



Planning Inspectorate  
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

## Hearing Transcript

|                 |                                                |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project:</b> | Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange |
| <b>Hearing:</b> | Issue specific hearing 1 – Session 1           |
| <b>Date:</b>    | 29 September 2026                              |

**Please note:** This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

It is not a verbatim text of what was said at the above hearing. The content was produced using artificial intelligence voice to text software. It may, therefore, include errors and should be assumed to be unedited.

The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

# Audio\_OxfordSRFI\_ISH1\_session1\_29092026

Tue, Sep 29, 2026 4:26PM • 1:30:24

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Rail freight, Logistics space, Strategic interchange, Site location, Market demand, Rail connectivity, Highway works, Construction programme, Mitigation measures, Environmental impact, Land assembly, Economic growth, Transport links, Biodiversity gain, National policy

## SPEAKERS

Speaker 10, Speaker 12, Speaker 14, Speaker 6, Speaker 9, Speaker 4, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, Speaker 5, Speaker 11, Speaker 7, Speaker 13, Speaker 1, Speaker 8

### Speaker 1

Good afternoon, everybody. It's now 2o'clock, and it's time for this hearing to begin. So I'd like to welcome you all to this issue-specific hearing for the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Project. Just before I carry on, can I confirm everybody can hear me? And also, can I confirm as well with mr. Shedd that the live streaming and recording of the event has commenced? Brilliant. Thank you very much. My name is Adrian Hunter, and I'm a chartered town planner. And I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine this application. Just before I go through some housekeeping matters, I'm just going to ask the rest of the panel if they could just introduce themselves, please.

### Speaker 2

My name is Alex Ojevade. I am a charter transport planner and have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

### Speaker 3

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Guy Rigby. I'm a chartered civil engineer, and I've also been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

### Speaker 1

Thank you, Berth. Together, we constitute the examining authority for this application. We're also also supported by other members of the planning inspectorate, some of whom you may already have spoken to, our case manager is mr. Matthew Shard, and he's supported by mr. Stephen Parker and Miss Lulu Pantalona, and they can be found at the back of the room. So please do ask them if you have any particular questions. We also have another inspector as well, who's attending the venue, who's observing purely for purposes of training as well. Just to deal with a few housekeeping matters, if I could. Again, a reminder to set all devices to silent, please. Toilets. I'm guessing most of you may well have found them during the breaks, but they're either end of the corridor. No fire alarm is planned. If we do, then the fire escapes are either end of the building, and then we congregate in the car park around the front. In terms of how this meeting will run and the agenda, the meeting will follow the agenda that was published on the website on the 22nd of September. The examination library reference for that is EV2001, and it will be helpful if you do have a copy in front of you. This agenda is for guidance only, and we may add other considerations or issues as we progress, should that become necessary. But the hearing will very much be a structured discussion, which I and other members of the XA will lead based on the published agenda. We'll conclude the hearing as soon as all relevant contributions have been made, and all questions asked and responded to. But if discussions can't be concluded, then it may be

necessary for us to prioritise matters and defer other matters to written questions. It is, however, important that we get the right answers to the questions that we are going to ask. Therefore, I would remind you that the examination is a written process. So, if you are unable to answer the question or require additional time to get the information requested, rather than giving a restricted or potentially wrong answer, in the interest of the smooth examination, please indicate that you happily provide that to us in writing, or we can defer to written questions if that's easier, or a later hearing if that would help. In terms of timings today, our aim is to adjourn for a mid-morning break round about half past three, and we anticipate including the hearing around half past five this afternoon. Just in terms of how outlined the hearing is going to run, anybody any questions or comments on that? No, nothing in the room or nothing online. Okay. Today's hearing is being undertaken in a hybrid way, which means some of you are in the room and some of you are joining us on Microsoft Teams. However, you have decided to join us will ensure that you get the opportunity to participate fully in the hearing. A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the project page of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as practicable after this meeting is closed. The transcript will also be available. So, with this in mind, please can you assure that when you do speak, you speak clearly into the microphone, stating your name and who you represent. If you're not at the table, there is a roving microphone that will be brought to you, so please wait for that. Alternatively, I think there might be a space at the table, so if you do wish to come forward, by all means, come come and use those. But again, please please speak into the microphone. For those joining virtually, should you wish to speak, please use the raise hand functions and then be await to be invited to speak. However, it may take a bit of time to come to you, so please be please be patient. If you're attending attending virtually and don't want image to be recorded, you can switch off your camera. In terms of those in the room, if you do not want to be recorded, I think there's a space right at the very, very back where the cameras won't reach, but the microphone will work. So by all means, make your points from there if you don't want to be recorded.

### **Speaker 1**

A link to the planning inspector's privacy notice was provided in the notification for this hearing. So again, we're assuming everybody's familiarised yourselves with that document, and this establishes how the person. Data our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. Again, any questions on those? I suggest you refer those to the case team in the first instance. Similar, any questions or comments on what I've just outlined in terms of how the hearing will operate? No. Okay. No questions. No hands. Excellent. In terms of the purpose of today's hearing, the issue-specific hearing is held to explore the principle and scope of the proposed development, the need for the proposed development, and any alternatives considered by the applicant. The purpose of today is the EXA to examine the information submitted by the applicant and also by interested parties and others. I'd just like to reassure you that we are familiar with all documents that have been sent in. So, when answering a question, you do not need to repeat in length something that has already been submitted. But if you do want to refer to any information that has been submitted, it's really helpful to us and other people watching online and reading the recording afterwards if you could refer to the correct PINS examination library reference number as well. This is a public examination, and therefore, even if you haven't indicated you wish to speak, and there is a point that you wish to make, please please feel free to indicate that you wish to do at the relevant point, and we will come to you. We will conclude the hearing as soon as all relevant contributions have been made and all questions asked responded to. However, we are mindful that the agenda is quite full. So, if it looks like discussions can't be concluded, I'd refer to the earlier comments we made about possibly taking things away or dealing things in writing. Has anybody any questions on the procedural side of the agenda today? Nope, I'm not saying anything. I'm now going to move on to introductions. So, I'm just going to ask those people who've registered to participate today to introduce yourselves. So, when I state your organisation's name, if you could just introduce yourself and say who you represent. If you're not representing an organisation, again, just confirm your name and summarise your interest in the application. And again, if you could

just sort of identify how you wish to be addressed, whether it's mr. Miss, or mrs. That would be helpful to us as well. So, if I could start with the applicant, please.

**Speaker 4**

Good afternoon, sir. My name is Alexander Booth, King's Counsel, and I am instructed on behalf of the applicant in this matter, by Ms. Laura Beth Hutton, a partner at Eversheds, who is sat immediately to my right. I'm happy to be referred to as mr. So I'm not proposing to introduce other members of the applicant team because there's going to be a number of them that may participate this afternoon, and rather than read out a long list, we'll introduce them as and when they come to the fore for the first time. Thank you.

**Speaker 1**

That's that's fine and seems for the usual practice and happy to happy to go with that. That's fine. Thank you. Okay, if I can move on to the host authorities, please.

**Speaker 5**

Thank you. I'm mr. George Gurney. I am a lead strategic planner at Austria County Council. I'm joined by Tony Cahill, who is the director at SLC Projects, and my colleague Braul Chabaraja Lopez, who's a senior NC Planner at Ulster County Council. And I'll hand over to Nick Weick at Gerald District Council.

**Speaker 6**

Good afternoon. My name is Nick Weick, Central Area Team Leader at Gerald District Council, and I'm happy to be referred to as mr.

**Speaker 7**

afternoon. My name is Sean Fleet, and I'm Principal Planning Officer at Cherwell District Council, and I'm happy to be referred to as mr. Thank you.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you. Thank you for those introductions. Next on my list, if I can move to National Highways, please.

**Speaker 8**

Yes, it's mrs. Vicky Fowler. I'm a partner and solicitor at Gowling WLG, and I'm joined by mr. Jeremy Bloom of National Highways, third-party DCO lead, East region. Thank you.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you. Next, I have mr. John Broad from.

**Speaker 9**

Thank you, Sam. My name is John Broad, mr. and I'm representing Campaign for Protection of rural England.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you. Then I have Mid Chowell Neighbourhood Plan Forum.

**Speaker 6**

Yes, my name is mr. Jonathan Boyce. I'm accompanied by mr. Martin Lipson, and we represent as NCNP Forum 12 parish councils in the Chowell District.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you. And then I have North Oxford Residents Association, Kelly Holden White. She was here this morning, but no. Okay. Thank you. That's everybody I have on my list, but it's. Is there anybody else who is expecting to speak who hasn't been asked to?

**Speaker 10**

Good afternoon. My name is Philip Nostrand, mr. Philip Nostrand, and I am the founder of Stop the Trojan Horse, the community group that opposes this project. And our group consists of approximately 110 residents in the local area.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room who's looking to speak whose name I haven't called? And anybody online who is looking to speak whose name I haven't called. Nope. Okay. Like I said, it's this public meeting, so if people do feel that there are points they wish to make, by all means raise your hands, and we can come to the appropriate point. Okay. Well, that brings to the end items one and two. Does anybody have any comments on the process that we've just been through and outline before we move on to item three on the agenda? No. Okay. So turning to item three on the agenda, this is for the XA, and what we've requested here is the applicant provides with an overview, very much of the proposed development. The agenda provided some guidance, which I think we felt would be sort of helpful to sort of get a steer on to sort of give you an indication what sort of things we're looking for. I'm not really I'm not going to go through that right now because I'm hoping that's all quite clear from the agenda. But just in summary, the purpose of the hearing is really to ensure that we, as the XA, have a detailed understanding of, and for us to ask questions about the individual components of the proposed development and how they would operate, the overall construction programme, including the phasing of construction, commencement of operation, particularly the delivery and operation of the rail interchange, and then finally, proposed mitigation measures and delivery of those mitigation measures, and hopefully those three bullet points match the agenda that you've seen, which is good. At this stage, we see this part of the agenda being very much led by the applicant. However, not surprisingly, we may well interject with questions, and we have a number of points that we probably want to explore with you as you go through that, but we're also conscious that be a number of interested parties, local authority, etc. may have some questions on those as well. So what we would ask is that perhaps the applicant can pause at particular points through that that would allow us to bring in interested parties to sort of raise comments and ask questions, us to ask questions as well. What I would say, though, is that please keep any questions to the matters that the applicant has discussed. So, for example, if you have a question on construction, but the applicant hasn't talked through construction, let's not get into that until the applicant has had a chance to deal with that, because your questions may well be answered in what the applicant is going to address. So, we'll try and sort of keep it so it flows in that way. But what we will do at the end, we'll have sort of a sort of an up, and any other matters. So if there are matters that the applicant hasn't touched on and you want to raise, then the opportunity to do that. But bear in mind, the applicant may not be able to respond to those if they've not got the necessary people in the room. But at least we can add those questions. Does anybody have any questions or comments about how that this sort of item on the agenda is going to run? Excellent. If not, then I think that's probably time for me to pass over to the applicant.

**Speaker 4**

Thank you very much, Alexander Booth, on behalf of the applicant. So, just to begin, we've obviously considered the agenda carefully, and we are in your hands. But we've noted that certainly the purpose of the hearing is identified as being for us, in the first instance at least, to explain to you the nature of the proposed development, its parts, and how it will operate, and of course we anticipate questions and

indeed observations from members of the public. What I'm proposing to do, subject to your agreement, is this: I'm going to provide an overarching summary of the project and set it in its relevant legal context, and then what we're going to do is, in a logical sequence, address the project, and in particular the three bulleted points you've spoken to, sir, by reference to, I think it's seven separate topics, and those separate topics will not only address those three primary bullet points that you've raised, but also they will sweep up the subsidiary bullet points in the agenda which you have published. So I hope that, following my initial introduction and the seven supplementary. Pieces, we will have covered all the ground that you identify. And what I'm proposing to do is, as I say, after each of these topic areas, we would pause there for questions from yourselves, and also to afford an opportunity to other members of the examination, interested parties, to make observations as you see fit. If that's okay,

**Speaker 1**

sounds perfect. Sounds idea. That's that's what we're hoping for. So it's always good to hear.

**Speaker 4**

Very well, sir. Then to begin, as you are aware, the development, the subject of the examination, is a strategic rail freight interchange on land adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line in Oxfordshire, northwest of Bicester, south of Ardley and north of Middleton Stoney, and Sir, for your note and the notes of others, the location plan is document 2.4. Delivery of this SRFI would comprise a nationally significant infrastructure project by virtue of section 26 of the 2008 Act, and this is a situation where there is a relevant national policy statement which has effect for the purposes of section 104, and that is the national networks national policy statement. The core elements of the development are firstly a rail freight terminal accessing the Chilton Mainline. Secondly, some 603,000 square metres of rail-served logistics floor space, plus another 200,000 square metres additional mezzanine floor space. And so, as regards those two principal elements, in terms of the terminal, that will comprise of five rail sidings, each able to accommodate a 775 metre length freight train, and there will also be a 775 metre length headshunt. As regards the commercial accommodation, maximum building heights will be some 25 and a half metres, but these will reduce to 21 metres and 18 and a half metres in the western part of Zone A. Much of the development will be sunk into the main site to assist with landscaping and visual screening, and in this regard, so the parameters plan and the illustrative master plan are at documents 2.5 and 2.6. The swiftest summary and explanation of the development is perhaps provided by document 1.3. That's the guide to the application, and further detail is provided in the planning statement document 5.4. In addition to the two core elements of the SRFI that I've just mentioned, there are significant highway works proposed as part of the development. And so, as you're aware, in fact, two elements of the works comprise highways and SIPs in their own right by virtue of section 22 of the 2008 Act. That's firstly the works to Junction 10 of the M40. I think that's works 14 and 14B in Schedule 1. And secondly, so the works to the A43 works 15A and 15B, and I think 16 also in the schedule. There is also a series of other works that will be delivered as associated development, including other highway works, notably the relief road for Middleton Stoney and the bypass for Ardley. Other associated development is going to include ecological mitigation, works to the existing landfill, and the foul drainage outfall. In terms of delivery, so as set out in the funding statement, and that's document 4.2, the applicant is an SPV ultimately owned by the U.S. Automobile Association, which organisation is possessed of annual revenues of more than 48 billion. That was the last record in 2024, with assets of some 221 billion. The applicant is going to fund the acquisition and land assembly piece, and will also fund the development. And those points are again addressed in the funding statement. The facility is going to be delivered and operated by Mount Park Properties Limited, which is a global leader in strategic logistic provision, that company's credentials are also summarised in the funding statement document 4.2, and I think in the last decade it has delivered some 19 million square feet of logistics development across Europe, and also has a further 10 million. Million square foot consented. That is owned by Affineus Capital. That is to say, Mount Park is ultimately owned by Affineus Capital, and that group has delivered some 112 million square foot of industrial development in North America over the

last decade and a half. Turning to the project, so that has been in preparation since, in the order of 2019, we had non-statutory consultation in 2022 and statutory consultation in 2025, and the application was submitted in at the end of March this year. Most of the land required to deliver the project has already been assembled. That is almost 70% is already within the control of the applicant. However, some further interests are required. So the applicant is seeking compulsory purchase powers as part of the order. The case in respect of compulsory acquisition, which of course we'll come to on Thursday, is set out in the statement of reasons at document 4.1.

#### **Speaker 4**

Efforts are ongoing to try and reach voluntary agreement with remaining interests, and so the current position is as set out in the land and rights tracker, which is at document 4.4, and which you'll note has already been once updated. So you're going to hear more about the need for the project and the national policy statement later in this issue-specific hearing, either from myself or from others. But sufficient to say at the outset that the project has the very strong and unequivocal support of national policy, which recognises a compelling need for delivery of strategic rail freight facilities in general, and also particularly in a locality such as this, which is not currently served. So, sir, that is the overarching introductory piece. What I'm proposing to do now is ask mr. Ben Holmes, who sat two to my right, and to his right, mr. Steve Harley of Exalis Planning, to speak to you regarding effectively the location and principle of development. So, for example, why this market area? Why this form of development? And why this site? Touching on the alternatives piece. So, I'm going to ask mr. Holmes to step up. Then, thank you.

#### **Speaker 11**

That's not very good to start, is it? Is that working? Yes. Good afternoon, everyone. Ben Holmes oxalis planning on behalf of the applicant. Thank you for the introduction, Alex. I'll just raise for what I intend to talk to. So I intend to start by giving a short overview of the process for identifying the oxal of our site, and in doing so, I'll pick up on the agenda items. The first two first bullet points, sorry, in the second phase of the bullets, i.e. justification for the location and alternatives. I'll then go on to give a brief introduction to the form of development, addressing the second bullet point on the second part of the list, which is the justification for the amount of floor space proposed. In addressing these points, I will make reference to the national network, national policy statement, and if it's okay, I'll refer to it as the NPS because otherwise a bit of a continuous mouthful. So I'll start by explaining why we think there is a need for an SRFI in this market area, as mr. Booth has already referred to, and perhaps the key point at which to start is that the government has concluded, as set out in the NPS, that there is a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFI throughout the country, this conclusion flows from an assessment of the drivers of need for SRFIs. These drivers, the government says, include the benefits of SRFI in terms of the following key elements: supporting supply chain resilience, meeting user or logistics business needs, increasing connectivity, and enabling economic productivity and growth, and realising the full range of environmental benefits that rail freight can offer. In terms of this latter point, the government has very recently reaffirmed its ambitions to achieve a 75% growth in rail freight by 2050, with now specific Targets to 2040; those targets simply cannot be achieved without more SRFIs. The government's ambition is for a network of SRFIs across all regions, where there is demand or potential demand, recognising that a more extensive cross-country network. Will help unlock the full range of benefits that an expanded network can provide. The work that has been undertaken by the applicant and its team concludes that those drivers of the need for SRFIs identified by the government apply to this market area within which OXSRFI is located. The work concludes that Ox SRFI would expand the network of SRFIs into an area that is currently very poorly served by rail. And for reference, the principal documents that that work is contained within is the planning statement, library reference APP 161, the market analysis report, reference APP 311 and the GB rail freight supporting statement, and that one is ADP 313. The area within which Ox SR5 sits is strategically exceptionally well located, with the potential to connect to both the strategic rail and road network, and to an extensive market

area, its location in the southeast but close to the Midlands and on the M40 corridor means it is accessible to a large population. This means it is very attractive to logistics businesses seeking space for national and large regional distribution centres, and these are the types of facilities and businesses, due to their scale, most likely to both seek to and be able to incorporate rail in their supply chains. The area, therefore, has the fundamental attributes to help to facilitate the government's ambition for mode shift, delivering logistic space that is rail served, and enabling existing and future businesses on site or in the catchment area to utilise rail. Without an SRFI in this broad location, expanding the SRFI network, logistics operations in the area will continue to be entirely road based. The government concludes in the NPS that reliance on road-based logistics is not an option, and in this regard, the delivery of road-based logistics schemes in the market area now or in the future only goes to reinforce the compelling need for an SRFI in this market area. And I'll turn, if I may, just to then explain why we consider this particular site to be a suitable location for an SRFI. The Ox SRFI site was identified because it does have the crucial attributes for an SRFI. It provides access to the strategic rail and road network, alongside access to markets and access to an existing and growing labour pool.

#### **Speaker 11**

Importantly, however, the geography of the site and its context provide an environment within which an SRFI can be developed, contained, and the effects managed. The main site itself is extremely well contained by existing physical features, there is the Chilton Main Line to the north, the B-430 to the east, and the former US airbase Upper Heyford to the west. The site's characteristics and this context, together with the approach to design, enable the effects of the scheme on the environment and non-existing communities to be appropriately managed and mitigated. Consideration has been given as to whether there are alternative sites within the defined market area, and then the approach to and conclusions of this assessment are set out in the alternative site assessment, which is at Appendix 6.2D of the environmental statement. And I think the library references AS 054. That assessment finds that there are very few locations in the market area that have the required attributes for an SRFI, and it concludes that of the very small number of sites that have any potential, none would be preferable to OX SRFI. Now, if it would be helpful, we can go into a bit more detail and explain the methodology used in that alternative sites assessment, or we can sort of move on.

#### **Speaker 1**

Sorry, happy to move on. That's fine. Unless anybody else has got any particular questions on on that? No, so happy to to move on. For yeah,

#### **Speaker 11**

okay. Thank you. I'll now briefly outline the approach, the form of development proposed, and in doing so, I'll talk about the the amount of floor space the scheme contains. The offset right scheme has evolved through a very extensive and iterative process of design, assessment, consultation, redesign, reassessment, and and so on. The first assessment work that I was involved in and the master planning options were undertaken way back in 2017, and the scheme has evolved and changed very considerably since. Since then, as I have explained, the site is very well contained by existing physical features, and the form and scale of the scheme has been informed by these features, as well as the constraints and opportunities of the site and the environment of the wider area. The environmental assessment process has directly informed development parameters, the nature and scale of the scheme, and the mitigation proposed, and the approach to the design of the proposals and its evolution is set out and explained in the design approach documents. References 5.5A, B, and C, and the library reference for the the main design approach document is APP 166. The NPS is clear that SRFIs are locations for businesses capable now or in the future of supporting their activities by rail. It recognises that SRFIs necessarily involve large structures, buildings, and operations, and that they deliver many benefits to the local economy. The NPS requires applicants to maximise local employment

opportunities, and outlines the range of socio-economic benefits SRFIs can deliver. The approach to the proposals therefore necessarily seek to achieve the appropriate balance between maximising the economic benefits whilst minimising environmental and other potential harms. The final form, size, and scale of the proposal, therefore, including the floor space proposed, is a response to the site and its context, the iterative design, consultation, and assessment process, and to this policy framework, and that concludes my my sweeping introduction. Thank you.

**Speaker 4**

So, so I mean, in relation to that piece, we're essentially explaining why this site, why this wider area and why this development? I think just to say, in terms of the floor space, the quantum of floor space, what one thing we'll come onto in a later topic area is because you've expressly asked for it, is comparison with other SRFIs, and at that point, mr. Holmes is going to be demonstrating and illustrating that, in fact, in terms of equivalent developments such as East Midlands Gateway, Northampton Gateway, West Midlands Interchange, we're always looking at the same sort of footprint, the same broad footprint in terms of commercial floor space and so on. But I'm going to park that because we'll come back to it in that comparative piece. So, unless you had questions on those matters, or there were other, there were any topics, any issues that others wished to address in relation to what mr. Holmes has just said, what I was then going to do was invite Ms. Harriet Maloney, the director of planning at Mount Park, to speak very briefly to effectively the vision and how it is anticipated that the development will operate in practice once consented.

**Speaker 1**

Before we do that, I've got I have a question, but it may well be a question that might come up later on. So if I sort of pose it now, and if you're happy, turn around and say, "Well, actually, we'll deal with that later on. But it's really to do with the amount of floor space, and what the driver was for identifying that number. You know, is it is it demand that you've identified? Is it is it the ability, the the capacity on the rail network? What is driving? Well, what is very much driving that number, and why is that number as it is? And it may be that's something that you are going to pick up later on. But if I pose that now, then it might be something. Well,

**Speaker 4**

so what I will do is speak very briefly to that now. Check with mr. Holmes and others that I've not put matters incorrectly, but then leave it for them to speak to subsequently in relation to other topics that we're going to address. But the three core issues that I think we would like you to consider in this context, and which have in fact driven the development shape of the development as now proposed. The first of those is one which mr. Holmes has already alluded to, and that is effectively the geographical features on the ground, which serve to shape this site, and he spoke to, in particular, the b4 103 O, the Chiltern Main Line, and the former airbase as being features which shape an appropriate footprint. So that's one consideration. Second consideration, and this is going to be addressed by others subsequently, and I think in part, actually, mr. Holmes, when we come to speak to market considerations, mr. Kilminster, actually, Kilminster more particularly, is the scale of demand and. Will come to the market documentation, but that scale of demand we say is very significant indeed, particularly as regard XXL accommodation. And the third consideration in that context, quite apart from the geographical layout of the area and the extent of need is what I just alluded to. The question of what is what what would one expect to see in the context of a strategic rail freight interchange, and in terms of the total space there. I mean, to throw out examples, East Midlands Gateway, because of course we've had the first phase of that fully delivered. In fact, there's only recently been a DC examination in relation to phase a second phase to East Midlands Gateway Two. But the first phase was 557,000 square metres, as compared to our 603,000 square metres. Northampton Gateway was slightly smaller at 468,000 square metres. West Midlands Interchange was larger at 743,000 square

metres. So, a third consideration in that context of the point you raise is that puts us squarely within the middle of what is orthodox and expected in the context of a development of this type. But I don't propose to say anything more there, unless there's anything you wish to add, mr. Holmes. I know we're going to come to these other points that I flagged subsequently. But if there's something you want to add now,

#### **Speaker 11**

Ben Holmes oxides planning for the applicant. The only thing I would just reiterate, and for the sake of repeating it, is that the final size and the force-based proposal is a product of all of those elements that have been taken into account. It's not. It's not a. It's not a starting point. It is. It is. It is a conclusion of a very extensive iterative and long process of design assessment, considering the site, considering those policy drivers of maximising economic benefits while minimising those those harms. So it's a product of all of that, as opposed to a starting point.

#### **Speaker 3**

Okay, thank you. I just I have a follow-up question. The process of selecting the site that we currently are examining has therefore been through quite a process in terms of location next to motorways and location next to railway lines. Has the railway line got capacity? Is there a sort of a hierarchy to your process, so that you then end up with the site that we are examining in terms of proximity to motorway and railway, and then you've got to think about what you can realistically fit into the site that you prefer at that point, is it that way round, or is it driven immediately by volume?

#### **Speaker 4**

Well, so what I'm going to suggest is that potentially mr. Harley comes in very briefly to speak to this issue, but just in terms of flagging for you the process in terms of the documentation, Chapter Two of the ES, and that is document 6.2, and Appendix 2.4 to Chapter 2. That's the alternative sites assessment. That's document 6.2D. Those, I think, spell out the process that has been had regard to, and in particular identifies the various criteria which enable first a long list of sites and a short list of sites to be identified. I mean, obviously, one cannot have a strategic rail freight interchange without that immediate proximity to a suitable rail line and also suitable proximity to the strategic highways network. As mr. Holmes has indicated, it's a number of considerations which feed in and which serve to help sift one site from another. But I'm going to ask mr. Harley to speak very briefly to this point because I appreciate we've got lots to cover in terms of answering your question, mr. Rigby. Thank

#### **Speaker 12**

you. Thanks, thanks, Alex. Steve Harley for the applicant. So, in just my following comments, I am referring very directly to the alternative sites assessment, which mr. Booth just referred to. That is AS zero 54 in the library, and in that document you'll find a an expression of the methodology we applied to the alternative sites assessment, we're aware there is no prescribed process for that. So you'll find our methodology set out in paragraph 1.7, which which captures eight steps, and I'm not going to read them all out. But those steps start with a very broad policy policy review, and they go through, as been alluded to by mr. Boo's opening comments there, a sort. A long listing process, and then a shortlisting process, and filtering, and the criteria and the considerations we've made in that are set out in full in the document. But it is absolutely rooted in the NPS, and what the NPS tells us an SRF must be able to do. So it's it's the long list itself was informed by the the sort of sifting you've alluded to around proximity to rail, and actually we were quite conservative in our long listing. We applied a five-kilometre distance from rail. Other schemes you'll see applied a two-kilometer threshold, but we applied a five. We also applied a five-kilometer threshold for or distance from the strategic road network, and that produced a long list of sites, which you'll find at Figure Figure Seven and Eight in the ASA document. You'll see the details of where those are and what they are. And we then sifted those 14 sites by applying a more

detailed examination of a range of connectivity issues, a finer grain analysis of their accessibility to road and rail, and a wider range of more detailed environmental considerations. So that included, this is in section six of the port, sir. If you if you choose to go and look at it in detail, things like flood risk, proximity to heritage assets, ecology designations, and other and other designations, topography, which was actually a very significant factor in why a number of sites we looked at just weren't feasible, as well as policy constraints or allocation. So, for example, if the local plan had allocated a site for alternative use, it's clearly not available. So, so it's all set out there, sir, and I think it would answer certainly your initial questions. If you've got other questions, clearly we would be very happy to receive them. But that document just set out. Basically, all

**Speaker 3**

I'm getting at is that you start off with quite a large number of sites, yes, and then quite quickly, when you look in detail, quite a lot of them will drop out.

**Speaker 6**

Correct, sir.

**Speaker 3**

And so, therefore, you've the hierarchy of getting to where we are is operating, and you're getting to where we are through operating that process.

**Speaker 12**

Absolutely, and you'll see the reasons why each of those sites we considered. There were three shortlisted sites for context, and you'll see why none of those were considered to be as good or better than the application site.

**Speaker 5**

Thank you.

**Speaker 4**

So thank you very much. In which case, what I'm going to do now is ask. Ms. Harriet Maloney, who's the director of planning for Mount Park, to speak to how the development will operate effectively, the vision for the development, and then she and Mr. Holmes are going to address the XA query about the components of the SRFI, and in that context, compare them with the components of other SRFIs. So, in the first instance, I'm going to ask Ms. Maloney to address that point.

**Speaker 13**

Thank you. Good afternoon, Ms. Harriet Maloney, Director of Planning at Mount Park. In presenting the vision for the scheme, I will be primarily referring to information contained within Document 5.5A, the design approach document for the main site, which is Examination Library Reference APP-166. The overarching vision for the Ox SRFI scheme is to establish a successful, nationally significant strategic rail freight interchange. We believe that the SRFI will meet the demands of the market, facilitate investment, job creation, and economic growth, and provide greater use of rail in the supply chain. Our master plan has evolved over many years, following extensive engagement and consultation, alongside extremely thorough technical work. As Ben has already said, the rail terminal, built development, and other active components will be positioned within an extensively landscaped site, with their effects on the environment and local communities minimised and appropriately mitigated, approximately 60% of the entire site is dedicated to green space, which serves numerous functions, including mitigation, green infrastructure, and good design. As part of that, the scheme also proposes to plant 60 hectares of new woodland and 13.9 kilometres of new hedgerows. As set out in our application, our approach is

based on key design principles, which are focused on the creation of high-quality built and natural environment with a campus-style feel. By adopting a landscape-led approach, we have ensured that the scheme responds to its setting, and we've managed to retain and enhance over 60% of the existing woodland on site. Alongside our careful approach to the natural environment, our focus is on delivering energy-efficient buildings, targeting B100 outstanding. An EPCA+ which will reduce carbon footprints during both construction and operation. Our vision is to create a real sense of place with an attractive environment where people want to work, and where they can take advantage of sustainable transport links, walking and cycling, and have access to amenities around the site. Central to our master plan is a vibrant central hub, which will restore and protect a listed building, giving it a viable new use into the future, and help foster a sense of community for all our employees on site. Uses could include a cafe, creche, gym, etc. The scheme will facilitate greater public access to green spaces, and the wider network of pedestrian links, cycleways, and bridleways will also be improved. We'll be providing 6.6 kilometres of footpaths and cycleways, 9.2 kilometres of new bridleways, plus Section 106 commitments to improving existing public right of way around the site. The scheme will also deliver an important uplift in biodiversity, with a commitment to deliver in excess of 10% net gain. And overall, we believe the quality of landscaping and building design will create a sense of place that is appropriate for a commercial scheme of national significance. ORL have invested over £25 million to date, and we are absolutely committed to delivering this scheme immediately should the application be consented.

**Speaker 4**

Thanks very much, Ms. Maloney. I mean, one point that I think might assist the XA further is if, and I don't know, so what you were anticipating in terms of how the facility would operate. I wonder whether Mr. O'Reilly could bring up the parameters plan, and then I'm going to suggest potentially Mr. Holmes or Mr. Maloney just identify where the trains will be coming in from, where they will shunt to, where they will sit, essentially, so the nuts and bolts of the operation.

**Speaker 11**

It might be more helpful to be the illustrative master plan for that purpose, if that would be helpful.

**Speaker 4**

Illustrative master plan. That's the one. A

**Speaker 11**

bit more, bit more of a lively. So I said parameters

**Speaker 4**

plan. Apologies. The illustrative master plan. So can we bring that up, please?

**Speaker 1**

Can I interject with a couple of questions that might be helpful to sort of, as part of that sort of discussion, as part of that, one of the things we're interested in is sort of explanation of which the units will be rail connected, which won't. So again, that might be something you could you can demonstrate for us as well. We've heard talk of national distribution or regional distribution, an understanding of which units might be which. So, as well as just sort of showing how it might work, sort of a little bit more of the depth of what you've talked about in terms of an explanation would probably help. And we may be getting a little bit beyond what you know at this stage, but whether there are any sort of built to suit developments that you're looking at, or whether there are any sort of speculative type elements and how that would work within. And I appreciate, and we appreciate it's only an indicative layout, illustrative at this stage. But if you have thoughts on how that might work as well, that would sort of help us as well understand that.

#### **Speaker 4**

Thank you, sir. I think we may come on to some of those matters in terms of bespoke construction or otherwise when mr. Kilmister begins to speak to the market issue. But we will make sure that that point is addressed. Firstly, however, though, I mean, in terms of what you see behind you, the illustrative master plan. I mean, you flagged a point, sir, about well, how many units do you say are rail connected and so on? I mean, what we do in that context, sir, I suppose, is flag in the first instance that we say that the entirety of this development is rail served. I mean, there are sometimes fascinating intellectual debates as to the terminology rail connected versus rail served and similar. We say the entirety of this of this development is rail served in equivalent situations. So, for example, at East Midlands Gateway, you'll hear more later on. That being a project in which many of this team were previously involved. Notwithstanding, there are not rail sidings alongside each individual unit. Far from it. It's a it's a terminal. But the totality of that development is currently makes use of by all occupiers of accommodation at East Midlands Gateway currently make use of the rail services provided by the terminal. So we say whether or not there is a direct access immediately outside. Unit or not, there is use of rail. In terms of how this particular development or this particular illustrative layout would work, I'm going to pass to mr. Holmes, and mr. Holmes can. I don't know whether he's going to. mr. O'Reilly at the end of the table is going to have to help him with the cursor to move to point to various parts of the master plan, but mr. Holmes will show you how that works. And to the extent that mr. Holmes isn't the man to address essentially the regional need, the national need, and so on, that will be picked up later in the market section.

#### **Speaker 11**

Thank you, Ben Holmes. Oxalis planning for the applicant, and hopefully me and mr. Riley will be in sync when we refer to various components of the of the scheme. Some of which have clearly been outlined already. So forgive me, I will repeat some of that, but just just to go around the full the full description. If I may, though, I'll start by just giving a bit of background to the to the applicant team and our and our experience, because the Ox SRFI team have collectively authentic experience of working on SRFIs. This is the third scheme that I and the Oxalis team have worked on, having been involved from inception to delivery at both East Midlands Gateway and Northampton Gateway. Other members of the team were involved in those projects, and others have been involved in the SRFIs at Durft and West Midlands interchange within the team. There is therefore a wealth of knowledge about the design and planning for, and indeed the delivery of SRFIs. In terms of then the components of the scheme, and I'll start by the key elements, and then go on to to to others, and as mr. Booth has explained, the scheme includes a very large intermodal rail freight terminal. It's located to the north of the site, adjacent to the Chiltern Main Line, and that and that terminal will involve both reception and handling sidings, capable of accommodating trains of 775 metres long, and it will contain connections to the Chiltern Main Line in both directions, north and south. It will contain extensive container storage areas, HGV parking, and associated buildings and facilities. We've touched briefly on the rail served or rail connected point. The approach on this site is very similar to West Midlands Interchange and Northampton, where there is the ability for some of the plots on the site to have rail going into their yards. So there is a rail cord which runs along the eastern side of the site, adjacent to the B430. So, on this illustrative master plan, for example, if it were to come forward in this form, those three large units on the eastern side of the site could have rail into their yards. As has been explained, the scheme includes around 600,000 square metres of warehousing, with additional floor space in the form of mezzanines. It includes the retention of key landscape features. In particular, there is an existing watercourse and trees and hedgerows which run from the midpoint of the south, midpoint of the site. Sorry, southwards through the centre of the site, so those key landscape features are are retained, and as you've as you've been it's been explained to you, it includes extensive areas for new landscaping and ecological enhancement, both within the main site and in areas close to the main site. To create the development scheme, both the development areas and to construct the rail terminal, there are

extensive earthworks, and those earthworks are also there to create the landscape screen mounding, which runs almost entirely around the the perimeter of the main site. Now, the approach to earthworks and landscaping are fully aligned with a strategy designed to make the views of the proposed development as sympathetic as possible. The rail terminal and buildings will be placed where possible in cutting, and the surplus material used to create the landscape screen mounds around the site. The design approach will ensure that ground-level activity is largely screened, and buildings will become increasingly screened as the landscape matures. As has been referred to, the scheme involves extensive new road infrastructure improvements to existing road infrastructure. That includes the formation of a new access to the site in the northeast corner of the main site. The construction of a bypass around the village of Ardley, and that bypass will connect the site access to Junction 10 and 40. It also includes a relief road. I'll pause a little bit while the mapping catches up with me. Apologies. A relief road around the northeast quadrant of Middleton Stoney, and that relief road links to and integrates with a new Hayford Link Road, which connects the Middleton Relief Road with Hayford Park. The scheme also includes significant works to the M40 motorway, mainly at Junctions 10, but also there are works to Junctions 9, and there are also local highway improvements. The main site contains a dedicated HGV parking area and driver welfare facility.

#### **Speaker 11**

I'll wait again for the for the plan to catch up, and that's broadly located on the Institute of Bass Plan in the in the in the centre central part of the site, and as has been referred to, it also includes a central hub, which utilises and brings back into use a listed threshing barn, a adjacent farmhouse, and outbuildings at Ashgrove Farm to provide estate management training and communal facilities. Finally, on the on the list of key components, the scheme includes new and enhanced walking and cycling connections, both within the main site but also within the wider area. The scale and form of these components are very similar to those at East Midlands Gateway, Northampton Gateway, and West Midlands Interchase, as has been referred to, all of those schemes have large intermodal rail freight terminals, a similar level of warehousing, and they deliver highway improvements in the form of new roads and improvements to existing roads, including major works to motorway junctions. Oxalis's experience at both East Midlands Gateway and Northampton Gateway was that prior to those developments coming forward, concerns were raised about the use of rail and whether those schemes would deliver the mode shift the government is seeking. The evidence is that SRFIs in the UK have quickly developed, generating entirely new custom to rail. East Millet's Gateway, for example, experienced very rapid growth and take-up of services, quickly running five to six trains a day. The growth has been such that the second phase of that terminal has now recently been completed, and as mr. Beard referred to, all of the units on that site utilise rail in their supply chains. The very recently opened terminal at Northampton is also already seeing demand, and trains are running. Elsewhere, the terminals at Durf and lport Doncaster have been hugely successful. Given this experience at other SFIs and given the attributes of the Ox SRF site, the applicant team is very confident that Ox SFI will be no exception in successfully driving rail freight use. It will not, as you might hear, and others have suggested, be a Trojan horse.

#### **Speaker 4**

So the only point I was just going to seek to supplement, as regards mr. Hogan's extremely helpful explanation, if we could just focus in on the intermodal rail terminal. I hope that the examination. I know the XA will already be familiar with this, but it's just essentially there to show how access from the north, from the Chiltern Mainline, leads into these five different sidings, each of which can accommodate a 775 metre train, and then as one moves further south, either one leads straight back towards the Chiltern Mainline, but there is there a 775 metre length shunt, so that were it appropriate, necessary for a train to enter, say, from the north into one of the sidings and then move to another siding, it can sit down in that shunt to the south and then head back northwards into another siding. So there is that flexibility of manoeuvre. Similarly, on this, on the basis of this layout, and again, it is illustrative, and

again, we've spoken about rail connected as opposed to rail served being a potentiality here. A train, say from the north, can move straight through the sidings, curving to the south west, and then running alongside each one of those. Large units along the B4030, or indeed a train coming from the south would head up into the siding before reversing back down that branch directly adjacent to those three large units. So I hope that speaks to the question of how the facility will operate, and indeed addresses the further issue which we were going to speak to. That is to say, a comparison with other SRFIs. If you have questions now, or indeed others have observations that they wish to make, we can pause. But in a moment, and after that, what I was going to propose to do was bring in Mr. Tom Kilmister, the senior development director at Mount Park, to speak to the effectively the market position, and that can address your query as regards regional need, regional demand, national demand, and so on. And also with him, we're going to have Alex Kirk, the commercial director of GB Rail Freight, to speak to the market demand for rail freight services, because both of those issues we consider are ones that you flagged. So, so I'll just pause now before we bring them in.

**Speaker 2**

I think I've got a question. I have got a question. When you considering all this the rail freight interchange. You mentioned previously, Mr. Booth, about the features on this side, geographical features, and the Adley station, the disused Adley station, hasn't been mentioned at all? Did you have any sort of consideration to the usefulness or potential usefulness, maybe in the near future, of Adley? Did this use Adley station at all in all your analysis?

**Speaker 4**

So we have, and it's not for me to speak to the detail of that. I think what I was proposing to do, and it's like a nine-year-old saying I was going to come to that. I was going to deal with it. Item, in fact, is item eight. The last item, as per your agenda, was surrounding development and RV station. So we are we are going to come to that point. But the first, the overarching observation I would make in relation to this that issue is this: Yes, the team has had real and significant regard to the potentiality for a passenger station at Ardley. We are aware of the objectives and aspirations of those such as OCC. That station is not part of this SRFI, it is it would be a completely different facility. Notwithstanding, there may be a strong public benefit in terms of the delivery of that facility. It would be a different facility, and this is not a situation where, for example, I could sit here and argue that there is a compelling case to justify compulsory acquisition of land in respect of delivery of that station when it doesn't form part of the development, i.e. the NCIP that we're seeking to promote here. It is a different development. What I can say is this: firstly, the development that is promoted through this examination, will deliver multiple significant benefits, which will ultimately assist the case for delivery of that passenger station, should it be brought forward, and should a business case be developed in the future. There are aspects of what we propose which will enable and facilitate that. Secondly, and just as critically, there is nothing that we propose to do which would in any way prejudice delivery of that passenger station, and that is not simply a matter that we put to you. I mean that is the subject of express comment in the statement of common ground that we have concluded with Net Rail, Network Rail. They're not sat at the table today, but they are here, and I know that they are willing and happy and able to assist the examination with any questions that you may have. We've worked with them in detail for some years, we will continue to work with them. That statement of common ground, which is document AS-092 in the examination library, that states in terms that nothing we are doing is going to prejudice delivery of. Station. So, if others do at some point seek to bring that forward, nothing we do will harm that. On the contrary, some things that we do will assist with that. So, I think that's probably all I can say for now. There will be others that can speak to that issue with more technical understanding subsequently. I

**Speaker 2**

just have a quick follow-up to that as well. I recognise mr. Holmes actually, if I could quote him directly, saying this SRFI will be capable now and in the future. You know, in terms of its activities, you have a lot of employees, and potentially the employee number will expand in the future. So I was just thinking that this at least station could have been considered, you know, alongside this proposal to say, okay, possibly in future, what can we do without just saying? I know you said that you will not be in the way prejudice the delivery, future delivery of it. Is there any consideration along that line that will support that statement that you will not prejudice the delivery of

**Speaker 4**

it? I think, if I understand your question correctly, what you're suggesting is that well, the XA understands that we're not prejudicing delivery, and that's not a matter of dispute. As I say, Network Rail agrees with us. But what you're asking very reasonably is well, look, in terms of the delivery of that station, isn't that something you've thought about in terms of your workforce and effectively sustainable travel, and of course that is a relevant consideration, and that is something that I mean the delivery of Arby passenger station is something that I, I mean, speaking as a layman and in the broadest possible planning context, I mean it seems desirable. However, there couldn't be any question of effectively stalling this development proposal to await delivery of Ardley Passenger Station, because in circumstances where one development waits upon another, that is an absolute recipe for nothing to happen at all in circumstances where unequivocal, emphatic national policy, as stated in the NPS, is to the effect that we need to that the government wishes there to be an expanded network of SRFIs. We need to get on and provide that network if, in fact, the government's targets for 2040 or 2050 are going to be met, or anything close to being met, and I'm afraid the reality, as I understand it, is that at the moment there is not a business case for Ardley passenger station. We would wish to, we would be very happy to see that come forward, but the funding package isn't there. My understanding is that government has provided some initial funding to explore feasibility, but that's that's the very incipient stage that we're at. So yes, would it be good to see Ardley passenger station come forward? Yes, it would be. Is that a matter which should in any way delay the consenting and delivery of this facility for which there is a freestanding policy case. The answer would be no. But what I'm being reminded very fairly by the rest of my team is that I'm a lawyer. I'm not a transport specialist, and in fact, I should be putting all this over to tomorrow, where those that know so much more than me will be able to assist you.

**Speaker 2**

Thank you, mr.

**Speaker 4**

Yes, that's all we had to say on that point. If there were any further queries in relation to the comparative piece with other SRFIs or the components, I know mr. Holmes would be happy to answer them. Otherwise, we'll come to the market piece.

**Speaker 1**

What I was going to do is two things. I think we can probably stop stop sharing now, if that's that'll be helpful. And I'm just conscious that there may be other parties who may wish to wish to come in and may wish to sort of make some some comments or observations. So, if it's okay, I'm going to sort of work work work my way round. So, if I could start with the the host authorities, please.

**Speaker 5**

Yeah, George. And so, what

**Speaker 1**

what I should say, just for those, if you address your comments to us rather than to the applicant, so ask your questions through us, please, which you're probably aware of.

**Speaker 5**

George Gurley, speaking on behalf of Oxford County Council, it was just a query if we could understand the topics that we covered after this one, just so I know when to address any points that are being made. It's been indicated that there are topics which will be coming after this one, so if we can have a list of what's being covered after this, that would be helpful.

**Speaker 4**

I think that's very wise, and what I ought to have done. In fact, a judge once told me a long time ago. I said I've got 16 points to make, and he said to me, "If your list of points is that long, don't tell anyone." How long the list is? Just go into it. But anyway, what I've got coming, subject to what the examining authority say, is firstly a topic heading which is essentially commitment to delivery and market demand, and that's going to deal with market delivery or market demand, the position of Mount Park in terms of delivering it, and also not just market demand for logistics, XXL floor space, but also demand for rail served floor space. And GB Railphras are going to speak to that. That's topic one of those remaining. The topic after that is a rail-specific technical topic, noting that, notwithstanding we're dealing with, say, transport matters tomorrow. On the agenda for today was a question about W8KH and so on. So I'm going to ask GB Rail Freight, their technical director, head of strategic access planning, to speak to the suitability of the Chiltern Main Line for rail freight, having regard to gauge pathing and capacity. The third item is going to be construction, i.e. what would the programme and what would the phasing be? And Ben Holmes, who you've heard from already, will speak to that. And also mr. Simon Hilditch of BWB, he will be speaking to, in particular, the road elements of the proposed project. Him being a highway specialist, I'm going to start shouting over the noise in a moment. Then, mr. Harley of Oxalis is going to speak to mitigation matters, that being another matter that's flagged, and then finally, mr. Harley and mr. Holmes were going to speak to, if I can term it this, the surrounding development issue as flagged in the agenda. That being a matter which would have embraced Ardley Station, but we've slightly touched on that already. But so those were the topic areas that we were anticipating dealing with. But of course, we're happy to answer questions on matters falling out of that.

**Speaker 1**

Does that help shape?

**Speaker 5**

It does, and I think I probably only have one question then regarding what we've already heard. Is that we heard during the alternative sites assessment process that local plan allocations were considered as part of that process. I'd like to sort of ask clarity about whether minerals and waste local plan allocations were considered, in particular mineral safeguarding areas, as part of the site allocation as the site sifting process.

**Speaker 4**

That's a sufficiently detailed point that it goes well outside of my purview, but I think mr. Harley may be able to address that one. Thank you, sir.

**Speaker 12**

Thank you, sir. It was part of the wider consideration, yes, but I think it was one of many. Clearly, the critical considerations for suitability of sites was the strategic access to strategic road and rail. So, to some extent, that you know that that trumps most other things. But yes, we we looked at we looked at all relevant policies.

**Speaker 1**

I think I don't think I know that is on the agenda for tomorrow in terms of minerals and waste. So, so that's certainly one area that we've got questions on in terms of that compliance with with the West Bank, because we've seen your your submissions. So hopefully that that answers what you want and then teases up nicely, perhaps for sort of what we've got tomorrow. Yeah,

**Speaker 5**

I'm content to wait until tomorrow. Okay,

**Speaker 1**

thank you. Brilliant. If I work my way down, I think Sherwood District Council. Yep.

**Speaker 7**

Thanks, Sean. Fleet from Cherwell District Council. Just coming back on the fifth of those points about other developments in the local area. Just trying to clarify what local area means. Is this close and adjacent to the site, the sort of likes of Hayford next door, or is this wider in the sort of surrounding Chirwell area, so Point of Foo and the logistics to the north.

**Speaker 4**

Well, mr. Fleet, the the position here is when I say we're going to be speaking to the surrounding development in the surrounding area. This is not it's not our idea as such to talk about that, this is drawn from the XA's agenda. In terms of that area, the developments that we're going to be speaking to-that's ultimately going to be mr. Harley and mr. Holmes will speak to that area. And if you're not happy with the area that they've addressed, then of course we could address that at that point. But let's let's wait until we've actually said our piece in relation to that. So, if it helps in

**Speaker 1**

terms of the area, from our understanding, it's those elements that have come through in terms of the cumulative assessment. So, it's those schemes that have been identified by the applicant, and they've undertaken cumulative assessment of. So, that's what we mean by within the local area. If that helps. Have we done to Mid Chowell Neighbourhood Plan Forum?

**Speaker 14**

Thank you, sir. Martin Lipson from Mid Chowell Neighbourhood Plan Forum. I've got a couple of questions in connection with the site and the components of the site, you showed us the drawing that showed the potential for a rail linkage on the east side of the site to those three large warehouses. I think I've seen in one of the documents that this rail link is for later construction. It's not part of the initial delivery. Is that correct?

**Speaker 4**

Yes, I believe that is correct. Actually, I mean, so I mean that that whole illustrative master plan is, by virtue of the name, it is illustrative, and it's a possibility, and it's not anticipated. I don't believe that that would be the initial position that that rail branch would serve directly those three units to the east.

**Speaker 14**

You did make quite a big thing of saying that the proposal is or is entirely rail served. Those three warehouses will not be, and I'll move on to my second question, which is that I know. Sorry,

**Speaker 1**

sorry, Karen. I was just going to let the applicant just just respond to that one. Sure. Yes.

**Speaker 4**

Sorry. I'm very happy for you to make your second point, but having made your first point, I would just wish to respond very briefly, and so that is to say that we say that the entirety of this development is rail served, and that would be the case whether or not the spur pointing to the southwest were delivered or not. We say the development is rail served in the same way that the rail that East Midlands Gateway accommodation is rail served, ditto Northampton Gateway, and so on. That does not turn on the question of whether or not there is a specific spur to serve directly a particular piece of accommodation, it's rail served because there is a terminal which serves the entirety of the development. So, so we do say rail serve the totality, irrespective of whether or not or when that spur to this pointing to the southwest is ultimately delivered. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

**Speaker 14**

Could I ask a supplementary question on that, which is why not build it straight away?

**Speaker 1**

Yeah, I think I think what we'll do is I think that's probably something we might well be getting onto in terms of delivery. I suspect, but I think that that's certainly a question that we'll hopefully pick up later on, and it's certainly questions that we have in terms of that overall sort of delivery programme. So, my second hold on to that one. All right. Second point. Yeah.

**Speaker 14**

Thank you, sir. My second question is: I noticed that quite a number of the more recent SRFIs elsewhere have expanded into a second phase. If that were to happen here at some future date, where would it go?

**Speaker 4**

I mean, if I may very briefly respond on that. I mean, I appreciate the question shouldn't come, or unless yeah. Well,

**Speaker 1**

all I was going to say is we've got to deal. I'm going to ask you to respond, but we've got to deal with what what's in front of us. So that that's our process, and that's what we're here for. But the applicant may wish to sort of

**Speaker 4**

say. that's essentially the point. We're not here seeking this as phase one of 234, phases. We're seeking development consent for this nationally significant infrastructure project, and that's all there is to

**Speaker 14**

it. Thank you,

**Speaker 1**

mr. Boyce. I think, isn't it from CPRE? Yeah,

**Speaker 9**

John Barraud. Yes. Sorry. Yeah, I had a couple of points. One is I found it interesting that initially I thought, where is Chiltern Rail and Network Rail around the table? This was subsequently sort of

answered, I believe in that somewhere behind me there is somebody who can represent that. But from the point of view of choosing the site, I would have thought that was really important to find out whether that line can actually accommodate freight, because at the moment it's a passenger line, and so can the freight actually be fitted in, in between the passenger, or are they going to do away with the passengers? I mean, surely this is something Network Rail or Children Rail should be here to answer. And I've got a second question as well, please. I

**Speaker 1**

think we can probably deal with the first one. Is I'm guessing that may be something again. I know it's on the agenda for tomorrow, but it might be something the applicant is looking to. So we

**Speaker 4**

will speak to that. I believe tomorrow, and we're going to come to it in the next but one item. So we will address it. But I mean, the short point to allay the concerns of mr. Broader as follows: This is a line that already has accommodated rail freight. This proposal to accommodate further rail freight on this line is one that would sit alongside, not instead of, passenger services, and there is unequivocal agreement with Network Rail that this line can accommodate rail freight as envisaged by this proposal, so to provide reassurance, I provide that initial view now. But we'll come on to it in the next but one item. And mr. Kapoor of GB Rail Freight, the market leader in rail freight in the country, is going to address that particular issue, sir. Thank you.

**Speaker 9**

Thank you, sir. The other question I was intrigued by the map, and somebody mentioned something about topography. And one of the more important things I think you should study, sir, is perhaps cross section through the land, because when they talked about mitigation, you know, against the buildings, you have to remember that both east and west are on hills.

**Speaker 1**

Yeah, thank you again. I'm not going to propose to pass that on to the applicant because that's something tomorrow we'll be looking at the landscape impacts and certainly some of the questions that we have relate to the applicant's understanding and our understanding of the topography. So yeah, so I think at this stage we're at that sort of quite high level, but there are some detailed questions that we want to get into tomorrow on on that. mr. Nosted,

**Speaker 10**

thank you. So my name is Philip Nostrand. I'm the founder of the community group Stop the Trojan Horse that opposes the proposal, and our group consists of approximately 110 residents in the local area. mr. Chairman, I have two brief statements: one on the location and the alternatives considered, and one on the scope of the proposed development. And with your permission, I'd like to read the statement out sequentially.

**Speaker 1**

Yeah, mate. The obvious question I have is how long are your statements? Because of course, it is a written process. So anything you submit to us,

**Speaker 10**

it's about one page of text. So it'll be less than five minutes. This statement,

**Speaker 1**

probably going more than we'd want. Not that I don't want to hear what you, but if you could keep it sort of under three minutes, that would that would be helpful because we've got quite an agenda to get through.

**Speaker 10**

I will. I will be as quick as.

**Speaker 1**

What I would say is, like I say, everything that you submit to us is there, and we will see it that way. Absolutely.

**Speaker 10**

Okay, I will be I'll be as quick as possible. So on the topic of location and alternatives considered, the examining authority must investigate whether Artley is the right location for a 604,000 square metre logistics estate with extensive highway works and significant local impacts. The applicant's case rests heavily on the site's location beside Junction 10 of the M40 and the Chiltern Main Line. The applicant argues that there are currently no SRFIs on the M40 corridor within Oxfordshire, and that this proposal would fill a gap. But a wider picture is different. The applicant's own evidence map shows that the surrounding region is already served by a substantial network of existing and consented strategic rail freight interchanges, including Döft, Hamps Hall, and the consented Northampton Gateway and West Midlands Exchange, and I direct the examining authorities' attention to the map in the rail report document number 7.2A, page 17, that shows shows England here, and you can see quite a dense network of interchanges up by Birmingham. You've got the new site at Ratlett near London, and of course we've got the Northampton Gateway just up the road. That matters because the applicant's market analysis does not confine itself to serving Oxfordshire. It claims a catchment area extending across the western home countries, the Upper Thames Valley, the Southwest Midlands, and parts of London. Areas that overlap greatly with markets already served or which will be served by those nearby facilities. Yet, as Oxfordshire County Council has previously pointed out, the applicant has not demonstrated whether those existing and consented interchanges could provide additional capacity. Nor has it properly considered the overlap between the proposed the proposal and Northampton Gateway. For reference, the already consented Northampton Gateway is just 25 miles from the proposed Artley site with a direct dual carriageway connection, the A43. So, and I just have to correct something that the applicant's counsel said, which was that this area is not currently served by a strategic rail freight interchange. But given the proximity to Northamptonshire, I think it's it's fair. To say that this area is quite well served by strategic rail freight interchanges. Now, let me finally direct your attention to the market analysis report, document number 7.1, section 6.16, that has this map that shows the area that the applicant is proposing to serve, that goes right up to to Birmingham. Now the the map has been sort of conveniently truncated here, so you can't see the the several Birmingham exchanges that that are up here. But you can see the Northampton Exchange, and you can see how the proposed catchment area of this exchange reaches past the Ratlet site and in deep into into London. So, because nearby SRFIs already serve key parts of the claim market, the burden falls on the applicant to explain why this particular site and its substantial local impact is necessary in addition to that existing local network of SRFIs, in fact, the applicant has not demonstrated why this particular location is preferable to realistic alternatives, despite its proximity to an established and expanding SRFI network, and despite the exceptional local infrastructure improvements required to make it function. On that basis, I respectfully ask the examining authority to conclude that the applicant has not demonstrated that this location satisfies the national policy statement's requirement for the right infrastructure in the right place, supported by a sufficiently robust assessment of realistic alternatives. Thank you very much.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you for that, and thank you for for keeping that short and and to the point. Like I say, we submit all that information to us, then we'll see the the detail. That would be that would be great.

**Speaker 10**

Absolutely, I will I'll file this with the examining authority straight after, and there are sources for all the information, if you'd like to check any of the references,

**Speaker 1**

I was going to suggest a short break, but I didn't know whether there was any points the applicant wished to pick up on before we did that, or whether you're happy to go for a break and then sort of pick up any of those points when we come back.

**Speaker 4**

So I'm not proposing to come back on in any detail with what mr. Northstrand has just said, I think it's probably right, though, just to make a couple of points now, rather than break and then come back. So while they're fresh, I would just make two brief observations. Firstly, this: what's said is, well, Northampton Gateway is some 25 miles away. I have to say I don't know the precise distance and whether that's as the crow flies or similar. But what I do say is that Northampton Gateway is accessed off the West Coast Main Line. This facility will be accessed off the Chiltern Main Line. It's a different rail line, and we say that this is a proposal which is entirely consistent and in keeping with the very clear direction in government policy, as stated in the NPS, supporting firstly of strategic rail freight generally, and secondly supporting an expanded network of strategic rail freight interchanges, that is to say, there isn't one that currently serves this particular rail line. There isn't one that serves this particular area. And on the question of areas served, so you will be aware that this isn't a situation where one has A discrete area served by any particular facility. Rather, there are any number of facilities. For example, Northampton Gateway, East Midlands Gateway, West Midlands Interchange, which could arguably be said to overlap with one another. There is an overlapping series of markets served by this network of facilities, and there's also been reference made to the Radlett facility. That I think someone will pick up the precise size of the Radlett facility for me in a moment when we speak to other matters. But what we do say is that the southeast and the Greater London area is not well served by rail freight. That is a matter which is itself again expressly identified and recognised in national policy, and we say we meet that need. So, insofar as mr. Nordstrand says, well, the burden falls upon the applicant to demonstrate A, to demonstrate B, to demonstrate C. I mean, that's simply not right, sort of, because I mean, you will be aware of the effect of Section 104 of the 2008 Act, and the clear policy directives as stated in the relevant NPS. But that's all I was proposing to say, and I'm happy that we respond if we need to any further in writing on any particular matter.

**Speaker 1**

Okay, I think that's that's. That's helpful to hear. I think it's probably time to we're sort of taking a short break. I think, looking at the clock and my computer, both seem to be saying different times. So to make it easier, what I'm going to suggest is we come back at 3:45 and do that. So thank you. This hearing is adjourned until 3:45.