with their consultants LUC, provided detailed comments on draft ES Chapter 7 (Landscape and Visual Appraisal). These included comments on specific aspects of the methodology, the use of Zone of Theoretical Visibility tools (ZTVs), clarity sought on container heights within the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5), the methodology for the night-time assessment, and clarifications and suggested updates to photo viewpoints.

7.4.37 Neighbouring landowners and Parish Council's within the vicinity of the OxSRFI Main Site raised queries and concerns about the landscape and visual impacts of the OxSRFI scheme, including impacts on the rural nature of the area. Most of these comments are predominantly generalisations about the scale of development and impacts from development on the local landscape and views from receptors (including residential properties). Comments from Dorchester Living are specific to the level of detail in draft ES Chapter 7 (Landscape and Visual Appraisal).

#### *Applicant response*

7.4.38 In response to comments and dialogue with OCC and CDC (including their consultants LUC), updates have been made to the Parameters Plan

(Document 2.5) to clarify the maximum heights and minimum finish floor levels (FFLs) within the 'Schedule of Development Parameters' table. This includes amendments to limit numbering to one decimal place, instead of three as previously presented. Separately the minimum FFLs for Zones B and C have been reduced by one metre in view of further technical work by the project team on earthworks.

- 7.4.39 Several updates have also been made to ES Chapter 7 (Landscape and Visual Appraisal) and the relevant appendices following comments by OCC and CDC (including their consultants LUC). This includes further explanation of methodology and assessment within the text of the final ES Chapter, inclusion of baseline night-time photographs, inclusion of ZTVs, explanation and cross-referencing of photo viewpoints, and two updates to photo viewpoints with and a new viewpoint added.
- 7.4.40 Comments by Dorchester Living and other residents relating to the potential landscape and visual impacts on the Heyford Park development have resulted in an amendment to being made to the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5) on the south-western corner of the OxSRFI Main Site adjacent to both existing consented, and potential future phases of development within Heyford Park. Specifically, changes were made to increase the bund heights and widths, in introduce sub-zones within Development Zone A4 (now A4a, A4b and A4c), and reduce maximum building heights (please also see paragraph 6.2.47 of this Report).
- 7.4.41 In respect of the general landscape and visual concerns raised, it should be noted that the parameters for the OxSRFI scheme have been defined following direct regard to the Main Site's context and its relationship with existing communities and other 'receptors'. The proposals include substantial green infrastructure and landscaping (which account for over 50% of the Main Site area), and which includes significant earthworks mounds around the Main Site which help to minimise adverse visual and landscape effects. Maximum building height parameters vary across the site in response to the context.

#### Impacts on amenity (noise, air quality and light pollution)

- 7.4.42 A number of consultees referred to the potential for general adverse environmental or amenity impacts as a result of the Proposed Development. While the majority of these comments referred to the potential for such effects during the construction period, some also raised concerns about the potential for significant effects once complete and operational. The main topics or issues of interest in this category were noise and lighting.

- CDC and OCC in their joint response
- Natural England
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum
- Ardley Parish Council
- Upper Heyford Parish Council
- Bucks and Ox Wildlife Trust
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Heyford Park Community Action Group

### *Applicant Response*

- 7.4.43 It is acknowledged that the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) on which the Stage 2 consultation was based did not include full drafts of the assessments of either Air Quality or Noise, pending further progress made with the traffic modelling being undertaken to inform the Transport Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1). The draft ES Chapters which formed the Stage 2 PEIR provided good detail regarding baseline conditions, and outlined embedded or standard mitigation measures which would likely be implemented to minimise or avoid effects, but were not able to draw a full set of conclusions regarding likely effects from the OxSRFI proposals. Nonetheless, the Applicant considers that the requirement to consult on “preliminary environmental information” was adequately and appropriately satisfied. Therefore, understandably, in the absence of detailed assessments and forecasts of likely future effects, many interested consultees raised questions about these issues and expressed an interest having more information.
- 7.4.44 Since Stage 2 consultation, these topics have been fully assessed in the submitted Environmental Statement (ES), with relevant topic specific chapters dedicated to each of ‘Air Quality and Odour’ (ES Chapter 4), ‘Noise & Vibration’ (ES Chapter 5), and ‘Lighting’ (ES Chapter 8). The scope and methodologies for the assessments undertaken have had direct regard to the requirements and information set out in the ES Scoping Opinion issued by PINS in 2021, as well as direct dialogue with statutory consultees including Environmental Protection Officers at Cherwell District Council which began prior to the Stage 1 consultation process in 2023, and has continued since the Stage 2 consultation process. Indeed, the Stage 2 response submitted by Cherwell District Council explicitly confirmed agreement of the methodology proposed for the Air Quality Assessment.

7.4.45 A range of measures are proposed within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (ES Appendix 3.2) to avoid or minimise likely (temporary) effects from the construction process, including with regard to air quality (dust), odour, noise and lighting. With the CEMP implemented (to be supported by future phase specific pCEMPs) through the DCO, the ES Chapters identify no likely significant effects during the construction process. Measures include those specifically targeted at managing and minimising construction dust, and adverse effects from any lighting required to aid construction activities. Therefore, any likely adverse effects are mitigated and minimised, and given the nature of the construction process, will change over time for receptors closest to the construction sites.

7.4.46 The ES assessments conclude that no significant adverse effects are likely from the operation of the OxSRFI proposals with regard to Air Quality, Odour, or Lighting as a result of the design and mitigation measures proposed. Similarly, no significant residual noise effects are anticipated directly from the OxSRFI proposals, albeit there is potential for significant effects on receptors from traffic reassigning to improved routes resulting in increased noise at night on the western edge of Bicester (adjacent to Middleton Stoney Road) with OxSRFI and other committed and planned developments in place. Other unavoidable adverse noise effects will be at negligible or minor adverse levels, and below significant levels. The assessments conclude that some communities will experience benefits (i.e., reduced effects) as a result of reduced through-traffic as a consequence of the Highways Works proposed. The overall conclusions from the ES are that the residual effects will be up to minor adverse effects on air quality from operational road traffic, and up to moderate lighting effects (from ‘sky-glow’) at a small number of receptors closest to the OxSRFI Main Site, but with the vast majority of receptors experiencing negligible or minor levels of change from lighting associated with OxSRFI.

#### Other environmental impacts

7.4.47 The following consultees made comments and raised concerns about other environmental impacts which included:

- Loss of agricultural land
- Justification and need for the development in this location
- Foul drainage connectivity
- Local heritage assets

7.4.48 These comments were made by consultees which included the following:

- Calum Miller MP
- Thames Water
- Anglian Water
- Historic England
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum
- Somerton Parish Council
- Deddington Parish Council
- Englands Economic Heartland

*Applicant response*

7.4.49 The following points should be noted in response to the above:

- Loss of agricultural land – as stated in paragraph 6.2.40 of this Report, only 8% of the total OxSRFI Application Site area is classed as BMV land, and therefore this accords with the approach in the NPS for Applicants to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- Justification and need for the development in this location – the OxSRFI scheme responds to government policy which identifies a compelling need for additional SRFIs across the country (see paragraph 3.103 of the NPS), and to help meet the government target for at least a 75% growth in rail freight by 2050 (paragraph 3.99 of the NPS). The location of the OxSRFI scheme meets the requirements for connectivity to national freight rail and strategic highways networks. The OxSRFI will also be the only SRFI (currently) on the M40 corridor with good access to both Midlands and South-Eastern markets and distribution networks, including an ability to serve parts of London. The scale of development reflects the wider strategic needs for logistics around M40 J10 and along the M40 corridor (see Market Analysis Report, Document 7.1), and also responds to the constraints and opportunities presented by the OxSRFI Main Site.
- Foul drainage connectivity – further to comments and dialogue with Anglian Water and Thames Water, a foul drainage connection to Bicester only is now proposed, with the previously proposed connection to Ardley pumping station now removed from the Order limits. Prior discussion with Thames Water has also been held in relation to the

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Ardley Reservoir and Water Pumping Station to determine what the inundation would be in the event of failure and to discuss mitigation options. A flood wall surrounding the reservoir will direct any breach flows to the west where they will be contained within the valley topography.

- Local heritage assets – dialogue and engagement with Historic England has confirmed the approach to the ‘half height’ bund at the end of the former RAF Upper Heyford Airbase.

## **8.0 Consultation Following Stage 2 – including additional Order Limits Consultation**

### **1. Managing returned and undelivered consultation letters as part of the Stage 2 consultation process**

1.1 The Applicant initially posted all consultation letters by special delivery in order that it would have confirmation of receipt (notwithstanding that any letters sent first class would be deemed served pursuant to s230 of the Act, save where they have not been returned). However, the Applicant received a number of returned letters marked as undeliverable, or ‘addressee gone away’ or ‘not at this address’. The Applicant suspects that this may have been because the occupier did not always correspond with the name on the letter (despite land referencing having been carried out) or due to the Royal Mail being unable to secure a signature due to the accessibility of the property. These letters were re-sent by first class, rather than special delivery.

1.2 The re-sent letters were sent with a covering letter explaining that the Applicant had originally tried to contact the owners and/or occupiers of the property as part of the statutory consultation but that the letter had been returned. The letter stated that notwithstanding the statutory consultation having finished, the addressee may still send in comments using the methods stated within the letter. A copy of that covering letter is appended to this report at **Appendix 39**.

8.1.1 In some instances, following receipt of an undelivered letter to a company or organisation, the Applicant checked for alternative addresses and located these using either Companies House, the Law Society or a search on the organisation’s website. The following consultees received letters to a new address:

- Oxfordshire Gypsy and Traveller Service
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Virgin Media
- Forestry Commission
- Eclipse Power Networks
- Steeple Aston Parish Council

8.1.2 There were also some instances of bodies being consulted which were dissolved. The NHS Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group is no longer in existence. Clinical commissioning groups were dissolved in July 2022 and

their functions were taken on by integrated care systems. As a result of this, the Applicant sent a consultation letter to the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, being the ICB for the area in which the Proposed Development will be located. The Applicant also sent a consultation letter to Health Education England, however following receipt of a returned letter, further enquiries confirmed that it had merged with NHS England. A consultation letter had already been sent to NHS England as a separate statutory consultee and therefore no further action was taken.

- 8.1.3 At the time of preparing this report, the Applicant has not received any returned, first class letters.

## 8.2 Cherwell Services

- 8.2.1 As part of its continued investigations into land and the interests therein, it is considered that the occupiers of the Cherwell Services (“the Services”) may have a right of access over land owned by National Highways (which is not adopted highway) off the Cherwell roundabout at the A43 which leads into the Services. This is Plot 3/31 shown on Sheet 3 of the Land Plans (Document Number 2.1C). The interest is assumed to exist because the occupiers must travel over this parcel of land in order to access the Services. However, the interest is not noted on the title and therefore is unregistered.

- 8.2.2 The Applicant’s land referencing team carried out a site visit and additional land referencing and determined that there were five occupiers which may have this right:

- Travelodge Hotels Limited
- Lloyd Baker Leather Limited (trading as Tanners)
- WYE Tech Limited
- NoteMachine Limited
- Airvending Limited (trading as AIR-serv)

- 1.3 In light of the above, the Applicant wrote to the occupiers by way of correspondence dated 10 March 2026. This correspondence provided an excerpt of the affected land and explained that the occupiers may have an unregistered right of access and a copy is appended to this Report at **Appendix 40**.

### 8.3 Land Referencing Data Refresh

The Applicant has continued to refresh land referencing information to endeavour to keep the data up to date and ensure it is carrying out appropriate diligent enquiry. This has resulted in a number of new parties being revealed since statutory consultation was undertaken, and in a number of parties who were consulted at statutory consultation being removed as parties with an interest in the land (and therefore who do not appear in the Book of Reference). The Applicant wrote to these new parties on 10 March 2026 and to one extra party on 30 March – the list of those consulted is not included due to Data Protection requirements.

- 1.4 Parties who were consulted at statutory consultation but who no longer have an interest in the Order limits have been noted by the Applicant but the list of is not included due to Data Protection requirements.
- 1.5 Final land referencing of the potential category 3 parties explained in the Statement of Reasons was concluded in March and the Applicant wrote to those parties on 30 March 2026 – the list of those consulted is not included due to Data Protection requirements.

### 8.4 Targeted consultation following Statutory Consultation

- 8.4.1 The Applicant has carried out targeted consultation with specific consultees for different reasons, addressed below.

#### Order Limits Change – M40 J9

- 1.6 As set out in paragraph 2.3.1 of this Report, the Applicant carried out targeted consultation in relation to a change to the Order limits in respect of land at J9 of the M40. As a number of personal injury collisions have occurred at J9, National Highways, in its response to statutory consultation, queried how the proposals at the junction would address this. The Applicant sought to address this by (in addition to the new left turn lane which already formed part of the Proposed Development) introducing a 50mph speed limit on the A34 Northbound approach to M40 J9 to reduce vehicle speeds for a distance of 500m. The extension to the Order limits was solely required to provide the signage for the 50mph speed limit. Land referencing investigations confirmed that this land was all adopted highway for which National Highways is the highway authority, with the subsoils being owned by National Highways and Oxfordshire County Council. In light of this, the Applicant wrote to National Highways to give them notice of the Order limits change and to ask for

comments within 35 days. National Highways has since confirmed in a Transport Working Group that the speed limit change is acceptable and therefore support the Order limit change.

- 1.7 The letters were sent by post and by email to the Applicant’s contacts at National Highways, Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council on 17 December 2025. A copy of the correspondence is attached to this report at **Appendix 41**. The correspondence was also sent to Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council.

#### Ardley Landfill Site (“the Landfill”) – Permitting and Monitoring

- 1.8 Further consultation was carried out with Valencia Estate Management Limited, owners of the landfill within the Order limits (Work No. 34), Viridor, whose land was included within the Order Limits for EA permitting monitoring purposes, and Oxfordshire County Council who operate the Household Waste Recycling Centre where the Order Limits were amended to include the landfill gas and leachate treatment plant dated 13 January 2026.
- 8.4.2 The works required at the Landfill are described in ES Chapter 2 (Description of Development and Alternatives) and form Work No. 34 in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO (Document 3.1). In summary, works are needed in this area because the Chiltern Main Line lies in a cutting where it passes the Main Site. Earthworks will therefore be needed to form the rail connections as they need to be at a similar level to the main line. As the eastern connection passes through the existing Ardley Landfill site, earthworks will be required which include the excavation and reprofiling of material within the landfill. Part of the Principal Access roundabout also extends into the Landfill.
- 1.9 The Applicant included part of the Landfill in the proposals for statutory consultation at Stage 2. However, following further consideration and investigation into the requirements of operating the landfill, as well as discussions with the Environment Agency, the Applicant extended the Order Limits as:
- The land is subject to an Environmental Permit which splits the Landfill site into different cells and the Order Limits have been extended to cover the entirety of the relevant cells required to undertake the works, even where physical works might not be undertaken in part of the cells, the relevant cells are included due to the permitting arrangements. The

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Landfill Reprofiting Technical Note provides further detail (ES Appendix 13.1) and

- Additional land is required for access and use of the ongoing gas and leachate monitoring associated with the landfill works.

8.4.3 Valencia responded on 5 February 2026 and engagement with Valencia is detailed in the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker appended to the Statement of Reasons (Document 4.1).

8.4.4 A meeting was held with Oxfordshire County Council on 21 January 2026 to explain the reason to include the HWRC within the Order Limits related to securing access to the gas and leachate treatment plan. Oxfordshire County Council formally responded to the further consultation on 11 February 2026. Discussions are ongoing with Oxfordshire County Council to secure a voluntary agreement for the necessary rights as detailed in the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker appended to the Statement of Reasons (Document 4.1).

8.4.5 A meeting was held with Viridor on 19 January 2026 to explain the reason the Order Limits extended to include their land related to EA permitting monitoring purposes. Viridor formally responded to the further consultation on 6 February 2026. Discussions are ongoing with Viridor to secure a voluntary agreement for the necessary rights as detailed in the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker appended to the Statement of Reasons (Document 4.1).

1.9.1 The list of parties consulted on the Landfill extension is included at **Appendix 42**.

#### Bridleway and Drainage

8.4.6 Further targeted consultation was carried out in relation to a small addition and removal of land within the Order limits, specifically a strip of land required to stop up bridleway 109/26 and to construct a drainage outfall for the Ardley bypass.

1.9.2 As this change related to a minor Order limits change affecting landowners only, a consultation letter was sent to Valencia on 23 January 2026 in its capacity as owner of the land affected by the proposed change. A copy of the letter is appended to this Report at **Appendix 43**.



## 9.0 STAGE 2 – SECTION 48 (DUTY TO PUBLICISE)

9.0.1 The Applicant publicised the proposals pursuant to s48 of the Act and regulation 4 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications and Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 by placing a public notice in local newspapers the Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (as explained below at paragraph 9.0.6, the notices were published only once in the local press).

9.0.2 The s48 Notice was also published in The Guardian national newspaper and the London Gazette on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

9.0.3 The Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser was specifically chosen by the Applicant because they were aware that the paper has a large readership in the villages where the exhibitions were to be held.

9.0.4 Copies of the published s48 Notices are contained at **Appendix 36**.

9.0.5 It is impossible to ascertain from the responses submitted whether they have been submitted specifically and directly as a result of the public exhibitions, local press notices, leaflet distribution, site notices or ‘word of mouth’ locally. All responses received are detailed in this report (see **Appendices 20 and 35**) but we are not aware of any responses being made specifically to the s48 press notices.

9.0.6 In finalising the application for submission, copies of the s48 notices published in the Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser were collated to append to the Consultation Report. In doing so, it transpired that the notices were published in the local press on 18 September 2025, but unfortunately were not published for a second time on the intended date of 25 September, being one week after initial publication. This was due to human error as although the two dates were requested in the Applicant’s final confirmation email to the local press, when the proformas were issued for payment on 8 September, they only contained one date (the 18<sup>th</sup>). This was not noticed at the time and therefore the Applicant settled payment for one publication only.

9.0.7 The Applicant understands that this is a technical breach of s48 of the Planning Act 2008 which requires the Applicant to ‘publicise the proposed application in the prescribed manner.’ The ‘prescribed manner’ is that set out in The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009. The relevant regulation is Regulation 4(2)(a) which requires that an applicant must publish

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a notice of the proposed application for at least two successive weeks in one or more local newspapers circulating in the vicinity in which the proposed development would be situated’.

9.0.8 The notices were published once in the two local newspapers (Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser) and were also published in the online versions of those newspapers for one week, commencing on 18 September. In addition to this, the notices were published on the Public Notice Portal website for a period of 31 days beginning on 18 September and ending on 18 October, which would have extended the reach of the adverts (viewable via the link <https://publicnoticeportal.uk/notice/planning/68d3b369161a6d59f6fa2d6e>).

9.0.9 As stated above, the Applicant is not aware of any responses being made directly to the s48 notices. However, it has carried out a full and thorough consultation and as explained in this Report including the extensive consultation leaflet drop (8400 leaflets), s.47 notices that were issued on 11 September, social media and website updates publicising the application, posters and site notices and directly notifying Parish clerks. In light of this, the Applicant considers that no prejudice has been caused to the consultation process as a result of not fully complying with Regulation 4(2)(a).

9.0.10 For completeness, this means that s48 notices were published as follows:

1. Once in hard copy in the following publications on 18 September 2025:
  - Oxford Mail
  - Bicester Advertiser
  - London Gazette
  - The Guardian.
  
2. Online in the following publications for 7 days from 18 September – 25 September 2025:
  - Oxford Mail
  - Bicester Advertiser
  
3. Online on the public notices portal for 31 days from 18th September - 18 October 2026:  
<https://publicnoticeportal.uk/notice/planning/68d3b369161a6d59f6fa2d6e>).

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## 10.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 10.0.1 Prior to submitting an application for a DCO to the Planning Inspectorate, and in accordance with the requirements set out in the Act, the Applicant carried out public and stakeholder consultation on its proposals. All statutory consultation has been carried out in line with the advice and guidance provided by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 10.0.2 Consultation took place over two formal stages, one non-statutory (in 2022) and one statutory (in 2025) with defined periods for comments and input from consultees. However, the OxSRFI consultation process has also seen engagement on a less formal and ongoing basis over a considerably longer period with regular and open channels of communication and contact with key local groups since 2019/2020.
- 10.0.3 The non-statutory consultation was undertaken in accordance with the same procedures and processes as those required for a statutory exercise. An extensive consultation area, agreed through the SoCC process, of approximately 4,011 addresses formed the basis of the Stage 1 public consultation, with this area extended further for Stage 2 to include in excess of 8,400 addresses (this increase reflected the inclusion of additional addresses in western Bicester).
- 10.0.4 The early stages of the consultation process ensured the Applicant was fully aware of a range of wider concerns and issues from the perspective of local communities. The Parish Councils in particular were effective and consistent in raising issues regarding the potential local environmental and other effects. Many of these issues have remained on the agenda throughout the non-statutory and statutory consultation processes, and feature prominently in the Environmental Impact Assessment and other supporting information which have informed the proposals.
- 10.0.5 The input received by the Applicant throughout the consultation process, including the non-statutory stages, has had a direct influence on the proposals. This Consultation Report has referred to the ways in which the proposals have been amended or designed to respond to local issues and comments. The Design Approach Documents (Document series 5.5) also refers to the design evolution of the proposals in further detail.

- 10.0.6 Across the consultation process there have been some common themes and issues raised by the comments received, and it is clear that existing traffic and transport impacts are of particular concern to local communities and other stakeholders. The Application would address many of the existing local transport challenges and issues through a substantial programme of improvements and mitigation measures, creating local benefits while also meeting the transport and accessibility requirements of the proposed SRFI.
- 10.0.7 Although the overall strength of the logistics and distribution sector, and the advantages of enabling a shift from road to rail freight in the M40 corridor has generally not been challenged or questioned by consultees, questions about the choice of site location for the proposed OxSRFI have been raised by some in the local community. However, it is also noteworthy that the principle of seeking to shift freight from road to rail has been welcomed by a number of local residents, even where they may have concerns about localised potential effects or issues.
- 10.0.8 Naturally, many of the issues and concerns raised through local consultation have focused on the Main Site specific characteristics and effects of the proposals. The concerns and objections raised by nearby residents and communities have focused on a relatively limited number of issues, all of which have been assessed by the Applicant through a combination of the Environmental Impact Assessment and the design process.
- 10.0.9 A main focus of comments received through the statutory (Stage 2) consultation was on the likely highways and traffic effects, with a particular focus on potential future cumulative effects given a number of live development proposals in the locality. The Transport Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1) deals with traffic on a cumulative basis, with mitigation and assessment of effects directly rooted in data relating to the cumulative future traffic conditions and features consideration of future scenarios both with, and without, the proposed OxSRFI scheme, and its proposed highways mitigation works. To reflect the specific context here, the Transport Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1) (and the ES as a whole) also give some additional consideration to potential cumulative effects associated with undetermined, and so ‘non-committed’ development schemes in the local area as a direct response to the concerns and queries raised by consultees and nearby communities.
- 10.0.10 From the non-statutory stage onwards, the Applicant has been keen to evolve and adapt the proposals in response to concerns about local potential effects, and as described in this report and the Design Approach Documents

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(Document series 5.5), the final proposals have evolved significantly from those originally proposed.

- 10.0.11 The Applicant has ensured that the Environmental Impact Assessment prepared alongside the proposals has assessed and considered the key issues raised by local bodies and the community. The mitigation measures proposed minimise the negative effects, and maximise the potential benefits, and the results of the assessments contained in the ES reveal that the proposals will deliver a range of effects, including some significant and notable environmental and economic benefits.
- 10.0.12 The Applicant is fully content that comprehensive consultation was undertaken in line with the agreed Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), and in accordance with the requirements of the Act.