



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Intermodal Logistics Park (ILP) North Strategic Rail Freight Interchange</b>
<b>File reference</b>	<b>TR0510001</b>
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>The Planning Inspectorate</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>30 April 2024</b>
<b>Meeting with</b>	<b>Tritax Symmetry</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	<b>Project Inception Meeting</b>
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely. The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

### Introduction to the Project and Applicant

The Applicant gave an overview of Tritax Symmetry and the Intermodal Logistics Park (ILP) North (ILP North) Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) Project, providing details of the proposed development. The Applicant advised that Tritax Symmetry is the development function of Tritax Big Box Reit PLC. Tritax also confirmed that they have recent experience in promoting a SRFI-led scheme at Hinckley through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.

The Applicant explained that the site lies in between the East-West Liverpool – Manchester (Chat Moss Line and West Coast mainline) rail lines. The site is connected by a link road to the M6 motorway (Junction 22) whilst also being in close proximity to the M62 motorway. The Applicant advised that 230 acres of the allocated Parkside East site are within their ownership with a small area forming part of the Greenbelt and sits adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Applicant further advised that part of the allocated land is within third party ownership. The eastern boundary of the allocated Parkside East site forms part of the administrative boundary between St Helens and Wigan local authority areas. The land adjoining the site within Wigan Borough is designated green belt within the adopted Wigan statutory development plan and the Applicant advised that as the proposals are still being refined, it is not yet confirmed whether such land will form part of the final DCO application.

The Applicant advised the Inspectorate of the site acquisition noting that the site is formed from allocated land in the St Helens Borough Council (SHBC) Local Plan. The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the freehold of part of the land allocated by St Helens Borough Council was purchased by the Applicant in October 2023.

The Applicant advised that the SRFI is noted to be strategically important for both the Liverpool City and Greater Manchester Combined Authority regions due to its ability to serve/connect to the Port of Liverpool and potentially reduce rail freight movements in the Manchester Piccadilly corridor. The Applicant stated that the potential for the delivery of an SRFI would provide a major piece of infrastructure not only for SHBC but also provide a crucial piece of development for the Liverpool City Region, Northern Powerhouse Rail and for the Northwest of England. The Applicant further provided a summary of the main shipping routes that are used for the distribution of freight both across the UK and across the world.

The Applicant advised that they are seeking to resolve any rights of access issues informally given the relationship that Tritax has with adjacent landowners. The Applicant advised that some properties had already been purchased and the Applicant will be seeking voluntary agreements for any further land required, however there may be some Compulsory Purchase Order powers required.

The Applicant stated that ground level changes will be required in order to ensure that the terminal sits at the correct level along with significant engineering works to ensure the rail line can meet the existing mainline track. The Applicant advised that they are surveying a quarry within close proximity of the site to establish whether material removed to match the required levels can be deposited there.

The Applicant advised that the site forms part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Freeport and forms one of a number of sites which have been consulted upon as part of a new LCR Spatial Development Strategy for the region. The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the Freeport tax status is confirmed until 2028, with SHBC and LCR Combined Authority in negotiation with Central Government regarding an extension to the current status which would extend into the 2030s.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

The Applicant advised that engagement has commenced and is ongoing with SHBC. The Inspectorate was advised that the Applicant has weekly engagement with the Council and are in the process of agreeing a Planning Performance Agreement with them.

The Inspectorate was informed that the site is located within the Liverpool City Region but interfaces with the Greater Manchester City Region by virtue of its interface with Wigan local authority area. The Applicant advised that conversations had taken place with SHBC senior officers and that similar introductory discussions would be held with representatives of the adjoining Wigan (WiBC) and Warrington (WaBC) local authorities as well as the respective City Region Combined Authorities.

The Applicant advised that they are in dialogue with WiBC regarding progressing potential green belt release within the currently emerging local plan. The Applicant further advised that they have also begun early engagement with Network Rail including holding workshops.

## **Planning Policy Context**

The Applicant advised that the proposed site has a long planning background including its allocation within the adopted SHBC Local Plan (2022). The plan allocated the site following its removal from the Greenbelt (via exceptional circumstances) for the establishment of an SRFI of no less than 60ha. The Inspectorate asked about the status of the Wigan Local Plan and the Applicant confirmed its understanding that it could be approximately three years until adoption. The eastern boundary of the site marks the authority boundary of SHBC with WiBC, with the land in WiBC still within the Green Belt. The Applicant advised that they may be seeking to include land within the WiBC as part of the development.

The Applicant provided a summary of the area surrounding the site including the Parkside West development and the Parkside Link Road which has been created to open up later phases of the Parkside West development along with providing an access to the ILP North site. The Applicant advised that it understands the road is due to open at the end of 2024.

The Applicant enquired about whether the Inspectorate can conduct outreach sessions with local authorities. The Applicant was advised that this can in some instances be done however it depends on the circumstances and expertise of the local authorities.

## **EIA/ Scoping**

The Applicant advised that appointed teams are undertaking initial baseline work, identifying the key constraints and identifying any potential issues with the site. The Applicant advised that they do not currently have any fixed scoping views and that work to establish these will be undertaken in conjunction with the Inspectorate and other statutory bodies. The Applicant advised that work is ongoing to establish whether the Habitats Regulation Assessment regulations will be triggered. The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that they are seeking voluntary access and arrangements and do not currently believe the use of section 52 and 53 powers will be required.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that changes had been made to the Applications Prescribed Forms and Procedures Regulations in relation to bodies which are required to be consulted. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant look into the changes and ensure that any consultation undertaken was compliant with the amended regulations.

The Inspectorate further advised the Applicant that scoping requests are 42 days and that more informative responses from statutory consultees occur when deadlines do not slip into the holiday periods. The Applicant was advised that early engagement with statutory consultees is recommended to allow such bodies to align resources.

## **Project Timeline**

The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with the current proposed DCO Programme outlining the key milestones proposed between now and the period following submission. The DCO pre-application stage is likely to commence in June 2024 with the project launch. Further to this the Applicant intends a submission of the EIA Scoping Opinion request in October 2024.

A non-statutory consultation is intended to take place in January 2025 with statutory consultation expected to take place between September and November 2025. The

Applicant advised the Inspectorate that they currently anticipated submission of the DCO in May 2026.

## **Actions**

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant to establish the current expected programme for the development of the Wigan Local Plan.
- The Applicant to provide a further note on the current status of the Parkside West application and status of works.
- The Inspectorate to publish a project webpage once the project is formally launched.