OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC RAILFREIGHT INTERCHANGE

HOST AUTHORITIES (HA)

SUMMARY OF JOINT LOCAL IMPACT REPORT

DEADLINE 1 | 13 OCTOBER 2026

- Oxfordshire County Council
- Cherwell District Council

HOST AUTHORITIES

SUMMARY OF JOINT LOCAL IMPACT REPORT

The Host Authorities (the "**HA**") are comprised of the following host authorities who are working collaboratively to represent constituents on key issues during this Examination and assist the Examining Authority ("**ExA**") with the Examination's smooth running:

- Cherwell District Council ("CDC")
- Oxfordshire County Council ("OCC")

In these submissions, the Host Authorities may be referred to variously as the HA, the Host Authorities or the Councils.

Purpose of this Submission

The purpose of this submission is to provide a concise and accessible summary of the joint Local Impact Report (LIR) submitted by the Host Authorities for the benefit of the Examining Authority, the Secretary of State, the applicant and all other interested parties. This summary focusses on Chapter 7 (Principle of Development) and Chapter 8 (Environmental Impacts) of the LIR as well as the overall conclusions on the proposed development

This submission itself is not to be considered a Local Impact Report and any commentary on the Local Impact Report should refer to the main report submitted alongside this summary.

AI notice

Microsoft Copilot was used in extracting information from the Council's Local Impact Report. This extraction was word for word and so AI was not used in summarising any information from the LIR.

Summary of Chapters 7 and 8 of the Local Impact Report

The Principle of Development

Summary

- The Councils' policies support the principle of rail freight interchanges and the transition of freight from road to rail.
- The Councils consider that the minimum requirements for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange in both the National Networks National Policy Statement and Section 26 of the Planning Act 2008 have been met.
- The Councils do not oppose the need for warehousing to serve an SRFI. However, the Councils do not consider that the applicant has provided sufficient justification for the quantum of warehousing proposed.
- The Councils do not consider that adequate evidence has been provided to demonstrate agreement between the applicant and Network Rail on the timeframe for the proposed rail network connections in line with paragraph 4.88 of the NNNPS.

Transport

Summary

- Both Councils have engaged regularly with the applicant since 2021 to discuss the potential transport impacts of the proposed development via the Transport Working Group (TWG).
- Via the TWG OCC as Highway Authority agreed assessment methodologies, modelling and mitigation in advance of submission.

- As a result of this close engagement very few highways issues remain outstanding and only very minor issues remain. The remaining highways issues relate more to legal drafting of the DCO rather than as potential environmental impacts and so are considered in Chapter 9.
- The Council remains concerned that the applicant has indicated that the proposal will not be able to accord with OCC's adopted parking standards.
- OCC's OxRail 2040: A Plan for Rail includes an ambition to deliver a new railway station at Ardley to serve the nearby villages and the potential for future growth at Heyford Park. OCC has engaged with the applicant on this issue and the applicant has agreed to include passive provision for the station within their overall designs.
- OCC requests further information outlining that viable and meaningful rail connectivity is possible between the proposed facility and Southampton in order to reduce the pressure of freight traffic on the A34.

Mitigation/Improvement

- OCC requests further information on rail connectivity from Southampton to the SRFI in order to demonstrate that the facility could reduce the pressure of road freight on the A34.
- The Council requires the applicant to demonstrate that once the development is completed and the full travel plan provisions are in place, the applicant will be able to comply with OCC's parking standards.
- The Councils request an update to the outline CTMP to ensure the pre-commencement surveys are undertaken for all construction routes identified in the CTMP.

Air Quality and Odour

Summary

- There is a potential for impacts from increased vehicle movements, dust from construction works and odour from disturbing Ardley Landfill site and the closure of the Ardley in Vessel Composting Facility (IVCF)

- The EHO Officer at Cherwell District Council is satisfied the proposed mitigation is sufficient to prevent significant air quality or odour impacts

  Mitigation/Improvements
- None

Noise and Vibration

Summary

- There are potential impacts of the scheme in both the construction and operational phase.
- The background noise in the area is dominated by the M40 with a constant noise level heard during the day and night.
- Increased noise could come from extra road traffic for both construction, especially prior to the proposed Ardley bypass opening, and operational use. Overnight significant impacts have been found on Middleton Stoney Road in Bicester.
- Overnight significant impacts have been found on Middleton Stoney Road in Bicester which are proposed to be mitigated by way of a S106 but the Councils question the effectiveness of this to address identified impacts.
- Increased noise could also come from the additional rail movements once the site is operational, along with the operation of the site, especially during the night, on residential receptors.
- There are low levels of vibration currently from trains which could increase with the extra freight services.

Mitigation/Improvement

- A noise insulation scheme has been proposed for the affected properties in Bicester by way of a section 106 agreement to provide enhanced glazing and acoustic ventilation. The adequacy of the proposed mitigation mechanism and the wording of the S106 agreement is still in discussion with the applicant.

Ecology including Arboriculture

Summary

- Further information is required to fully establish the significance of any ecological and arboricultural harm.
- The proposal will result in the loss of irreplaceable habitat and wholly exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated to allow for this loss.
- Adequate compensation is required.
- The Applicants have advised that, as part of an updated Arboricultural Assessment, they will provide an updated Tree Survey Plan which includes a 15x stem diameter buffer zone, in line with the NPPF definition for Veteran trees, for the two trees of 20.55m (T150) and 18.1m (T152). The Councils would welcome this but reserve their position regarding its appropriateness subject to future scrutiny.
- The Councils recommend that there are at least 30m buffer zones around Kennel Copse and Burntclose Copse ancient woodlands.
- The BNG assessment needs to be updated to reflect the loss of irreplaceable habitat.
- The opinion of the project hydrologist is required to establish what the potential hydrological impact might be on Burnt Close Copse, an area of ancient woodland.

Mitigation/Improvement

- The plans need to be amended to include at least 30m buffer zones around Kennel Copse and Burntclose Copse.
- An assessment of indirect impacts on ancient woodland should be carried out.
- Where irreplaceable habitat is to be lost or deteriorated, full compensation schemes should be submitted.
- Additional survey information is required in respect of otter habitat.

- A standalone strategy for mitigation of the impacts to the SSSI is required.
- Mitigation for the breakup of the functional woodland corridor is required.
- Further information on bat mitigation measures is required, including hop-overs and lighting.
- Further information on bird habitats is required.
- Updates to BNG calculations and the HMMP are requested.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Summary

- The proposed development would result in a negative local landscape and visual impact. Its substantial scale, mass and industrial character, together with extensive earthworks, infrastructure, operational activity and lighting, would permanently replace a large area of rural agricultural landscape.
- The ES identifies significant effects for a range of landscape and visual receptors. However, broad receptor groupings and summary conclusions do not always make clear where the greatest local effects would occur or which characteristics of the development cause them. Council fieldwork indicates particular concern in the B4030 and Middleton Park direction, where the proposed buildings may compete with or rise above the apparent scale of existing woodland.
- ISH2 did not establish how the sensitivity of the open and exposed plateau landscape had resulted in measurable changes to the scale, height, extent or disposition of the built development. The applicant's focus on the limited overlap with the 2024 Upper Heyford Plateau LCA does not address the wider county-level Farmland Plateau evidence or the influence of the development on the openness, skyline and setting of the adjoining plateau landscape.
- The reported reduction of several significant effects to non-significant effects at Year 15 relies materially on future bunds, woodland and structural planting. The current framework does not yet demonstrate with sufficient certainty the location, minimum quantum, timing and landscape performance of all mitigation-critical planting. The extended and phased construction programme also creates uncertainty about the duration of significant effects, when the relevant bunds and

planting would be completed, and the date from which Year 15 would be measured for each receptor. Receptors may experience completed and operational development while later phases remain under construction and associated planting is immature. ISH2 did not establish how the adverse landscape effects of the strategic mounds had been distinguished from their screening benefit, or the planting density and measurable performance criteria supporting the assumed Year 15 effects.

- A receptor-linked mitigation schedule, construction and landscape phasing programme, representative parameter-envelope visual evidence, and measurable establishment and monitoring requirements are therefore needed. Until these matters are satisfactorily defined and secured, the Councils cannot place full reliance on the reported Year 15 reductions, and significant effects dependent on unquantified, immature or delayed planting should be treated as unresolved.

Mitigation/Improvement

- The Councils require further information on design evolution demonstrating application of the mitigation hierarchy, including consideration of building height, scale, massing and disposition before reliance on bunding and planting. A concise schedule should identify where significant and locally important effects occur, what causes them and the mitigation relied upon.
- Mitigation-critical landform and planting should be identified, quantified, phased and secured through the DCO and associated control documents. This should include minimum planting areas, widths, densities and plant numbers; bund-specific soils, drainage, erosion control and irrigation; early delivery before relevant buildings are occupied; fixed-point summer and winter monitoring; and enforceable remedial measures.
- Representative visual evidence should show the maximum parameter envelope, completion and Year 15 scenarios. Detailed rail-terminal and lighting information should define the reasonable worst case, including landform, sidings, cranes, container handling and storage, operational activity, lighting and night-time effects.
- The applicant should provide an auditable design-evolution schedule showing the landscape and visual constraints identified, options tested, comparative effects and resulting changes to building height, footprint, extent, disposition and levels. The adverse effects and screening benefits of strategic mounds should be assessed separately and supported by accessible plans, sections and visual evidence.

Lighting

Summary

- There will be a change from the current baseline due to the proposals during the construction and operational phase. It is not considered that this will cause a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mitigation/Improvement

- None

Water Environment

Summary

- The LLFA is content that on the basis of the information provided there is a viable scheme to ensure the main site can be drained adequately, subject to revisions being made to the Sustainable Drainage Strategy [AS-077] which have been agreed by OCC. OCC wishes to ensure that the correct details are submitted at detailed design stage.
- OCC does not consider that sufficient detail has been submitted to demonstrate how water will be attenuated during construction.
- In its capacity as Highway Authority OCC in its Relevant Representation has raised concerns around the Sustainable Drainage Strategy for Highway Works [AS-078]. However, following positive dialogue with the applicant, and subject to revisions being made to this document, the Council is content that sufficient detail has been provided at this stage to ensure there is no negative impact on surface water flooding on the highway.

Mitigation/Improvement

- OCC considers that additional details are required to demonstrate how water will be attenuated during construction.
- Amendments to both [AS-077] and [AS-078] have been agreed with the LLFA and HA. The Council expects the applicant to update these documents in line with the position agreed with the authority.

Heritage: Built and Archaeology

Summary

- The proposal site lies in an area of relatively high archaeological interest and potential, in a landscape which has a known, rich archaeological record. The proposed development will result in the removal of archaeological receptors.
- Though mitigation excavation and recording of these features will not fully mitigate their loss, the investigations will result in public access to the results of the investigations.
- An agreed Archaeological Mitigation Strategy was submitted into the examination at Procedural Deadline A [PDA-005].
- In respect of built heritage, overall, the development will result in a low level of harm to the significance of heritage assets.
- Subject to boundary treatments and the relationship of the site to neighbouring ground levels, the redevelopment and restoration of the Listed Building and the wider Ashgrove Farm complex is considered to be of heritage benefit.
- Any harm to the significance of the Listed Building and to RAF Upper Heyford conservation area will result from the large-scale changes to the surrounding agricultural land and the visual impact.

Mitigation/Improvement

- In relation to the built heritage impacts, the visual impacts in respect of the conservation area can be mitigated through sensitive landscaping and design of the acoustic fence that lies between the site and the protected area.
- The proposed works to bring the listed building and its associated structures back into active use are welcomed, subject to agreement on adjoining ground levels and boundary treatments. Built heritage impacts resulting from development within the wider setting can be mitigated through the control of building heights and appearance and the provision of adequate, appropriate landscaping and planting.

Ground Conditions

Summary

- Minerals: Most of the Development Order Limits, including the access, fall within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for crushed rock; around 27 million tonnes or more of mineral could be sterilised; the submission has not demonstrated conformity with the NNNPS, NPPF or OMWCS (2017); and further information is needed on the Minerals Resource Assessment assumptions, mineral requirements and sources, potential aggregate freight use of the SRFI, and how minerals safeguarding and mitigation were taken into account.
- Contaminated Land: The site is mainly arable and farming land, and the Council is satisfied with the methodology and findings of the ES chapter on contamination. Following recent developments around PFAS contamination on a neighbouring site, a supplementary report has been provided that deals specifically with this topic.
- Palaeontology: The site is located within an area with geological deposits of known international palaeontological significance. The Council considers that the applicant underestimates the significance of the impact on palaeontological assets.

Mitigation/Improvement

- Minerals: Either extraction of the minerals should occur prior to the development or there should be no development on the Safeguarded Minerals Area, unless it is established that the need for the development outweighs the economic and sustainability considerations relating to the mineral resource.
- Palaeontology: The Councils require the applicant to consult a credible palaeontological institution regarding their assessment of the significance of the impact on palaeontological assets and the adequacy of the proposed mitigation.
- The Council considers that a more detailed written scheme of investigation should be submitted into the examination. This WSI should ensure that a palaeontologist is on site at all times when fossil remains could be encountered and should ensure that appropriate excavation techniques are used.

Socio-Economics including Health

Host Authorities (HA)

Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (TR050008)

Summary

- Positive health opportunities identified through jobs, active travel and green infrastructure.
- Health inequalities and vulnerable groups are not assessed in sufficient detail.
- Local and cumulative impacts are underdeveloped, particularly around Heyford Park.
- The conclusion of a significant moderate beneficial effect appears overstated.
- Overall impact considered potentially positive, but with important uncertainties.
- Based on the position set out in the National Policy Statement, the Councils accept there is a national need for strategic rail freight development.
- The development has the potential to have a negative impact on local employment capacity.

Mitigation/Improvement

- Strengthen assessment of health inequalities and vulnerable groups.
- Use more localised health evidence.
- Provide a more balanced assessment of adverse and beneficial impacts.
- Further assess cumulative impacts alongside planned housing growth.
- Introduce measurable health mitigation and monitoring commitments.
- Strengthen consideration of mental wellbeing and climate resilience.
- Expand training and apprentice support to include road and rail logistics opportunities in addition to construction roles.
- Engage with the local community regarding ongoing community use of the amenity land to the south of the site.

Materials and Waste

Summary

- The proposed development is considered contrary to Policy W11, Safeguarding Waste Management Sites, of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2017 (OMWLP).
- The proposed development would result in the permanent loss of a safeguarded waste facility at Ashgrove Farm.

Mitigation/Improvement

- It has not been demonstrated that equivalent waste management capacity can be appropriately and sustainably managed elsewhere
- It has not been demonstrated that the Ashgrove Farm is no longer required for waste management
- Clarification is needed on the quantities, types and management of waste arising from the scheme
- Further information is required regarding the impact on Ardley Landfill.

Soil Resource and Agricultural Land

Summary

- The Councils agree with the applicant's conclusion of a major adverse residual effect on agricultural land and a significant adverse cumulative effect on agricultural land.
- The Councils do not agree with the applicant's assessment of compliance with NPS paragraph 5.189, which states that applicants should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

Mitigation/Improvement

- The applicant needs to justify how the design of the proposed development has sought to reduce impacts on BMV, rather than relying on the site selection process.

Climate Change

Summary

- The OHA recognises the strategic carbon benefits associated with increased rail freight capacity and modal shift from road to rail. The submitted Greenhouse Gas Assessment, Energy Strategy and Carbon Management Plan provide a comprehensive assessment of climate impacts and demonstrate compliance with relevant national and local policy requirements.
- However, whilst the proposed development performs strongly against regulated operational emissions through the use of rooftop solar PV and air source heat pumps, the OHA remains concerned that the overall climate strategy relies heavily on renewable energy generation rather than demand reduction. In addition, a significant proportion of operational emissions arise from unregulated energy use associated with future occupiers and there remains uncertainty regarding how long-term operational carbon performance will be secured and monitored.
- The provision of infrastructure to support the transition to zero carbon freight vehicles is minimal, and the OHA is concerned that this is out of step with national ambition and Oxfordshire's own transport carbon targets, and misses a clear opportunity for the development to showcase innovative methods of charging or refuelling for HGVs and other heavy vehicles.

Mitigation/Improvement

- The Council considers that the following measures should be explored further through the examination process and, where appropriate, secured through DCO Requirements, the Design Approach Document and associated management plans:
- Measures to maximise rooftop solar PV provision from first occupation, subject to grid and operational constraints.
- Stronger operational energy monitoring and reporting arrangements, including regular reporting of energy performance and renewable energy generation.

- An Operational Energy and Carbon Management Plan which addresses ongoing energy performance, demand reduction and tenant engagement.
- Further consideration of measures to reduce unregulated energy demand associated with future occupiers.
- Enhanced climate resilience measures including overheating mitigation and consideration of future climate scenarios.
- Consideration of how future low-carbon freight technologies, including zero-emission HGV infrastructure, can be accommodated within the development over its operational lifetime.
- Continued reduction of embodied carbon through material selection, reuse and application of PAS2080 principles during detailed design and construction.
- Opportunities for community energy participation associated with on-site renewable energy generation, including potential community ownership, investment or benefit-sharing mechanisms, in order to maximise local benefits arising from the development's renewable energy infrastructure.

Cumulative Effects

Summary

- Whilst some of the major in-combination effects have been taken into account, notably the relationship of the proposed development to other schemes in terms of their cumulative impact on the wider strategic highway network, there continues to be a series of important matters appertaining to this scheme which the Councils consider necessary to address.
- Landscape: due to the substantial scale, mass and industrial character of the proposal, there is a negative impact on the local landscape and visual impact. In combination with other schemes, notably the logistics development to the north of Junction 10, this scheme has the potential to dramatically degrade an area of open agricultural land to a scene more akin to a semi-urban development form.
- The loss of best and most versatile agricultural land resulting in a significant adverse impact is regrettable.

- Due to the spread of best and most versatile land, the proposal will compound the immediate and piecemeal loss and erosion of valuable agricultural land which cannot be replaced.
- These effects, when considered in the context of other schemes, could result in significant cumulative harms which weigh heavily against the proposal.

Mitigation/Improvement

- Whilst the landscaping bunds and associated landscaping will minimise direct views of the proposed buildings and rail freight facility, the bunds themselves represent an incongruous form of development in the open countryside.
- The proposal to save best and most versatile soils during the construction stage offsets some of the harm arising, but this measure does not fully address the harm or the disaggregation of a cohesive area of land well suited to agricultural use.

Summary of Local Impacts

Topic Area	**Potential Impacts**
Transport and Access	Highways: **Positive** Rail: **Neutral**
Air Quality and Odour	**Neutral**
Noise and Vibration	**Negative**
Ecology and Arboriculture	Ecology: **Negative** Arboriculture: **Negative**
Landscape and Visual	**Negative**
Lighting	**Neutral**

Water Environment (including flood risk and drainage)	Surface Water Drainage: **Neutral** Highways Drainage Design: **Neutral**
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	Archaeology: **Neutral** Built Heritage: **Neutral**
Ground Conditions	Minerals: **Negative** Palaeontology: **Negative** Ground Conditions: **Neutral**
Socio—Economic Impacts	Economics: **Neutral** Health: **Positive**
Waste	**Negative**
Agricultural Land	**Negative**
Climate Change	**Neutral**
Cumulative Effects	**Negative**

Summary of Overall Conclusions

The Councils support the principle of Rail Freight Interchanges and consider that the proposed OxSRFI meets the minimum criteria for an SRFI contained within the National Networks National Policy Statement. However, the Councils consider that insufficient justification has been provided for the quantum of warehousing. The Councils also consider, partially as a result of the quantum of proposed warehousing, that there will be significant environmental impacts resultant from the development. Throughout the Local Impact Report the Councils have sought to provide suggestions as to how these environmental impacts could be avoided, minimised or adequately mitigated.