



Planning Inspectorate  
c/o QUADIENT  
69 Buckingham Avenue  
Slough  
SL1 4PN

Customer  
Services: 0303 444 5000  
e-mail: [oxfordshiresrfi@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:oxfordshiresrfi@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

---

To the applicant  
(By email only)

Case ref: TR050008

Date: 28 April 2026

---

To Oxfordshire Railfreight Ltd

## **Planning Act 2008 – section 51**

### **Application by Oxfordshire Railfreight Ltd for an order granting development consent for the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange**

#### **Advice following issue of decision to accept the application for examination**

On 28 April, the Secretary of State considered the application against the acceptance tests set out in section 55 of the Planning Act 2008. In doing so, the Secretary of State noted that the application did not fully comply with the publicity requirements of section 48 of the Act and Regulation 4(2)(a) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009. Notwithstanding this, as other statutory pre-application consultation activity and publicity were otherwise undertaken in accordance with the statutory framework, the Secretary of State has decided, on balance, to accept the application for examination.

The Planning Inspectorate's acceptance checklist and the application documents have been published and made available on the project page of our website.

In undertaking checks at the acceptance stage, the Inspectorate has made some initial observations in relation to the application. This letter comprises advice to the applicant provided under section 51 of the PA2008 in respect of these initial observations. Please see appendix A for further advice. The applicant should pay attention to its content and consider how appropriate action might be taken in response.

#### **Environmental Statement**

ES Appendix 6.1 Ecological Appraisal Report (Doc 6.6A) was submitted marked 'confidential'. Although the document contains some sensitive environmental information (regarding Schedule 1 birds and badger setts), considering the Inspectorate's obligations under the Environment Information Regulations, it would be appropriate for those specific

pieces of information to be redacted, rather than marking the entire document as confidential.

We request a version of this document be provided with the 'confidential' title removed before the relevant representation period opens. The Inspectorate will redact and publish according to our redaction policy.

## **Consultation Report and appendices**

The applicant explains in paragraphs 9.0.6 to 9.0.9 of the Consultation Report (Doc 5.1) that they did not comply with regulation 4(2)(a) of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009. In particular, the applicant acknowledges that the statutory notice was published in two local newspapers for one week only, rather than for the minimum two-week period required by the Regulations. The applicant confirms that this shortfall arose because of human error.

The applicant outlines that consultation activity was otherwise undertaken in accordance with the statutory framework and that a range of additional methods were employed to inform the public of the consultation. This included making consultation materials available on the Public Notice Portal for thirty-one days, alongside wider, non-prescribed engagement activity, evidencing an intention to engage with the community and encourage participation. While such engagement is noted and welcomed, the applicant is strongly reminded that alternative or supplementary consultation activity, including extended availability of information online, does not negate or substitute for compliance with the specific statutory publicity requirements set out in legislation, including the prescribed duration of newspaper notice publication.

The applicant notes how they complied with the approach set out in their Statement of Community Consultation at both informal and formal consultation stages, documented in appendices 2 and 19 of the Consultation Report (Docs 5.1A and 5.1G).

The Inspectorate strongly recommends the applicant pay close attention to the requirements of relevant legislation and engage with communities affected by their proposal in a fashion above reproach. The Inspectorate also strongly advises that the applicant takes the necessary steps to ensure full compliance with future legislative requirements.

The applicant is advised to include cover pages for all appendices, for consistency and to aid comprehension and searchability. For example, document 5.1K has no cover pages separating appendices, whereas document 5.1I does.

Paragraph 7.1.2 of the report states 'The list of those consulted under s44 is not included due to Data Protection requirements.' These are not the Inspectorate's requirements and are inconsistent with other recently accepted applications, such as East Pye Solar and Lime Down Solar Project. The applicant is encouraged to review their decision to not include their list of s44 consultees.

## **Book of Reference**

It is suggested the applicant add a column to Part 1 of the Book of Reference (BoR) (Doc 4.3) cross-referring articles in the DCO to each related plot, as can be seen in the BoR for Portishead Branch Line - MetroWest Phase 1.

Please pay close attention to the advice set out in this letter and its appendix and act on it accordingly. It is requested that you action these points before the commencement of the relevant representation period. This will contribute towards a more efficient examination and give any future Examining Authority comfort that the documentation is complete and accurate.

We trust you find this advice helpful. If you have any queries on these matters please do not hesitate to contact our office using the contact details at the head of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Sheard  
**Case Manager**

This communication does not constitute legal advice.

Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to the Planning Inspectorate.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



## Appendix A – amendments and minor errors and omissions

### Minor errors and omissions

There are minor errors and omissions, as reflected in Box 30 of the acceptance checklist, which require consideration by the applicant.

### General comments

The Inspectorate advises all documents should include a document control sheet; they are necessary to be able to track changes to documents during examination. It should be noted that an author's/supplier's document issue record, for example in document 6.11F, is not sufficient. The document control sheet should appear immediately after the cover sheet.

Contents sheets across the application should show page numbers and be hyperlinked to the relevant section; this is necessary due to the size of some documents and for accessibility.

A document's revision history prior to the submission of the application is irrelevant to the examination. For example, the Land Plan Key Plan (Doc 2.1) is titled and includes a revision number within the document of 'v8.0'. All document version/revision numbers should be reset at the point of submission. We request all documents be updated to reflect this.

Unless both a clean and tracked change version of a document is submitted to the Inspectorate, we expect all documents to be clean; free of tracked changes, comments, and draft watermarks, for example. The applicant is advised to review their application and resubmit clean versions of documents where 'working' copies have been unintentionally submitted; for example, ES appendix 15.5 Carbon Management Plan (Doc 6.15E) contains editing comments.

The application should be reviewed to ensure all necessary documents and components of documents, such as appendices, figures, and tables, have been submitted for examination. Examples of missing documents and components can be found in Box 30 of the s55 checklist.

### Environmental Statement

The Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion (Doc 6.32) is incorrectly titled "Scoping Opinion Response". This is misleading, as it implies that it is the applicant's response to the Scoping Opinion, and should be amended.

ES Appendix 3.1 Transport Assessment (Doc 6.3A) is eleven separate documents. They need to be referenced separately, for example '6.3A01'.

## Plans

It would benefit the reader for plans, in particular the Land Plans and Works Plans, to be submitted as single documents, rather than separating each sheet of the plans into individual documents.

The Land Plan Key Plan (Doc 2.1) shows dashed purple lines which are missing from the legend. The legend should be updated to describe the dashed purple lines, as it does for the red and black lines. Also, the red line would benefit from being more distinct, to aid visibility.

The Works Plan Key Plan (Doc 2.2) is orientated with north pointing to the left of the plan. This is different from the orientation of the individual sheets which have north pointing to the top of the sheets. It is also different from the Land Plan where the key and all sheets have north pointing to the top. It would be of considerable assistance to the reader for the Works Plan Key Plan to be orientated in the same way as the individual sheets. The applicant is encouraged to check that all key plans have north pointing to the top of the sheet.

It would greatly assist the reader if the Location Plan (Order Limits) (Doc 2.4) and any other plans showed road numbers and labelled the railways, particularly the Chiltern Main Line and the former Ardley rail station.

The wording in respect of land shaded blue on the Land Plan appears to be different on the Land Plan, the Statement of Reasons and the Funding Statement. It would greatly assist the reader's understanding if the wording were clear and consistent.

The Parameters Plan (Doc 2.5) file takes a long time to open due to its size. Consideration should be given to supplying a low-resolution version, as has been done with the Location Plan (Order Limits) (Doc 2.4). Also, consideration should be given to a more varied palette, for example to make the cross hatched areas of strategic mounding and hardstanding/hard landscaping/parking easier to distinguish.

Documents 2.8A to 2.8E Highway Classification Plan Sheets 01 to 05: the label on the legend should include reference to the relevant schedule(s) in the DCO as is the case with documents 2.9A to 2.9E. The document could be improved by adding all road numbers and names.

Sheet 04 of the Speed Limit Plan (Doc 2.10D) contains inset 4.1. This inset is a considerable distance from and not associated with the remainder of sheet 4 on the key plan, so a note explaining this on the inset on sheet 4 would be helpful. The relative orientations of the key plan and the inset do not help the reader - please refer to the advice concerning north points. On the key plan (Doc 2.10), presumably the note for inset 5.2 document 2.10E should refer to sheet 5 rather than sheet 4.

Plan series 2.14 (Listed Building Plans) needs to have Listed Building Plans explicitly stated on each plan, in the same way as for example Works Plan and Land Plan.

Plan 2.16B (Central Hub Site Plan As Proposed) shows a wildlife pond (T) but this does not appear on for example the illustrative masterplan (Doc 2.6) which would benefit from labelling of buildings and other areas such as the Central Hub and the Chiltern Mainline

railway. Please check all plans to ensure that details are consistent between them and that there is sufficient labelling to identify all pertinent buildings, roads, railways and other relevant features.

## **Guide to the Application**

This is a useful document: however, as the examination progresses, it will help considerably if appendix 1 becomes a separate, self-contained navigation document with its own document revision history sheet.

This navigation document should preferably be an A4 document for ease of reference, be capable of revision at each deadline, and be updated as required throughout the examination. It should include a section for new documents generated during the examination and show, preferably using strikethrough and shading, the latest version and any documents which are superseded, so as to give an up to date picture of the latest position at any point in the examination and at the close. For each document, as well as details of the document number, reference and title and whether it is a certified document, it needs to show the revision number, the version (whether latest or obsolete), the submission deadline and date, and the Examination Library (EL) reference (once known).

It will help considerably during the course of the examination if, when a document is revised, both a tracked and a clean version are provided. These are effectively different documents and will be given different PINS examination library references. The Navigation Document (Doc 1.4) from the Lower Thames Crossing DCO application (PINS EL references REP1-002, REP10-003) is suggested by way of example.

## **Equalities Impact Statement**

The document should be formatted with paragraph numbers to aid referencing.