Rail Central
Northamptonshire


**Rail Central**

# Preliminary Environmental Information Stage 1: Non-Technical Summary

**April 2016**

# Contents

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This document is a non-technical summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) which has been produced to inform community consultation.

1.2 It is intended to offer an accessible summary of the more comprehensive report. It focusses on content which is likely to be of interest to people living in the area and summarises the findings of the survey work undertaken to date, as well as any survey work which remains outstanding. It also offers the current positon in terms of what works it is considered may be necessary to undertake in order to alleviate any changes in the environment which result from this development.

1.3 This report is part of an ongoing consultation programme and reflects the current stage of the project. Not all of the information is complete or final. If you feel that we have missed important information please reflect this in your consultation comments as this will help us to ensure that we have complete information to take into account in the next stages of environmental assessment work.

# 2. The Proposed Development

2.1 The proposed development will be limited by a series of parameters which set the maximum amount of development that can be achieved on the site. A masterplan has been prepared which shows the maximum extent of the development that could be delivered under those parameters.

2.2 The scheme will provide up to 8,000,000 sq ft of rail-served logistics space with storage and distribution warehouses and ancillary office accommodation. Provision has been made for up to three of the larger warehouse units (around 2.3m sq. ft.) to be capable of direct rail siding access into / alongside, whilst the remainder will be served by a common-user, open-access intermodal facility. The masterplan shows a configuration of buildings, which is the largest that could be achieved under the current parameters. This is intended to illustrate the worst case for assessment in the Environmental Impact Assessment which is being undertaken.

2.3 The scheme will take rail access from two points on the national rail network.

2.4 The majority of the anticipated rail freight services are expected to access the site via the Northampton Loop line (known historically as the Roade & Rugby New Line), which handles most of the freight and non-express passenger services at present. Trains will be able to access from either direction on the main line, with trains passing directly into or alongside the intermodal terminal to facilitate fast turnaround of trains once off the main line. Provision has been made in the track layout design to allow both diesel- and electrically-hauled trains to access the sidings.

2.5 In addition (and uniquely for a SRFI), the masterplan also makes provision for access to and from the West Coast Main Line itself (known historically as the London to Rugby Line), mainly for a smaller number of express freight services, similar to those used by the Royal Mail between London, Warrington, Glasgow and Newcastle (and more recently used by Eddie Stobart, Sainsburys and TNT). Access would again be provided from both directions of travel for diesel- and electrically-hauled express freight trains, the loop off the main line being of sufficient length to allow trains to enter and depart at higher speeds. A cross-dock platform would allow trains and goods vehicles to transfer goods quickly between modes. This facility would allow freight users to benefit from faster transits than possible with road haulage or traditional rail freight services.

2.6 The four separate main line access points (two on the Northampton Loop and two on the West Coast Main Line itself) would also be interconnected within the site, providing maximum flexibility in moving trains on and off site as directed by Network Rail. For example, when either of the two main line routes is closed for engineering works, or due to disruption, the rail layout would enable Network Rail to route services via the other main line if necessary.

2.7 The intermodal terminal would be equipped with multiple sidings capable of handling maximum length (775m) freight trains. All of the non-electrified sidings would be accessible for overhead gantry crane operation, providing more efficient (and electrically-driven) interchange of containers between road and rail. The terminal operator would be able to stable or process intermodal trains in the same set of sidings,

reducing the shunting time normally associated at SRFI with separate duplicated sidings for train stabling (reception) and handling. Space would be provided alongside the sidings for containers to be stored temporarily if required between road and rail interchange. The intermodal terminal would be open to all users, whether on-site or off-site, and would be open to all rail freight operating companies (FOCs) as a fully open-access facility. Dedicated container handling vehicles (known as "tugmasters" or "dockspotters") would be available to occupiers on site to move containers between the intermodal terminal and individual warehouse units. The intermodal terminal would also have facilities for secure parking of HGVs awaiting entry to the handling area (typically achieving a 20-minute turnaround once inside), along with ancillary facilities including driver amenities, maintenance, administration and workshop buildings.

2.8 Additional rail formations on site would then allow for direct siding access into or alongside some of the larger warehouse units, or to provide stabling and servicing facilities for locomotives and rolling stock. This would help replace facilities (and skills) lost at the nearby historic Wolverton Railway Works to the south, which has been heavily rationalised in recent years.

2.9 The creation of the rail connections will involve creating level land, laying tracks and any necessary works to provide crossings (bridges or underpasses) for public rights of way, landscaping and drainage infrastructure.

2.10 Road access to the site will be taken from a new "grade separated" junction on the A43. This will provide access to a central spine road which will serve the entire site. A truck park facility will be provided which will remove the potential for drivers arriving early to site to park on the wider local road network.

2.11 The main development site will be split into two distinct areas.

2.12 The smaller area between the A43 and Northampton Road / Towcester Road will be split into two main development zones, to the north and south of the spine road. These will provide for several logistics buildings with a maximum height of around 18.5m. The development zones will need to be levelled. Each building will have landscaping, car parking, HGV parking, access docks and a range of ancillary development, including gatehouses, vehicle maintenance areas, vehicle washing facilities and cycle parking.

2.13 The larger area of the site is located to the east of the site, between Towcester Road / Northampton Road and the railway lines.

2.14 Access to this area will be taken via the main spine road. There are currently two options to cross Towcester Road, including a new roundabout and an underpass. The underpass option would segregate site traffic from traffic using Towcester Road and it would remove the potential for HGV's to attempt to travel through either Blisworth or Milton Malsor. This is currently the preferred option.

2.15 This eastern area of the site will be split into three development zones, each having buildings as described above. There will also be the proposed intermodal facility and the express freight cross dock platform located adjacent to each of the railway lines.

2.16 There is a further area of site available to the west of the A43, which has the potential to accommodate a range of uses to support a SRFI. This area could provide a hotel, restaurant or an office based use. The nature of potential uses is open to consultation inputs.

2.17 Around the site, landscaping will be undertaken with the aim of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and limiting its visibility from the surrounding area. This will incorporate earth mounding, belts of tree and shrub planting, surface water features, including landscaped balancing ponds, swales and marginal aquatic habitats. Landscaping will also be provided within the site, forming boundaries between building plots and breaking up areas of car parking. Where possible, the existing field pattern will be retained and enhanced.

2.18 The construction of the site will be undertaken in a phased manner. The precise phasing of works has not been determined, but it is likely that the first stage of works will be taking an initial construction access from the A43. This will most likely use the former petrol filling station access point. This will allow the establishment of a construction compound to the west of the site. Works will then start with the creation of the main site access from the A43, which will facilitate the main road based access for the construction phase.

2.19 A central haul road will then be created to Northampton Road, to allow works on the underpass to begin. Once complete, this will allow access to the eastern area of the site. Construction access will then be taken to the eastern boundary and another construction compound created. This will allow works to begin on creating the rail infrastructure for the intermodal terminal. These initial rail works will allow the use of rail for some construction activity, potentially including bulk deliveries or exports. The first phase of rail works is unlikely to involve the creation of the entire intermodal facility, but will provide direct rail access to the site.

2.20 The creation of development plateau and perimeter bunds will require bulk earth works. These will also be undertaken on a phased basis, although it is likely that this will be limited to one or two main earth work phases, providing levelled and profiled areas for the eastern and western parts of the site. Once each phase is complete, advance landscaping will be provided to maximise maturing time.

2.21 It is possible that the initial buildings will have a direct rail connection requirement, in which case they will be constructed in the eastern area of the site. For occupiers with an indirect rail requirement or an anticipated future rail requirement, the site location will depend on the scale of the building and the occupiers preference for location. This may involve buildings being constructed on the western area of the site.

2.22 As the delivery of the site will be market driven, the construction phase effects of the development may be extended over a number of years as buildings are delivered. However, as the effects will be spread over a longer period, the intensity of the effects will be lessened.

# 3. Need and Alternatives

3.1 There is a national need and policy drive for rail freight, which is set out in both the relevant National Policy Statements on National Networks, the Logistics Growth Review and on Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, as supported by Network Rail's market forecasts. Current planning policy looks to shift as much road-based freight as possible onto less carbon intensive modes of transport, including rail and water transport.

3.2 Northampton is recognised by the Local Economic Partnership as having a strong market for distribution and logistics, to meet both regional and national needs, based on its central geographic location and excellent road and rail connectivity. This is evident in the considerable amount of existing warehousing floorspace in Northamptonshire and surrounding areas – most of which has no prospect of rail access or use. As the population and economy continues to expand, with business and consumers demanding ever-greater product choice and availability, so the consistent upward trend in demand for warehousing is expected to grow as a consequence, with much of this growth still concentrated in the Northamptonshire area at the geographic heart of Great Britain.

3.3 The successful development of the first generation of SRFI such as DIRFT and Hams Hall reflects a rare synergy between public policy and commercial objectives. Government policy as far back as 2004 foresaw the development of SRFI as encouraging more companies to locate alongside the rail network, from where to evolve their distribution activities over time to make greater use of rail; companies such as Eddie Stobart and Tesco first took occupation of warehouses at DIRFT1 when it opened in the mid-1990's, from where a network of national rail services were then developed a decade later. Between them, the relatively small number of SRFI developed in England and Scotland to date (6 sites) have created over 30 new freight trains per day, taking more than 2,000 long-distance lorry loads off the road network every day.

3.4 The existing SRFI in the Midlands (DIRFT 1 and 2, Hams Hall and Birch Coppice) have each attracted occupiers and rail traffic, derived from both on-site and off-site customers, even where SRFI are co-located with each other and neighbouring SRFI (eg Hams Hall is less than 8 miles from the Birch Coppice SRFI and the Birmingham RFI). Additional SRFI and RFI developments such as Castle Donington, DIRFT3 and East Midlands Gateway will further enhance capacity and help create a wider network of inter-connected SRFI in the short to medium term.

3.5 However, in order to address the ongoing government policy objectives, and satisfy new market demand in the most appropriate way, a need exists for more rail served warehousing space, given the relatively small proportion of warehousing in the area which is rail served, either by intermodal terminals or directly-connected warehouses. The existing SRFI will only have a finite capacity to expand floorspace and/or rail freight interchange facilities, such that further sites such as Rail Central are needed to increase both the capacity and the catchment area of the network, bringing rail access closer to more local companies than is possible from these existing sites alone.

3.6 Development of Rail Central will therefore help to ensure greater opportunities to achieve further "modal shift" of long-distance freight from road to rail, with the

associated environmental benefits, over the medium to long term. This site is therefore targeting a longer term provision of space to ensure continuity of supply.

3.7 There are a limited number of sites where good access to rail and road are available in the UK. The core area of demand is the "golden triangle" but with equally strong locational characteristics, the wider East Midlands and West Midlands both show strong demand for rail and road based accommodation.

3.8 Initial work has been undertaken to examine potential alternative sites to the Rail Central Site. A number of sites were suggested through informal public consultation and alternatives examined by recent rail freight schemes have also been considered.

3.9 The findings of this exercise are summarised below and plans of the sites locations can be found in the alternatives chapter of the main PEIR report:

| Site | Reason for Discounting |
|---|---|
| Northampton Highgate (J15) | • Controlled by third party developer;<br>• Current masterplan removes land to achieve rail access;<br>• Planning application withdrawn<br>• No demonstrable intention from landowner to pursue rail at this time |
| Pineham Expansion (J15a) | • Extant permission in place<br>• No rail connection<br>• Controlled by third party developer |
| South West of J15a | • No rail connection |
| South East of J15a | • No rail connection |
| Milton Ham Business Park (J15a) | • Lapsed planning permission<br>• Application refused, current appeal<br>• No rail connection<br>• Controlled by third party developer |
| Northampton South SUE | • Recent allocation for housing<br>• Poor road access needing major new junction on to M1 |
| Midway Park (J16) | • Controlled by third party developer |

| Site | Reason for Discounting |
|---|---|
| | • No rail connection |
| Midway Park Phases 2 & 3 (J16) | • Controlled by third party developer<br>• No rail connection |
| DIRFT 3 (J18) | • Recent consent<br>• Needed in addition to Rail Central<br>• Provides for earlier need |
| Expansion of DIRFT (J18) | • Unlikely to progress until DIRFT 3 well progressed<br>• Limits market choice of location at this time<br>• Potential to deliver in the future, after Rail central |
| Eurohub, Corby (A43, Corby) | • Limited rail capacity<br>• Limited rail gauge<br>• Scheme viability as noted by DIRFT assessment |
| East Midlands Intermodal Park (A38, Derby) | • Different market area<br>• Needed in addition to Rail Central |
| EMDC (A50, Castle Donnington) | • Well advanced development.<br>• Small scale non-SRFI. |
| East Midlands Gateway (J24, M1) | • Recent consent<br>• Needed in addition to Rail Central<br>• Provides for earlier need |
| West Midlands Interchange (J12, M6) | • Different market area<br>• Needed in addition to Rail Central |
| Hinckley (J2, M69) | • Needed in addition to Rail Central |

3.10 A more detailed criteria based search is still ongoing which is using defined parameters, to ensure that the exercise is robust. This is not yet complete, but will be made available on the project website in due course. The aim of this exercise is to ensure that we have considered all reasonable alternatives. Please suggest sites for us to look at as part of this consultation.

# 4. Highways

4.1 The highways effects of the development are linked to the effects of other developments and existing traffic flows. The modelling work being undertaken at the moment is complex and the team is working closely with Northamptonshire County Council and Highways England to ensure that the methods being used are consistent. It is likely that a key council model that examines the cumulative effects of future developments on the wider network will be revised in the summer. This may mean that some of the existing work needs to be re-examined at that point.

4.2 The initial work being undertaken now has used worst case assumptions on the number of HGV and staff movements and uses a routing which concentrates all traffic onto the A43 and J15a. No HGV traffic will use the Old Northampton Road but options for local and employee access are being considered and feedback is sought on this.

4.3 A travel to work area analysis has been undertaken. Due to the sites proximity to the M1 the site will have a wide travel to work catchment, extending across South and North Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Wellingborough and Coventry.

4.4 At this stage, the results of the assessment are a worst case scenario. Construction stage information is also being collated and so assumptions have again been made on a worst case basis.

4.5 It is expected that the modelling work will continue throughout the spring and summer. It will be made available on the project website once it is complete.

4.6 It is currently envisaged that physical highways works will be required at the following locations, although the form and detail of the improvement works are still under consideration:

- M1 Junction 15A
- M1 Junction 15
- A45 Queen Eleanor roundabout
- A5076/Towcester Road roundabout; and
- A5076/A5123 roundabout.

4.7 A number of options are being considered for these junctions which can only be finalised when traffic modelling is complete.

4.8 The site access will be provided by a new “grade separated” junction. This will help traffic to continue flowing on the A43 without being impacted by traffic slowing to leave the road.

# 5. Landscape and visual effects

5.1 The landscape and visual assessment has identified landscape features that may be sensitive to change, such as the character of the existing landscape and the existing visual amenity experienced at specific viewpoint locations, including views from residential properties. The main landscape receptors that have the potential to experience landscape effects are:

- The loss of agricultural fields, hedgerow and trees within the site;
- Change to the landscape character of the site itself; and
- Change to the surrounding landscape character.

5.2 The landscape and visual impact assessment work has also identified various locations where visual change is expected.

5.3 Residents of individual detached properties located on Northampton Road are surrounded by lines of trees, however there is potential for close-range views of the proposed development. Supplementary planting may be provided in the vicinity of detached properties located beside Northampton Road.

5.4 Residents of Railway Cottages on Northampton Road may experience close-range views from the rear upper storey of their properties. Earth bunding and screen planting may be provided in the intervening space.

5.5 Residents and footpath users to the south of Milton Malsor may experience relatively close-range views of the development. Opportunities to screen views will be explored, including earth bunds and additional tree and hedgerow planting located to the north-east of the site. Earth bunds may align with existing landform undulations so that they provide an instant increase in the height of planting which would help in screening views.

5.6 Residents on and users of Courteenhall Road may have elevated views of the site. The existing visible skyline, which includes part of Northampton is unlikely to be disrupted, although the view will change. Planting along the southern boundary of the site may be introduced to reduce visibility of the building facades when looking from the north-eastern periphery of Blisworth.

5.7 Users of the Grand Union Canal currently have limited views into the site due to the strong hedgerow boundary. However, full analysis of the potential views is being undertaken. Supplementary planting along the Grand Union Canal as it passes the south-western part of the site may be provided.

5.8 Road users in the eastern areas of Gayton may have elevated views of the site. However, extensive views of the site are not expected, due mainly to the position of the site below the village and below the visible skyline, in addition to the screening effect of vegetation cover around the village.

5.9 Landscape mitigation being considered may include: supplementary hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting beside Northampton Road in the centre of the site; and additional planting beside the Northampton Loop to screen views of the development from the eastern part of the study area.

5.10 Further work in relation to the landscape and visual effects of the development will be undertaken over the coming months.

# 6. Noise & Vibration

6.1 A survey of baseline noise conditions has been undertaken. More detailed survey work is currently underway. Data has been gathered from four monitoring locations and monitoring at four more is ongoing. The monitoring locations are designed to be representative of the noise environment particularly at nearby homes. Vibration monitoring is also underway. The monitoring should be completed in spring 2016.

6.2 Detailed noise predictions will be undertaken when the more detailed baseline surveys are complete. However, it is likely that noise mitigation will be proposed.

6.3 Primary noise sources are likely to be vehicle movements in yard areas and ventilation plant associated with the storage units. It is likely that landscaped earth bunding will be used to reduce noise at nearby properties. If the modelling indicates further barriers should be provided, there is also potential to provide noise attenuation fencing. Other possible mitigation measures that could be used might include restrictions on reversing alarms. Restrictions on operational and construction noise will be secured through the Requirements contained in the proposed Development Consent Order. Where measures are proposed in outline plans, there will be a requirement to work up detailed plans for South Northamptonshire Council's approval before construction and/or operation can commence.

6.4 The modelling work and detailed noise predictions will be completed during summer 2016 and will be made available in due course.

# 7. Air Quality

7.1 Baseline survey work has been undertaken using data from 10 bespoke monitoring sites as well as local authority monitoring data. Monitoring has been undertaken for Nitrogen Dioxide and fine particulate matter, both of which are pollutants associated with vehicle use.

7.2 There are a number of Air Quality Management Areas in the wider area. Baseline monitoring work is still ongoing.

7.3 A full year of monitoring data is not yet available; however, the first nine months of raw monitoring data indicate that the objective for annual average nitrogen dioxide will be met at the monitoring locations.

7.4 Further work is ongoing, including work on bespoke modelling of the effects of the development.

7.5 It is anticipated that the main air quality effects will arise from construction activities and subsequently from vehicles associated with the development.

7.6 Whilst modelling is not complete, the mitigation which is anticipated to be needed will focus on best practice measures during construction, including dust control measures. A dust management plan is going to be prepared which will be applied on a phased basis as development progresses around the site. It will include measures such as damping down any stock piled loose materials, sheeting vehicles or plant moving materials around the site, appropriate routing of construction traffic and adequately maintaining plant and machinery used during construction.

7.7 Staff and HGV travel planning, including measures such as car sharing, encouraging cycling and walking as well as vehicle routing controls is likely to be applied at both operational and construction phases, including a construction traffic management plan and a delivery and servicing logistics plan.

7.8 During both construction and operation, the use of energy efficient and lower emitting modern vehicle fleets will also be considered

# 8. Agriculture

8.1 The site has been surveyed to establish the nature and quality of soils on the site. The land is a mixture of soil types, with clays, chalky clay and more sandy deposits from glacial flows. The quality of the land is limited mostly by seasonal wetness, which results from impeded drainage associated with slowly permeable subsoils.

8.2 The quality of the land for agricultural purposes ranges from Subgrade 3b to Grade 2, with most of the site classified as moderate quality Subgrade 3b land. Further soil survey work may be required to increase the density of sample points to refine the extent of each grade across the site and to survey areas to which access was not previously available. If required, this will be undertaken during the course of 2016.

8.3 The development will see the loss of this agricultural land. Further consideration is being given as to how this might be mitigated, however, it is likely that the best quality soils will be re-used in the extensive landscaping scheme that will be required around the site.

8.4 The loss of farming land may also have an effect on the farmers currently working the land and further work is being undertaken to establish the nature of the farming businesses on site.

# 9. Archaeology

9.1 A desk based assessment has been carried out for the site. This shows that there is potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site. There have been spot finds of early prehistoric flint artefacts on the site, although there are no corresponding records of prehistoric settlement of equivalent date. There is crop mark evidence which indicates later prehistoric / Romano-British settlement, in the western part of the site, and a potential pottery kiln from the same period. There have also been spot finds of Roman roof tile and of quern fragments (a grinding stone used for processing grain).

9.2 There is no evidence of Saxon settlement on the site, although there is evidence for settlements in the wider area. Recovery of two Saxon pottery vessels in the 1940s suggests that a possible Saxon cemetery once survived on the outskirts of Milton Malsor, just within the site. There have been finds of medieval pottery in the southern part of the site; which could indicate a former medieval site in this general area.

9.3 It is anticipated that the development would affect three crop mark sites, which are believed to represent two potential late Iron Age or Romano-British settlements and a ditch. The development would also affect a historic barn and remains of former ridge and furrow cultivation.

9.4 There is a body of evidence that suggests there are buried archaeological remains on the site. Further investigation work is in the process of being agreed with the County Council's Archaeologist and it is likely that this will involve a geophysical survey of the site, and potentially include trial trenching of selected areas, to further investigate the archaeological resource. It is anticipated that this work will be undertaken during summer 2016.

9.5 The proposed Development Consent Order will be subject to a Requirement that further archaeological work be undertaken, in accordance with a detailed brief which will need to be agreed with the County Council Archaeologist.

# 10. Built Heritage

10.1 There are no listed buildings or conservation areas within the development site. However, within the wider 2km study area, there are 146 listed buildings. 133 are listed at grade II, 12 buildings at grade II* and one building at grade I. There are also 7 conservation areas and the Courteenhall Registered Park and Garden.

10.2 There will be no direct impacts on built heritage assets, but there is potential to affect the significance of the listed buildings/conservation areas/registered park and garden through development within their setting. This is subject to further more detailed assessment work which is currently ongoing.

# 11. Drainage and Flood Risk

11.1 The majority of the site is not at risk of flooding. However, small areas immediately adjacent to the Milton Malsor Brook have an increased risk, with some land categorised as being at medium and high risk.

11.2 The Environment Agency have confirmed that the current flood zones are the subject of consideration pending more detailed and site specific modelling of all watercourses. This modelling work is currently being undertaken.

11.3 An initial assessment has been undertaken to determine the amount of surface water storage that will be required to restrict water runoff rates to the existing greenfield condition.

11.4 At this stage of the design process it is assumed that each building unit and its associated hardstanding areas will have its own storage features which will deal with their own attenuation requirements. In the majority of cases, because of the land use, the storage is likely to be provided in underground tanks beneath car park areas and other hardstandings.

11.5 In a number of locations there should be the opportunity to include attenuation ponds/basins which will be able to provide additional storage and deliver the ability to improve water quality before discharging to the existing watercourses within the site. It is also intended to include swales or similar features as conveyance systems and to provide water treatment benefits where permitted within the layout.

# 12. Ground Conditions

12.1 The site is primarily agricultural land although there are a number of former and current uses that have the potential to affect the quality of the land. There is a former petrol filling station, a transport yard and two farms present on site. There is evidence of agricultural buildings that were demolished in the later 20th century. There are also a number of former sand and gravel pits to the north and brick pits to the west of the site. In the centre of the site is a trading estate which would be retained, which includes an abattoir, a garage, a waste water treatment works and a factory. There is also a record of landfill in the north west area of the site.

12.2 The risks presented by the former uses of the site are considered to be low, although there are local sources of possible contamination, such as at the former petrol filling station, where risks will be higher. These areas will need suitable management and either de-contaminating by removal of materials to a registered facility, or if appropriate by sealing the contamination in an appropriate capping layer.

12.3 Further intrusive investigation works are ongoing and more detailed information will be made available for consultation in due course.

# 13. Utilities

13.1 A number of utilities cross the site, including a high pressure gas pipeline. Discussions with the statutory undertakers regarding asset protection and the potential diversions of assets is ongoing. It is not envisaged that the presence of utilities will have a major effect on the form of the development.

Turley

# 14. Lighting

14.1 The site is generally rural in nature and as such has limited artificial lighting at night time. The proposed development will bring new operational activities which need to operate 24 hours a day. This will change the relatively dark nature of the site.

14.2 The future external lighting design proposal will be designed to comply with relevant guidelines which are intended to limit the effects of artificial lighting by keeping light levels to the minimum necessary to achieve the task and directing light to where it is genuinely needed.

14.3 There will be careful selection of luminaires to ensure that appropriate products are chosen based upon their light distribution characteristics and the use of optimised optics (flat glass). Careful consideration will be given to their positioning and mounting heights and retaining tilting angles close to the horizontal that will minimise light spill and glare. A light quality that minimises disruption to existing ecological systems in the form of current technology and LED light sources which emit minimal UV and blue light will also be used.

14.4 The scheme will comply with the Bat Conservation Trust – Bats and Lighting in the UK (May 2009) and Bat Conservation Trust – Artificial Lighting and wildlife Interim Guidance (June 2014), and conform to the obtrusive light limitations commensurate with the surrounding environmental zone classification, as prescribed within Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light.

# 15. Ecology

15.1 The site is primarily agricultural land although has a range of habitats, including semi-improved grassland, wood and scrubland, brick works structures, streams and ponds, and hedges. A number of common plant species are present on the site and more detailed botanical surveys will be carried out in places of interest.

15.2 Further surveys for bats are currently underway, as several buildings and trees offer suitable habitat and some signs have been recorded. No evidence of badgers has been recorded on the site to date, although there is potential for them to be present in wooded and scrub areas to the north of the site. The habitats on the site are suitable to support a range of common farmland birds and the size of the site means that there is potential for rarer species to occur. Further surveys are underway to record farmland birds using the site. However, the site is anticipated to be no more valuable than similar habitats occurring locally.

15.3 There are thirteen waterbodies in and around the site which are being surveyed for protected amphibians, including Great Crested Newt. A large population of Great Crested Newt was found outside the site, on the area to the east of the Northampton Loop rail line which borders the eastern side of the site. The rail line is a significant barrier to terrestrial movements of newts meaning it is unlikely that this population has migrated to the site due to the presence of the railway.

15.4 There is also suitable habitat for common reptiles, including grass snake, slow worm and common lizard, and further surveys will be undertaken to confirm whether they are present. The watercourse on site is not suitable for otters, although they could use it as a route to navigate between other areas in their territory. Suitable habitats for water voles are present on streams within the site and further surveys to look for signs of water vole will be undertaken.

15.5 Further survey work, consultation and desk studies are being undertaken in the 2016 season to ensure that complete data is available and to ensure that a robust and comprehensive ecological impact assessment is undertaken. The findings of the surveys will be used to design mitigation measures, as appropriate, to which agreement will be sought from key consultees including Natural England.

15.6 Ecological mitigation and compensation may be provided in a variety of ways, including maintaining and enhancing any habitat that can be preserved, new planting and habitat creation areas within the site, and creating linkages of habitat through the site. These will be combined with strategic landscaping and landform creation designed to minimise views of the development.

# 16. Socio-Economic Effects

16.1 Work has progressed to examine the likely travel to work area for the project, as well as considering the likely economic effects of the development.

16.2 The travel to work area has been determined by examining the locations of the workforce from a modern logistics park with a similar relationship to the M1. This has identified that the work force for the site is likely to be drawn from a wide catchment area. The analysis undertaken suggests that labour would be drawn from South Northamptonshire, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Wellingborough and Coventry. This wider catchment will potentially provide over 75% of the labour force for the site. The remainder of the workforce are likely to be specialist skilled employees drawn from a wider catchment.

16.3 Work is currently underway to look at the actual level of planned growth in the wider area, drawn from planning approvals and allocated land. This will provide a basis for then estimating labour force growth over the next 15 years and the number of people entering the labour force and potentially available to work at the site.

16.4 The socio-economic effects of the development will therefore be experienced within the local area of South Northamptonshire and also a wider area. Locally, there will be job creation benefits and other associated benefits such as the local retention of business rates. For people working on the site and living in the area, there will also be local economic benefits associated with household spending which in turn can support local businesses. The wider catchment area will also experience employment effects and business benefits associated with increased household spending power.

16.5 The economic benefits will therefore be spread over a wider than local area, although the benefits to be felt locally are still likely to be significant. The socio-economic assessment is still being completed, and will be made available in due course.

# 17. Conclusion

17.1 This document is a summary of the environmental assessment work undertaken to date. It has been prepared specifically for the purposes of consultation and summarises the key findings of the main Preliminary Environmental Information Report.

17.2 If we have missed any information which you consider to be important for the project team to consider please leave us feedback at the consultation event or via the following contact methods:

Web site: www.railcentral.com

Email: railcentral@camargue.uk

Phone: 0845 543 8967

Post: FREEPOST Rail Central

Turley

Rail Central
Northamptonshire


## More information

For further information please visit:
**www.railcentral.com**

You can also e-mail us via **railcentral@camargue.uk** or telephone our information line (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm) on 0845 543 8967 (please note calls are charged at local rates).

There is further information on the planning process on the National Infrastructure Planning website at:
**www.infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk**

**April 2016**