



||||| OXFORDSHIRE |||||
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

DCO Submission

Environmental Statement

Chapter 2: Description of Development and Alternatives

On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Document 6.2

Prepared by Oxalis Planning Ltd
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2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 This chapter contains a description of the Proposed Development. Before doing so a summary description of the current characteristics of the Application Site is set out below. The Site Location Plan is Document 2.4.
- 2.1.2 The points within the Scoping Opinion which are relevant to this chapter are addressed with an appropriate response in the table (2.1) below.

Table 2.1: Response to ES Scoping Opinion

Para Ref	Inspectorate's Comments	Applicant's Response
2.3.1	<p>The ES should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the Proposed Development comprising at least the information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development; • a description of the location of the development and description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including any requisite demolition works and the land-use requirements during construction and operation phases; and • a glossary to explain the technical terms used within the assessment and a list of abbreviations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the proposed development is included within this ES chapter. • A description of the Application Site and its physical characteristics are included within this ES chapter. • A glossary is provided within ES Chapter 1 (Introduction)
2.3.2	<p>The following information should be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated rail freight and lorry freight operations; • In addition to maximum floor space and height of the proposed buildings, other design details provided for the distribution and logistics buildings; • Location and design details of the Seven Trent Green Power IVC Composting facility within the Main Site; • The nature of the green infrastructure; • Nature and scale of the proposed highways works; and • Construction activities, programming and phasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated rail freight movement is set out in this ES Chapter. The anticipated lorry freight movement is included within ES Chapter 3 (Transport). • The detailed design of the units and OxSRFI scheme as a whole will be applied for through the relevant DCO requirements in due course – the detail design will be in accordance with the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5). The Design Approach Document (DAD) which accompanies the DCO submission includes a design code which will guide the detailed design. • The IVC Facility is no longer included as part of the Proposed Development, with further detail provided within this ES chapter

		<p>(and ES Chapter 13 Materials and Waste).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further details about the green infrastructure are provided within this ES chapter, ES Chapter 7 (LVIA) and the Design Approach Document (DAD). • Further details about the highways works are provided within this ES chapter, ES Chapter 3 (Transport) and the Highways Design Approach Document (DAD). • Further details about the construction activities, programming and phasing are provided within this ES chapter and the CEMP (ES Appendix 2.3).
2.3.3	The ES should apply consistent terminology for the various elements of the Proposed Development.	The Applicant has applied consistent terminology throughout the ES – please refer to the Glossary of Terms within ES Chapter 1 (Introduction).
2.3.4	Define what elements of the proposed development are integral to the NSIP and which is ‘associated development’ under the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) or is an ancillary matter	Please see paragraphs 2.3.61 and 2.3.62 of this ES chapter.
2.3.5	<p>The ES should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description and layout of the land use proposed for each area within the redline boundary; • Site preparation including demolition/relocation requirements, the movement of spoil and the need to import or export material; • Traffic movements; transport and access routes; temporary/permanent road closures; a description of any exceptional deliveries or abnormal loads; • Construction processes and methods including phasing, hours of work, the number of workers and the number and type of vehicles, plant and equipment; • Operational requirements including the main characteristics of the rail freight processes, both on and off-site, including the wider network of freight movements; operational phasing, if relevant; working hours; employment; energy use and consumption; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the OxSRFI Scheme is included within this ES Chapter, and in addition, it should be read in conjunction with the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5), the Components Plan (Document 2.13), Schedule 1 of the Draft DCO (Document 3.1) which set out the Proposed Development in full. • Details about site preparation are included in relevant ES Chapters (11 (Ground) and 13 (Waste)). The CEMP (ES Appendix 2.3) also includes some of the measures and methods to be employed during construction phase of the Proposed Development. • Traffic movements are described within ES Chapter 3 (Transport) and its appendices as relevant. Further details about road closures are also in the Draft DCO (Document 3.1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of works to utilities, including the water main diversion linked to the Thames Water underground reservoir. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction processes and methods are set out in the CEMP (ES Appendix 2.3). Details about the number of construction vehicles are included within ES Chapter 3 (Transport) and its appendices. Operational requirements of the rail freight are set out within this ES Chapter as relevant. A description of relevant works to utilities are included within this ES Chapter.
2.3.6	<p>The environmental effects of all wastes to be processed and removed from the site should be addressed. The ES will need to identify and describe the control processes and mitigation procedures for storing and transporting waste off site. All waste types should be quantified and classified.</p>	<p>Further details about the types of waste from the Proposed Development are included within ES Chapter 13 (Waste).</p>
2.3.7 – 2.3.8	<p><i>Alternatives</i> - A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects'</p>	<p>A description of reasonable alternatives is included within this ES Chapter, with further details included within the Planning Statement and Design Approach Document (DAD).</p>
2.3.9 – 2.3.11	<p><i>Flexibility</i> - The Inspectorate notes the Applicant's desire to incorporate flexibility into their draft DCO (dDCO) and its intention to apply a Rochdale Envelope approach for this purpose. Where the details of the Proposed Development cannot be defined precisely, the Applicant should apply a worst-case scenario. Each aspect chapter of the ES should include a section define and justify the Rochdale envelope parameters for that particular aspect.</p>	<p>A reasonable worst-case scenario has been applied to inform the assessment of effects within the ES – in most cases this assumes the maximum parameters, even where this is not likely (such as max. building heights at every building across every zone of the site). Each ES chapter also sets out the embedded and additional mitigation measures required to deliver the stated residual effects – on this basis these stated embedded and additional mitigation measures are the relevant 'parameters' in accordance with the Rochdale Envelope.</p>
2.3.12	<p>If the Proposed Development materially changes prior to submission of the DCO application, the Applicant may wish to consider requesting a new scoping opinion</p>	<p>The Applicant considers that the Proposed Development has not materially changed since the ES Scoping Opinion was provided and therefore a new scoping opinion has not been sought.</p>

- 2.1.3 As set out below, this chapter includes details of the various elements of the overall Application Site, consistent with the glossary contained in ES Chapter 1 (Introduction).

2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.2.1 The proposed 'Main Site' is located between the B430 and the former Upper Heyford Airfield, which is located to the west of the Main Site. It is immediately south of the Chiltern Main Line. It predominantly consists of agricultural land used for mixed arable and grazing purposes and includes the Ashgrove farmstead ("Ashgrove Farm") which comprises a number of farm buildings and residences, including Ashgrove Cottages. The farmstead includes a listed building.
- 2.2.2 The Main Site includes several existing Bridleways (Right of Way) routes 109/28, 109/29 and 109/30, with a number of new routes or extensions to existing routes nearby proposed or committed in the vicinity of the Main Site. Some of these new routes are mitigation approved as part of the approved Heyford Park development scheme to the west.
- 2.2.3 Also within the Main Site is the Biffa operated 'In-Vessel Composting' (IVC) Facility which is an operational commercial food and garden waste composting facility. The IVC facility comprises a weighbridge, reception building, composting tunnels, office and welfare facility, bio filter and maturation pad. The site receives waste from refuse collection which is turned into bagged compost product. 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 current facility supports relatively low employment levels (assumed to be 10 Full Time Employees (FTE)).
- 2.2.4 There is an underground reservoir in the south east part of the Main Site to the north of the proposed Heyford Park Link Road which will remain. In connection with the reservoir there are some substantial water mains. It is likely that some of the water mains will be diverted in agreement with Thames Water.
- 2.2.5 To the east of the Main Site and east of the B430 is the Viridor Ardley Energy Recovery Facility ("Viridor ERF"), as well as the Ardley Fields Household Waste and Recycling facility and Ardley Landfill Site – part of the landfill south

of the Chiltern Main Line is within the Order Limits, associated with the proposed rail connections to serve the proposed Rail Terminal. Further south of the waste facilities is the active 'Dewars Farm' minerals quarry (limestone and clay).

- 2.2.6 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.
- 2.2.7 The village of Middleton Stoney is located approximately 1.5km to the south of the Main Site, separated by intervening agricultural land and associated landscape and field boundary features. Within the intervening land lies the farmstead of Manor Farm.
- 2.2.8 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.
- 2.2.9 The Highways Works include land on both the eastern and western sides of M40 Junction 10 which is largely in agricultural use already directly influenced by highways infrastructure. The proposed, less substantial works at M40 Junction 9/A43 are similarly closely related to the existing highways infrastructure and have a more limited impact on currently undeveloped land.
- 2.2.10 The site of some proposed works includes the Padbury Brook watercourse. The proposed Ardley Bypass is on land to the east of Ardley, and crosses a number of existing field hedgerow boundaries, as well as the Chiltern Main Line.
- 2.2.11 Similarly, the Middleton Stoney Relief Road includes agricultural land to the north and east of the village and includes sections of woodland as well as the Gagle Brook corridor.
- 2.2.12 The Transport Assessment, and dialogue with the Transport Working Group (TWG) of relevant consultee bodies, including Oxfordshire County Council, has informed decisions regarding the need for local improvements at the A4095/B4030 roundabout at the eastern end of the B4030 corridor on the western edge of Bicester.

2.3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.3.1 The main components of the Proposed Development are listed below. A more detailed description of each of the main components is then set out. These should be read in conjunction with the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5), the Components Plan (Document 2.13), Schedule 1 of the Draft Development Consent Order (Document 3.1) and the works plans/highway drawings submitted as part of the application for DCO. The main components 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.

- 2.3.2 The components of the Proposed Development on the Main Site have defined parameters which are set out on the Parameters Plan and in the detailed description of development below. The parameters fix the disposition of the proposed uses including the intermodal rail freight terminal, the rail and road corridors within the site, the built development zones containing the proposed warehousing and HGV parking area, the Central Hub area, areas of retained landscape and areas for strategic landscaping including strategic landscape mounding. The maximum heights of buildings and other infrastructure relative to AoD are also fixed, as are the relative heights of the strategic mounding, and the minimum finished floor levels. The defined parameters have been used to explain and test the proposals in relation to economic, social and environmental assessment criteria.
- 2.3.3 The application assumes that the Proposed Development would be operational up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the ES has been assessed on this basis as a worst-case. In practice, future occupiers on-site are unlikely to operate in this way from the outset, and some may not do so at all, or only operate on a 24 hour basis on a seasonal basis (e.g, to accommodate Christmas or other peak periods of activity).
- 2.3.4 The components of the Proposed Development listed above are each described in further detail below.

Rail Freight Terminal and Associated Infrastructure (Zones B and C and Rail Corridor)

- 2.3.5 The rail freight terminal, rail corridor and associated infrastructure (sidings, storage facilities, etc.) are located adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line in the northern part of the Main Site with rail connections to allow for access to and from the Chiltern Main Line in both directions (see the rail plans under Documents 2.5). The associated rail infrastructure will include rail reception sidings, container storage area and associated container transfer equipment, and refuelling facility. The terminal area will also include HGV parking relating to the terminal use, and associated ancillary built accommodation such as gatehouses, and estate management offices. This area is identified as Zone C and the Rail Corridor on the Parameters Plan. The rail connection from the Chiltern Main Line includes limits of deviation (shown adjacent to the Rail Corridor), with the route to be confirmed through the detailed design.
- 2.3.6 The Rail Corridor area will include associated landscaping, which will be confirmed through the detailed design.

- 2.3.7 The Chiltern Main Line lies in cutting where it passes the Main Site. Significant earthworks will therefore be required to form the rail connections and rail freight terminal as they need to be at a similar level to the main line. The south eastern connection passes through the existing Ardley Landfill site. The required earthworks will therefore include the excavation and re-depositing of material elsewhere in the Ardley Landfill site, with a maximum height of material up to 128m AOD within the Landfill area (see ES Appendix ES 13.1).
- 2.3.8 The terminal is designed to accommodate trains of up to 775m length (maximum freight train length). The terminal would enable the transfer of freight from road to rail (and vice versa), as well as the storage of containers or other freight at the terminal itself. The Proposed Development is designed to allow rail sidings to be constructed directly into the yards of some of the warehouse units in Zones A1, A2 and A3.
- 2.3.9 A fully functioning rail freight terminal capable of accommodating a minimum of 4 trains will be built and completed prior to the occupation of 2.5 million sq.ft. (232,257 sq.m) of warehouse floor space on the Main Site. . The area available will enable the terminal to be expanded in the future in response to market demand and activity within Zone C, with the potential for up to 12 trains a day.
- 2.3.10 In addition to the above, Zone B is stated on the Parameters Plan as being an area which could be developed for 'Rail Freight Interchange and/or Development Area' – this will be confirmed through the detailed design but could also include the above rail related infrastructure and development as part of the SRFI.
- 2.3.11 The terminal area will accommodate:
- East and West facing main line connections to the Chiltern Main Line together with appropriate signalling;
 - 5 sidings each capable of stabling a full length 775m freight train, with 2 sidings closest to the main line being reception sidings and 3 handling sidings, although all sidings will be capable of receiving trains directly from the main line to minimise shunting;
 - a 775m headshunt and additional sidings to provide direct access to the yards of some of the warehouses;
 - An extensive area for container storage, with the ability for efficient layout and operation through reach stackers and gantry cranes;
 - Passive provision for future electrification;

- Management offices and welfare facilities;
- Gatehouses and extensive HGV parking areas;
- A maintenance compound.

Warehousing and Buildings (Zones A and B)

- 2.3.12 Zones A1-A5 on the Parameters Plan will accommodate the proposed warehousing. The maximum warehouse development footprint applied for is 603,850 sqm (approx. 6.5 million sq.ft.) with an allowance also made for the provision of additional mezzanine floorspace (up to one third of the total floorspace – 201,283 sqm).
- 2.3.13 Maximum building heights are proposed at up to 25.5m, but vary across the Proposed Development.
- 2.3.14 It should be noted that since the Stage 2 (statutory) consultation, Zone A4 has been divided up in to Zones A4a-c to reduce the maximum height of buildings permitted by the parameters in consideration of proposed and potential residential development at Heyford Park to the west.
- 2.3.15 The area defined as Zone B on the Parameters Plan may be used for warehousing or used as part of the rail freight interchange depending upon occupier and rail terminal requirements.
- 2.3.16 The number and precise layout of buildings is not fixed, but an Illustrative Masterplan (Document No. 2.6) is included with the application which shows one way in which this floorspace could be accommodated on the Main Site. However, the height and broad layout of development zones on the Main Site are fixed via the Parameters Plan, with a table on the plan setting out the ‘Schedule of Development Parameters’ (see Document 2.5). The final, detailed layout of the OxSRFI scheme will be determined post consent, but the expectation is for a range of large floorplate building sizes to be provided. The layout of the Proposed Development allows for flexibility in the scale and the design of individual units so that it can meet a wide range of market requirements. This includes the ability to accommodate very large floorspace units to respond to the needs for National Distribution Centres.
- 2.3.17 Much of the built floorspace would be located on development plots sunk into the Main Site following the implementation of a proposed earthworks strategy to not only create flat plateau, but to also enable creation of substantial

mounds around the Main Site to form part of the visual screening (mitigation) and landscaping.

- 2.3.18 Zone A will also include an area of secure, dedicated, HGV parking. This provision will ensure that HGVs arriving early at the Main Site are able to wait in a safe, suitable location. This will include driver welfare facilities and will help ensure that the Proposed Development does not contribute to any impacts on the amenity of nearby communities caused by parked HGVs, particularly overnight. This provision will only be available for HGV visiting the warehousing or the terminal.
- 2.3.19 The Main Site will incorporate a spine road which will run from the Main Site access through the centre of the site, providing access to all parts of the Main Site. The connection between the Main Estate Road and the Heyford Park Link Road will be restricted to use for buses, cyclists, pedestrians, and for emergency access arrangements only.
- 2.3.20 In addition to the 'built' development described above, Zone A will:
- Be designed to allow rail sidings to be constructed directly into the yards of some of the warehouse units in Zones A1, A2 and A3.
 - Include service roads including road access to the rail terminal;
 - Include on-plot landscaping and planting;
 - Include sub-stations and other utilities infrastructure; and
 - Include bus stops.

Central Hub (Zone D)

- 2.3.21 Zone D covers the Central Hub area which comprises Ashgrove Farm which includes the existing Grade II listed Threshing Barn, as well as the Ashgrove Cottages located directly off the B430. The Farm house and associated buildings including the Threshing Barn, together with Ashgrove Cottages are proposed to be retained and re-used within the Proposed Development, and will be redeveloped for ancillary uses relating to the OxSRFI.
- 2.3.22 The proposals for the retention, rejuvenation and re-use of the Listed Threshing Barn as a Welcome Building are submitted in full with the application. The proposals for the remainder of the Central Hub area will be set out post consent, in accordance with the principles established by the Central Hub Design Approach Document (DAD). The ancillary uses that the Central Hub could accommodate include:

- Education and Training Hub
- Rail and Estate Management Offices
- Meeting Rooms
- Creche
- Cafe
- Gym
- Changing Rooms
- External seating, event and recreation space
- Community garden and orchard relaxation and well-being areas
- Outdoor sport / MUGA
- Landscape Management and maintenance Offices
- Landscape and site management Equipment Store
- Car and cycle parking

2.3.23 Full details for the listed Threshing Barn are included but with only illustrative proposals for the remainder of the Central Hub area (see plans in Documents 2.14¹ and 2.16²). Full details for the remainder of the Central Hub will be provided through the submission of a scheme for approval in order to satisfy relevant DCO requirements.

Earthworks, and demolition of existing structures

2.3.24 To enable development to be delivered, substantial earthworks will be undertaken on the Main Site, with some areas of the Main Site being lowered significantly from existing ground levels. Most units will be located on plateaus with a portion of cut and fill required to create each plot, and currently only the western edge of Zone A3 on the Parameters Plan is placed wholly in cut (see **ES Appendix 11.7**).

2.3.25 The 'cut and fill' exercise will enable the creation of the mounding around the Main Site and which forms a key part of the landscaping strategy. The earthworks strategy is to achieve an overall earthworks balance and avoid the import or export of materials. In total the earthworks strategy could require the cut and fill of approximately 3.8Mm³ of soils and rock across the Main Site to create development platforms, railbed and roadways.

¹ Document 2.14 (series) – Listed Building Plans

² Document 2.16 (series) – Central Hub Plans

2.3.26 The Main Site is currently used primarily for arable agriculture, and some of the small existing buildings and structures will be demolished.

Strategic landscaping, ecology and planting and rights of way

2.3.27 The Proposed Development includes provision of landscaping and tree planting as part of the mitigation of visual and landscape effects, as well as for biodiversity enhancement. The design of the Main Site incorporates a landscaping strategy which includes retention of existing woodland blocks along the Main Estate Road and south of the Heyford Park Link Road (HPLR). In particular, land within the Main Site to the south of the HPLR is entirely for biodiversity and landscaping enhancement.

2.3.28 The landscape strategy compliments the earthworks strategy which would create substantial landscaped mounds around much of the Main Site perimeter, and which would form the bulk of the visual mitigation measures to substantially limit or eliminate outside views into the Main Site.

2.3.29 The strategy would ensure the establishment of a strong and cohesive framework of landscape and new habitat creation, delivering biodiversity gains and an environment that is pleasant to work in and travel around. The landscape strategy forms a main element of the overall development and would be fully integrated with the built development and infrastructure zones. In this respect it has not been designed (or should not be considered) as a separate part of the Proposed Development.

2.3.30 The existing underground reservoir, located between Zones A1 and A2 will be retained within an area of landscape/green infrastructure with access from the site Estate Roads.

2.3.31 The core principles of the landscape strategy are:

- The provision of approximately 132 hectares (ha) of land on the Main Site dedicated to landscape, green infrastructure, and habitat creation—representing approximately half of the total Main Site area.
- Conserved wooded areas and habitats, particularly along the central watercourse and around the perimeter of the Main Site.
- A mix of new native woodland, trees, hedgerows, scrub and open calcareous and conservation grassland habitats, extending around the built development zones. This will encompass broad landscape

swathes to all sides of the Main Site and alongside all new highways and junction areas.

- Perimeter strategic mounding, extending around all sides and aspects of the Main Site. Bund heights vary but many are around 10m high and 100m wide. In conjunction with the conserved trees and planting and new woodland, scrub and other planting, this proposed mounding and planting will provide mitigation and visual screening to views from all directions around the Main Site. It should be noted that the bund at the north-eastern end of the former Upper Heyford Airfield has been reduced to a 'half-height' following discussions with Historic England in relation to preserving historic views from the runway (please refer to ES Chapter 10 (Heritage) for further details). It should also be noted that the bund to the south-west of the Main Site, alongside Zones A4b/c has been amended post the Stage 2 (statutory) consultation with increased height (by approx. 1m) and width in consideration of proposed and potential residential development at Heyford Park to the west.
- Sustainable drainage ponds and swales and other measures sited in the broad landscape areas and also within the Zone A development areas. In addition to satisfying drainage requirements, these will be designed for landscape, amenity and biodiversity benefits.
- New public access routes providing a variety of multi-user routes and opportunities within and around the Main Site. This will include circuitous loops around the perimeter landscape and green infrastructure areas, and connections to and extensions of existing routes and PROW within the immediate context of the Application Site. This includes the provision of new connections linking the Main Site to Bicester and other nearby communities.

2.3.32 The Proposed Development includes an area for ecological mitigation within the Main Site to the north-west boundary. There are also additional areas for ecological mitigation which are outside but close to the Main Site, and within highways works areas, including land adjacent to the Middleton Stoney Relief Road and land further to the north-west and south of the Chiltern Main Line. Further details for these areas are included within ES Chapter 6 (Ecology).

Highway Works

- 2.3.33 A package of highway works are proposed as part of the Proposed Development (see **ES Appendix 2.1** – Highways Works Overview Plan). These include alterations to Junction 10 of the M40 motorway and to the A43 trunk road, new road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including provision of a 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
- 2.3.34 The proposed alterations to Junction 10 of the M40 and A43 trunk road each constitute nationally significant infrastructure projects in their own right because they trigger the relevant thresholds of the Planning Act 2008.
- 2.3.35 Further details about each component are set out below.

The Principal Site Access

- 2.3.36 The Principal Site access will be formed at the end of the Ardley bypass where it intersects with the B430. It will be a signalised roundabout and will incorporate a segregated left-turn lane to direct all HGVs leaving the Main Site northwards to the M40 Junction 10 via the Ardley Bypass. Buses will be permitted to turn right onto the B430

Junction 10 Highway Improvement Works and A43 Trunk Road Works

- 2.3.37 The proposed improvement works at J10 include enlarging Ardley roundabout, a new bridge over the M40, relocated and amended slip roads on and off the junction, widening of the A43, and amendments to the Cherwell, Padbury and Baynard's Green roundabouts.

Ardley Bypass

- 2.3.38 A new link road is to be constructed, connecting the Main Site directly to J10 of the M40. This new road will form a bypass to the village of Ardley. The Bypass is proposed from a reconfigured Ardley Roundabout (at the western side of the current Junction 10 of the M40) on an alignment east of the B430. It would tie-in with the proposed re-located south facing M40 slip roads, and the would include the existing Ardley Road - bridge over the Bypass route.

- 2.3.39 The existing B430 will be stopped up to the south of Ardley village and north of the new Main Site access roundabout, and so all through-traffic would be removed from the village.
- 2.3.40 The Ardley Bypass would bridge over the Chiltern Main Line railway to serve the Main Site and rejoin the existing B430.

Middleton Stoney Relief Road

- 2.3.41 This is a new single carriageway road to the north-eastern side of Middleton Stoney which will provide a link from the B4030 to the B430 north of Middleton Stoney.
- 2.3.42 The Middleton Stoney Relief Road (alongside other highways measures described within this ES Chapter, including the proposed HGV Routeing Strategy) is forecast to reduce existing traffic from the village centre.

Heyford Park Link Road

- 2.3.43 This is a new single carriageway road which will provide a link from the B430 north of Middleton Stoney to Heyford Park. The western extent of this new link will tie in with the current Camp Road.
- 2.3.44 A Secondary Access into the Main Site will be formed off the Heyford Park Link Road at the southern end of the Main Site. This will be restricted to bus, cycle and pedestrian and emergency access only – all other vehicular traffic will use the main access further north from the B430.

Junction 9 Highway Improvement Works

- 2.3.45 The Junction 9 works comprise capacity improvement works at the roundabout from the A34 to the M40 northbound.

Local Highways Works

- 2.3.46 Local highways works are proposed to be carried out at the junctions of Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive, Middleton Road, the B430 west of the Main Site, Quarry Cottages, Middleton Stoney Crossroads and Aves Ditch, all in the vicinity of the Main Site. In addition, works to the A4095/B4030 roundabout at Middleton Stoney Road and Vendee Drive west of Bicester are proposed to be

subject to financial contribution by the Applicant to enable works to be delivered by the County Council in due course. This will be secured through a Section 106 Agreement once the level of contribution has been agreed with the Council.

Walking and Cycling

- 2.3.47 The Proposed Development will include footpath and cycle way connections through the Main Site (see **ES Appendix 2.2** – Footway/Cycleway/Rights Of Way Strategy Overview). This will include new provision along the Estate roads within the Main Site but also via diversions to existing Bridleways which cross the Main Site. Such routes will be diverted and extended to form circular loops within the landscaping areas, including a connection over the SRFI rail sidings to link to the existing bridge over the Chiltern Main Line. This would provide a connection to existing bridleways and footpaths that run northwards into Ardley.
- 2.3.48 The proposed new roads (Ardley Bypass and Middleton Stoney Relief Road) will incorporate public footpaths and cycle routes with at grade crossings provided to enable continued access and connectivity. Connections will be retained along the Bypass and Relief Road including an underpass to allow continued movement and connections with the existing network for all users including equestrians. In addition, new routes and connections to the existing network of routes to the east and south-east of the Main Site will be provided and facilitated to help deliver new connectivity from the Application Site to Bicester – this includes a route which facilitates improved cycle access to the B4030.

Utilities

- 2.3.49 The Proposed Development includes or requires the delivery of works to various utilities networks, both ‘off-site’ and within the Application Site. This includes different types of works including diversion, additional protection, or removal. The Applicant has engaged with network owners or operators, with dialogue ongoing, with a view to minimising disruption and ensuring connectivity and operation of these networks.
- 2.3.50 Works will include disconnecting existing properties or premises from existing networks (for example, buildings proposed to be demolished at the existing IVC green waste facility). New connections will be required to water, foul water, and power networks. The new utilities infrastructure explicitly included

within the Proposed Development includes a new foul drainage outfall to Bicester which runs from Middleton Stoney to Bicester within the B4030 corridor.

2.3.51 As part of the site enabling works (which will be phased across the site) it will be necessary to divert or relocate utilities infrastructure. Any works undertaken will be done so in accordance with relevant statutory, legislative or regulatory standards. The DCO also includes relevant 'Protective Provisions' which will help govern the works undertaken to existing utilities infrastructure – anticipated utilities works include:

Main Site

- Thames Water mains diversions, and new water connection to serve the OxSRFI site;
- Southern Electric Power Distribution overline electric lines diversions
- Telecomms (Openreach and others) diversions
- New foul sewerage connection (also referred to above).

Highway works

- Various existing infrastructure is known to be located within existing highways, some of which may need to be relocated or diverted, including:
 - o Telecomms (Openreach and others)
 - o Anglian Water
 - o Scottish and Southern Gas Networks.

Mitigation

2.3.52 The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations) (EIA Regulations) require that an ES shall include “a description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements”³.

2.3.53 Accordingly, where the assessment of the Proposed Development has identified potential for significant adverse environmental effects, the scope for mitigation of those effects has been considered and is outlined in the relevant ES chapter. Such measures would be secured by appropriate DCO requirements, and are set out along with other measures within the Commitments Tracker (Document 7.3) which forms part of the submission.

³ (Regulation 14(2)(c) and paragraph 7 of Schedule 4 to the EIA Regulations).

- 2.3.54 Two types of mitigation are referred to within the topic chapters of this ES. The first comprises measures included as part of the design of the Proposed Development including good practice measures (referred to as '**embedded mitigation**'). The second comprises measures proposed to avoid effects occurring or to minimise environmental effects, and are not included within the design (referred to as '**additional mitigation**').
- 2.3.55 The Proposed Development includes a range of embedded mitigation and design measures which form part of the proposals and have been developed in consideration of various likely effects, such as visual and noise, and have been incorporated into the scheme parameters. These measures include:
- The siting and heights of the landscaping and earthworks bunds which provide a screen to mitigation effects relating visual, lighting and noise impacts on the nearest sensitive receptors;
 - A variation in maximum building heights across the site to reflect different relationships with off-site 'receptors' and to mitigate and minimise effects;
 - The landscaping strategy and extent of new habitat creation and green space, as well as the retention of existing features (trees and hedges), which help the scheme deliver biodiversity net gain and other benefits;
 - Extent and location of built development zones which ensure buffers and distance from the nearest sensitive receptors to help minimise or mitigate effects;
 - Farm complex re-use, including the retention and restoration of the listed building;
 - Allowance of areas for sustainable drainage features which help provide mitigation against flood risk, as well as delivering benefits in terms of drainage, climate change and biodiversity;
 - Provision for active travel through new and improved walking and cycling provision with connections both on the Main Site, and off-site as part of the Highways Works. These deliver benefits relating to improved accessibility in the area and additional health and climate change;

- Design of the highways works, including the Ardley Bypass and Middleton Stoney Relief Road, which are proposed to reduce pollution and traffic through both the Ardley and Middleton Stoney villages, as well as being repositioned to minimise harm to buried archaeological assets around J10.
- 2.3.56 Embedded mitigation also includes good practice measures to be implemented during the construction phase to provide protection from construction impacts, such as measures contained in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (**ES Appendix 2.3**) – described further below.
- 2.3.57 Other ‘embedded’ mitigation measures, specific to each discipline, are set out in individual ES chapters.
- 2.3.58 ‘Additional’ mitigation measures: i.e., those which are ‘additional’ to the embedded mitigation measures, such as measures for appropriate long term management of retained and new habitats, as set out in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) (ES Appendix 6.11), are also described in the individual ES chapters, where relevant.

Construction and Phasing

- 2.3.59 It is anticipated that the general construction programme will broadly be broken down into four key components, as listed below:
- Highways improvements:
 - J10 Highway Improvement Works;
 - A43 Trunk Road works;
 - Ardley Bypass link from J10 to and including the Principal Access;
 - Middleton Stoney Relief Road;
 - Heyford Park Link Road;
 - Other off-site works including
 - A43 Baynard’s Green Roundabout
 - Middleton Road
 - Works to the B430 east of the Main Site;
 - Quarry Cottages;
 - Works at the junction of Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive;
 - Middleton Stoney crossroads
 - Aves Ditch;
 - Minor works to M40 J9; and

- Improvements to the A4095/B4030 roundabout (through a Section 106 Agreement contribution).
 - On-site works (not including rail and buildings):
 - Site preparation;
 - Earthworks;
 - Landscaping;
 - Biodiversity enhancement works;
 - Main Estate Road.
 - Rail Freight Terminal;
 - Warehouses and Central Hub;
- 2.3.60 The above works are expected to be phased over a 7-year period, and this forms the basis of the assumptions in the ES. Assuming the Development Consent Order is made (i.e., assuming an approval), construction works are assumed to begin in 2028. An indicative Master programme, appended to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (**ES Appendix 2.3**), sets out the anticipated programme for the construction of the Proposed Development.
- 2.3.61 The proposed approach to the phasing of works would see a process of technical approvals alongside initial site preparation works. The development will commence with Main Site earthworks closely followed by highways works which comprise the Principal Access junction, Ardley Bypass (linking the Principal Access to M40 J10), Junction 10 Highway Improvements, the A43 Baynard's Green Roundabout and Heyford Park Link Road.
- 2.3.62 A temporary construction access for the Main Site from the existing Ashgrove Farm access off the B430 will be in place until the main construction access is delivered, and will be at a similar point as the Principal Site Access off the B430.
- 2.3.63 The proposals involve a commitment to the construction of significant infrastructure early in the development process, including the rail terminal and rail connections to the main line, highway works, earthworks and landscaping.
- 2.3.64 The CEMP (**ES Appendix 2.3**) has been prepared which sets out the overarching system and controls that will be adopted during the construction of the Proposed Development to minimise any adverse environmental effects. In particular, the mitigation proposed during the construction of the Proposed Development, in many cases, relies on the construction management regime

that will be enforced through the CEMP and subsequent phase specific CEMPs (P-CEMPS).

NSIPs and Associated Development

2.3.65 The DCO application is seeking approval for three separate Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in one DCO. These are:

- a rail freight interchange including warehousing which meets the criteria set out in Section 26 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (“the 2008 Act”);
- the alteration of a motorway (M40 Junction 10) exceeding the thresholds set out in Section 22 of the 2008 Act; and
- the alteration of an All-Purpose Trunk Road (A43) exceeding the thresholds set out in Section 22 of the 2008 Act.

2.3.66 The associated development includes some highway mitigation works which are not part of NSIPs 2 and 3, the Central Hub facility, extensive green infrastructure including strategic landscaping and areas dedicated to biodiversity. These elements can all be seen across the following drawings: Works Plans (Document series 2.2), the Parameters Plan (Document 2.5), Highway Plans General Arrangements (Document series 2.7), Listed Building Plans (Document series 2.14), and the Central Hub Plans (Document series 2.16).

2.4 APPROACH TO ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Energy

2.4.1 The Energy Strategy (see ES Appendix 15.4), tied in part to the mitigation of effects on climate change, sets out how the Proposed Development will play a direct role in enabling the transition towards a more sustainable economy with Government targets for the UK to be ‘zero net carbon’ by 2050.

2.4.2 The Energy Strategy sets out to maximise the energy efficiency of the development and thus reduce the energy demands (and carbon emissions), the following design principles and features have been incorporated:

- Building fabric and glazing specifications to deliver energy efficiency which meets or exceeds Building Regulation requirements.
- Reduced air permeability compared to required standards.

- Specification of efficient heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) services and control systems.
- Energy efficient lighting throughout the development.

2.4.3 The strategy will assess and model the impact the package of measures proposed will deliver quantified reductions in CO2 emissions over the baseline emissions.

Reducing carbon dioxide emissions through green measures

2.4.4 A low or zero carbon (LZC) technology feasibility study was completed as part of this Energy Strategy which compared the feasibility of different technologies taking into consideration several different factors, including local authority requirements, land use, potential noise impacts and available space within the development. Based on this, it was identified that the most appropriate technology to meet its sustainability and energy targets, is the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels and localised Air Source Heat Pumps. These, alongside the above-mentioned energy efficiency measures, will comply with the energy requirements to achieve the targeted BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, or better, for the OxSRFI scheme.

2.4.5 In terms of PV coverage, at this stage of the design approximately 15% of the gross internal area of the Main Site buildings (25,870 sq.m) has been allocated for the installation of solar PV on the roofs of the buildings. The final roof area of PV installed will be informed by the efficiency and manufacturer of PV panel chosen in due course, and future occupier requirements, but the design of the warehouse buildings will enable up to 100% of available roof coverage ultimately if required.

2.4.6 Based on the approach proposed, including a robust approach to the energy hierarchy, the proposed development is expected to meet or exceed the relevant local authority policy and Building Regulations. The proposed strategy will achieve a site wide total reduction in regulated energy consumption and associated emissions over Building Regulations 2021 through the incorporation of energy efficiency measures and the inclusion of low/zero carbon technologies.

Approach to Sustainability

2.4.7 Alongside the above mentioned approach regarding the energy strategy for the Proposed Development (i.e. promoting energy efficiency and low/zero carbon technology in order to reduce the energy demand and associated emissions associated with the operation of the proposed buildings), the following items feature at the heart of the Proposed Development's approach to sustainable design and operation, relevant to both the construction and operational phases

- BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' targeted, aspiring to achieve an 'Outstanding' rating;
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A+ rating for all distribution buildings on-site, and building management systems to enable monitoring and management of energy use by occupiers;
- Enhanced 'U values' to limit heat/energy loss, and high levels of air tightness (in excess of standards required by Building Regulations);
- Proportion and distribution of glazing to ensure good levels of daylight which promotes well-being and reduces electricity consumption through artificial lighting;
- Intelligent, high efficiency LED light fittings to reduce energy consumption through daylight dimming and infra-red (movement based) controls;
- Use of water saving and monitoring/control devices to minimise water consumption including low flow rate showers, low flow dual flush WC's and flow restrictors on taps;
- 25% target for car parking spaces to be EV charging spaces, with passive charging infrastructure provided across remaining car parking spaces to ensure provision should there be future demand;
- On-site and off-site segregation and recycling of waste materials (construction and operational waste);
- Inclusion of surface water attenuation/protection measures to minimise watercourse pollution and support habitat creation while responding to the increasing requirements created by climate change;
- Extensive provision of new walking and cycling, as well a public transport access to the site to enable travel by means other than the car, and ease of movement around the site;
- Significant new green infrastructure and tree planting, including 10% biodiversity net gain to be delivered, to aid habitat enhancement and to create shade and spaces for recreation and active travel;
- To target 90% of construction waste being diverted from landfill; and

- Commitment to reduced emissions arising from both the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, as set out within a Carbon Management Plan.

2.5 ALTERNATIVES AND DESIGN EVOLUTION

2.5.1 The EIA Regulations (as amended) required applicants to provide an outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for the chosen proposal, taking into account the environmental effects

2.5.2 The EIA Regulations require that an environmental statement include:

“a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;”⁴

and , if relevant,

“a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects..”⁵

2.5.3 The National Networks National Policy Statement (NPS) confirms that applicants should comply with these requirements and any other policy requirements in respect of the assessment of alternatives.⁶ The NPS states that:

“where there is a policy or legal requirement to consider alternatives, the applicant should describe the alternatives considered in compliance with these requirements and in a proportionate manner”⁷

2.5.4 In considering alternatives, there are therefore a number of aspects and scenarios to be taken into account. Examining alternatives should involve the consideration of potential alternative locations for the Proposed Development,

⁴ 2017 EIA Regulations (as amended) Part 5, Regulation 18 (3) (d)

⁵ 2017 EIA Regulations (as amended) Schedule 4 Paragraph 2.

⁶ Paragraph 4.20 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

⁷ Paragraph 4.20, 3rd bullet point of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

where this is feasible. It should however, also examine alternative design and mitigation approaches and where relevant alternative processes and technologies. This could include alternative approaches to construction activities. The assessments of alternative locations have been limited to the SRFI element of the proposals and does not consider the highway works which are a direct consequence of the SRFI.

Alternative Masterplanning

- 2.5.5 Alternative design approaches have been considered through the iterative process of site assembly, masterplanning, assessment and consultation with the public and other consultees. The starting point has been the national requirements for SRFIs, however as an iterative process the design of the Proposed Development has undergone many changes as part of a rigorous approach to its design development. This has been underpinned by the environmental assessment process, which has been used to both inform and test the proposals.
- 2.5.6 The Design Approach Document (DAD), and the separate Planning Statement, explain the evolution of the proposals, including reference to key reasons for the preferred, proposed approach to site design and layout. The proposals are intended to balance the functional needs and requirements of large scale logistics and freight distribution, to create a high quality, attractive development, while also seeking to minimise local environmental effects.
- 2.5.7 A key driver of the preferred approach has been to achieve good design through siting and design measures related to the existing landscape character, function and surrounding land form. The evolution of the proposals is intrinsically linked to the work to understand the landscape and visual effects of the proposal. The Proposed Development is underpinned by a strong landscape strategy, with development plots surrounded by landscaped bunds, which will both help screen and visually contain the site. Various options were also considered regarding the size and location of the proposed warehousing 'zone' within the site to find the most efficient and appropriate disposition of uses within the site. This included consideration of various options of how to configure the rail terminal and associated infrastructure, including the head-shunt and sidings, etc. As shown in the DAD, the key components of the design of the Proposed Development evolved, with key component being a connection to Chiltern Main Line, as well as to the M40 and moving traffic away from local village centres.

- 2.5.8 Overall, the design taken forward for the Proposed Development balances a range of environmental and operational considerations based on the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. The site access and design proposals reflect the need to ensure that the Proposed Development minimises the environmental impacts, and maximises the potential for design and/ or mitigation measures to be successful in delivering reductions in any adverse impacts and maximise any benefits from the proposals.
- 2.5.9 Details of various options and alternatives are provided in the DAD, but having considered a number of alternative approaches to site design and layout, and in light of the range of assessments undertaken to prepare the ES – and public consultation responses – the Proposed Development as submitted best achieves this balance.
- 2.5.10 The following issues are seen as key to the identification of the final optimal scheme as submitted:
- It ensures no more land is taken out of agricultural use than is required, but contains sufficient land to ensure a range of new habitats and a significant net gain in biodiversity are provided.
 - The Main Site includes the land required to accommodate earthworks and landscaping which appropriately screen the rail terminal and buildings, as well as landscaping and drainage features associated with the Highways Works and other road infrastructure.
 - The proposed changes to the ground levels on the Main Site and the height of the proposed landscaped bunds will minimise the visual effects on nearby receptors, with many locations having views of the proposed buildings and terminal eliminated altogether.
 - The Main Site's location and layout ensures that surface water associated with the Proposed Development can be accommodated, stored and managed.
 - The proposals also include the land required to ensure suitable mitigation for the likely highways impacts, with significant improvements to Junction 10 which will deliver wider benefits to users of the surrounding network.

Alternative Locations for the Heyford Park Link Road and Middleton Stoney Link Road

- 2.5.11 An assessment of alternatives routes and junction options were considered by the Applicant for the proposed Heyford Park Link Road and Middleton Stoney Link Road during the development of the scheme – these included routes further north and south, and different junction arrangements. The assessment of these different options included a consideration of environmental effects with technical input covering air quality, noise, heritage, landscape and visual, drainage, ecology and, geology and soils, as well as transport connectivity.
- 2.5.12 Technical discussions with National Highways and the Local Highways Authority as part of the Transport Working Group were held to help inform a decision about the most appropriate routes for these highways works. Details of the alternatives are presented in the Options Report which is appended to Transport Assessment which is Appendix 3.1 to ES Chapter 3 (Transport).

Alternative Locations for the SRFI

- 2.5.13 An assessment of alternative locations is more generally required where there would be a need to examine alternatives, such as when development is proposed in the Green Belt or in the floodplain. Further, where development meets only part of a defined need (such as housing development) or is part of a network (such as SRFI) then alternative locations would not necessarily be addressed by a developer for the purposes of satisfying the EIA regulations. In the case of SRFI guidance, the NPS expressly seeks provision of an expanded network throughout the country⁸ (i.e., multiple facilities).
- 2.5.14 Nonetheless, consideration has been given to potential alternatives and analysis has been prepared in anticipation that the decision maker might find it helpful to have information on the applicant's view of other options considered by way of potential alternatives. The Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA) is appended to this chapter as **ES Appendix 2.4**, with a brief summary set out below.
- 2.5.15 The ASA sets out that the NPS highlights the government's commitment to grow the rail freight sector and has set a target "*of at least 75% growth in rail freight by 2050*". The NPS acknowledges that to achieve this level of growth, "*the right infrastructure needs to be in place, providing the necessary capacity*

⁸ Paragraph 3.105 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

*and capability to support growth. SRFIs are crucial to rail freight growth*⁹. The NPS also goes on to state: *“to facilitate this modal shift, a network of SRFIs is needed across a broad range of regions, to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets”*¹⁰.

2.5.16 The NPS considers the alternative options to the growth of rail freight which comprises:

- a reliance on existing rail freight interchanges to manage demand,
- a reliance on road based logistics, or
- a reliance on a larger number of smaller rail freight interchanges.

2.5.17 The NPS sets out that none of these options are *“viable or desirable”*¹¹, and therefore concludes that *“there is a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs throughout the country”*¹².

2.5.18 The starting point for the consideration of potential alternatives is to identify the area of search. After a consideration of the consented and proposed SRFIs, it is apparent that substantial gaps in the national network remain. One of the most striking of these is along the M40 corridor between London and Birmingham, particularly the southern end of this around Oxford and north-west of London – indeed, the lack of large scale SRFI’s serving London is noted in the NPS¹³. Consistent with the NPS, appropriate locations for SRFI are those with appropriate strategic connections (both rail and road) but also proximity to major markets and, in this context, the lack of provision along the M40 corridor represents a current gap in the network.

2.5.19 Having established the initial Search Area, the next stage of the assessment involved establishing ‘Focus Areas’ to refine the assessment. These are areas of land that fit the following pre-determined criteria, which is based on both national policy guidance for locating SRFIs and established approaches adopted by previous SRFI applications. It would clearly be inappropriate to consider areas that are not in reasonable proximity to railway or major roads or are in areas which have prohibitive environmental constraints. The key criteria are:

⁹ Paragraph 3.99 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

¹⁰ Paragraph 3.100 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

¹¹ Paragraph 3.102 and Table 1 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

¹² Paragraph 3.103 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

¹³ Paragraph 3.103 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

- Proximity to rail infrastructure: located within 5km of an existing rail line on the strategic rail network (as defined by the NPS);
- Proximity to road infrastructure: located within 5km of an existing junction on the Strategic Road Network (as defined by the NPS); and
- Key Environmental Constraints: outside of land designated as a National Landscape¹⁴.

- 2.5.20 The ASA adopted a comprehensive and thorough methodology when assessing individual alternative sites. This included an extensive search area along the M40, for sites which must be at least 60ha in size and have capacity to handle four or more trains a day¹⁵. The ASA notes that the OxSRFI Main Site would be approximately 300 hectares (including proposed landscaping, but excluding highways works) with the capacity to handle at least 4 goods trains per day and, therefore, meets the requirements to form an NSIP. The ASA then highlights that all other recently approved and proposed SRFI are of a similar scale and therefore, it is considered by the Applicant that significantly smaller sites are less likely to be able to meet all of the requirements to deliver a viable SFRI.
- 2.5.21 Building upon the criteria set out above, the ASA identifies 14 sites within three Focus Areas which identified for further assessment.
- 2.5.22 Several factors then informed the ‘sifting process’ of these 14 sites, such as environmental designations or features and Local Plan policy considerations, proximity to the strategic rail and road networks, and deliverability of connections to them, proximity to existing or proposed residential areas and existing availability. Where apparent, such issues as extreme topography, or the presence of water features and areas at risk of flooding were also taken into account. The outcome of the sifting process demonstrated that 11 of the 14 sites failed to meet one or more of the fundamental criteria.
- 2.5.23 The three potential alternative sites which progressed from the sifting process were assessed in greater detail – these sites are known as: Land north of Bucknall (Site 2.4), Land south-east of Junction 11 (Site 3.2), and Land south of Middleton Cheney (Site 3.4). Upon assessment, the ASA found these sites were considered **not suitable** as alternative sites when compared to the OxSRFI site from a planning and environmental perspective.

¹⁴ Previously referred to an Area of Natural Beauty (AoNB) – see paragraph 4.20 of the NPS (Department for Transport, 2024)

¹⁵ Part 3, clause 26 of the Planning Act 2008

2.5.24 The findings of the ASA therefore demonstrated that the OxSRFI is the most preferable site within the established Search Area for the delivery of a SRFI.