

The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Date: 31 March 2026
Our Ref: [REDACTED]
Direct: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@eversheds-sutherland.com

Sent by email: OxfordshireSRFI@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

Planning Act 2008
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Application pursuant to section 37 for a Development Consent Order in respect of the construction of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, highways and associated development, referred to as The Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange and Highways Order 202X

On behalf of Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited (the "Applicant"), please find enclosed an application for approval for a Development Consent Order ("DCO") ("the Application") pursuant to section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 ("the 2008 Act") for the proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange and Highways Order.

The Application is for a DCO for a new Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, warehousing, highway improvements and associated infrastructure on land adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line Railway, southwest of Junction 10 of the M40 motorway, east of the former Upper Heyford Air Base and to the west of the B430 in Cherwell District and the county of Oxfordshire (the "Proposed Development").

In summary, the application seeks consent for:

- A Rail Freight Terminal served via new connections to the Chiltern Main Line Railway (part of the Strategic Rail Freight Network), including container storage, HGV parking and associated buildings;
- Works within the Landfill area adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line Railway to allow a rail connection and the Principal Access into the Main Site;
- Works to the Ardley Tunnel to provide W8 gauge through the tunnel;
- Up to 603,850 sq.m. (approx. 6.5 million square feet) of distribution and logistics (use class B8) floorspace, including ancillary office accommodation, plus up to 201,283 sq.m. of additional floorspace in the form of mezzanines;
- Demolition of existing structures and new earthworks to create development plateaus to accommodate distribution buildings and associated yard and parking areas, drainage attenuation features, and extensive perimeter earthworks bunding which will form part of the screening (landscape and visual mitigation) of the Proposed Development;

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- Improvements to Junction 10 of the M40 involving works on the A43 east of the M40, new slip roads to and from the M40, and including an Ardley Bypass to the east of Ardley which will also form a new site access road to the Main Site;
- A Heyford Park Link Road which runs from Camp Road south-east of Heyford Park and south of the proposed development to a new junction on the B430;
- A Middleton Stoney Relief Road around the north-eastern side of the village connecting from a new junction on the B430 to the existing B4030 which links over the M40 to Bicester;
- The Principal Access to the Main Site will be from the new Ardley Bypass and from a new roundabout on the B430 in the north-eastern corner of the Main Site, south of the railway line. This primary access will serve all HGV traffic accessing the site. A secondary access into the Main Site for bus, pedestrian and cycles will be via the Heyford Park Link Road at the southern end of the Main Site;
- Highway works to be carried out in connection with the improvement of J9 of the M40 motorway;
- Additional off-site highway works to be carried out at the junction of Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive, Middleton Road, the B430 west of the Main Site, Quarry Cottages, Middleton Stoney Crossroads and Aves Ditch and including improvements to the A4095/B4030 roundabout¹;
- Measures to enable and encourage sustainable travel, including improvements and new links to existing Public Rights of Way, and provision of new foot and cycle links to and within the site, as well as connections to enable bus provision to serve the Main Site via the secondary access to the site from the Heyford Park Link Road;
- Retention and redevelopment of the Grade II listed Threshing Barn at Ashgrove Farm as part of a 'central hub' of shared and communal facilities for employees and other users of the Main Site, as well as the retention of the Ashgrove Cottages for rail and estate management related activities;
- Retained key landscape features and new landscaping and planting, including on the proposed earthwork bunds within the Main Site, as part of a comprehensive landscaping and green infrastructure scheme across all elements of the proposed development, including habitat creation to deliver a net gain in biodiversity; and
- Associated infrastructure and engineering works including surface and foul drainage, and utilities, including a foul drainage outfall.

Development consent is required because the Proposed Development is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") pursuant to sections 14(1)(l) and 26(1) of the 2008 Act, as a rail freight interchange. In addition, the J10 Highway Improvements comprising the works to junction 10 of the M40 Motorway and the works to the A43 Corridor constitute NSIPs under section 22 of the 2008 Act.

Further details are included in the Guide to the Application (Document 1.3) and the Explanatory Memorandum (Document 3.2).

The Proposed Development is formally described in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO (Document 3.1). The land on which the Proposed Development is to be carried out is shown with a red line on the Location Plan (Document 2.4).

¹ The A4095/B4030 roundabout works are currently included within the Proposed Development but ongoing discussions are being held with Oxfordshire County Council whereby the Applicant will instead provide a financial contribution towards works proposed at the junction to be delivered by the Council or others. This will be secured through a Section 106 Agreement once the level of contribution has been agreed with the Council.

Application formalities

This Application is made in the form required by section 37(3)(b) of the 2008 Act and the application documents comply with the requirements in section 37 of the PA 2008 and those set out in:

- The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (the "APFP Regulations");
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the "EIA Regulations");
- The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG, now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) 'Planning Act 2008: Nationally significant infrastructure projects – Application form guidance' (June 2013); and
- The Planning Inspectorate's 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Preparation and Submission of Application Documents' (August 2024).

The Applicant has also sought pre-application advice in respect of Section 51 of the 2008 Act and the application has been informed by these discussions and advice from the Inspectorate.

An overview of the Application documentation is contained in the Guide to the Application (Document 1.3) which includes a full list of the documents.

The GIS shapefile of the land over which authorisation is sought within the application was received by the Planning Inspectorate on 10 March 2026, in advance of this Application submission.

The application fee of £8,946.00 was paid to the Planning Inspectorate on 10 March 2026 with reference OxSRFI TR050008 and receipt of the fee was acknowledged by email on 18 March.

The Applicant notes the Planning Inspectorate's request for confirmation as to whether AI was used in the preparation of the application. The Applicant asked each person engaged on the application for confirmation on whether AI was used. This revealed some limited use of AI as follows:

- The use of Microsoft Co-Pilot to reword sentences;
- Modelling Impact Assessment Report and VISSIM - Modelling Impact Assessment Report – OxSRFI Core Scheme and Sensitivity Testing are appendices to the Transport Assessment (ES Appendix 3.1) (Document number 6.3A). The Modelling Group (not the Applicant's team) who prepared the VISSIM assessments confirmed that Anthropic Claude Opus 4.6. AI was used in the preparation of these modelling reports to check consistency of language usage, to assist in providing an additional layer of checking looking for any elements missed by independent human review, and to aid in the compilation of summary sections (i.e. Executive Summary). All AI edits and suggested changes were thoroughly checked by both the independent reviewer and the report composer before the report was signed off as ready for submission. AI-based edits were used for narrative refinement only – all data preparation and presentation has been fully prepared and independently checked without the use of AI.
- There has been some limited use of AI in creating the Ardley Trackways Technical Note (ES Appendix 11.9) (Document number 6.11I) appended to Environmental Statement Chapter 11 (Ground Conditions) (Document number 6.11). Gemini was used as an advanced search engine to find/generate a typical management protocol should dinosaur fossils / footprints be potentially encountered. This information was added to the Technical note and significantly altered / updated to be project specific.

Documents submitted

The Application documents have been uploaded to the Planning Inspectorate SharePoint site provided to the Applicant on 19 March.

To assist the Planning Inspectorate, a completed Section 55 Checklist is enclosed with this letter which demonstrates that the Application complies with the APFP Regulations and related guidance.

The Application is accompanied by a Consultation Report as required by Section 37(3)(c) of the 2008 Act. The extensive non-statutory and statutory consultation is set out in the Consultation Report. The Consultation Report also explains the evolution of the Proposed Development in response to the consultation responses.

As will be noted in the Consultation Report and the Applicant's Section 55 Checklist, in finalising the application for submission, the Applicant became aware that unfortunately section 48 notices were only published for one week in hard copy local newspapers. The Applicant understands that this is a technical breach of s48 of the 2008 Act and the APFP Regulations which require the Applicant to '*publish 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*'.

The notices were, however, also published in 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. For completeness, this means that s48 notices were published as follows:

- once in hard copy in the following publications on 18 September 2025:
 - Oxford Mail
 - Bicester Advertiser
 - London Gazette
 - The Guardian.
- online in the following publications for one week from 18 September:
 - Oxford Mail
 - Bicester Advertiser
- On the Public Notice Portal website for 31 days (18 September – 18 October).

Notwithstanding this unfortunate error, the Applicant has carried out a full and thorough consultation including exhibitions and webinars as explained in the Consultation Report and extensive measures were undertaken to publicise the consultation such as a widespread consultation leaflet drop (8,400 leaflets, having extended the core consultation zone to which leaflets were posted following engagement with the District and County Councils), s.47 notices and general advertisements in the Oxford Mail and Bicester Advertiser 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.

The Applicant has prepared a list of Potential Main Issues for Examination (PMIE) which is enclosed with this letter. The Applicant has not been provided with any Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS) from statutory bodies, but the PMIE document is informed by the main themes and matters arising through consultation and ongoing discussions.

A complete set of application documents as set out in the enclosed Electronic Application Index accompanying this letter. We respectfully request that the Application Documents are made available following Acceptance of the Application by the Planning Inspectorate.

Hard copies of any or all of the Application Documents can be provided upon request.

We look forward to hearing from you in relation to formal Acceptance of the application and if any further assistance is required in that regard, please do not hesitate to contact Laura-Beth Hutton of this office using the contact information at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully



Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP

Enclosures