

Rail Central: Community update

Autumn 2017



Rail Central would be where the West Coast Main Line and Northampton Loop Line meet adjacent to the A43 and close to the M1

As part of our series of community update newsletters, this edition is to keep you informed about the development of our proposals and our ongoing consultation programme.

We are focused on completing detailed surveys and technical work as the basis for our application. In this edition, we provide an update on those important technical assessments and how they will inform the proposals we consult on in the Phase Two consultation. We are investing considerable time to complete these surveys thoroughly and to ensure that we have up-to-date and comprehensive information for our Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI), which is a core part of the application.

This edition also includes a look at the economic benefits presented by Rail Central. These benefits are integral to the Government's policy for the creation of a network of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFI). As well as delivering nationally, Rail Central presents the opportunity for significant economic benefits locally and regionally, including the potential for approximately 8,000 new jobs.

An update on consultation

We held our Phase One statutory consultation in April to October 2016 where the initial plans were presented and feedback was sought from the local community and other consultees.

This feedback has helped us to shape the plans, contributing to the design process alongside the outputs of our technical work and surveys. Since October 2016, consultation with key stakeholders has been ongoing on an informal basis through regular meetings to update on our technical work and respond to any queries.

Since our Spring 2017 newsletter, we have carried out and completed a full spectrum of technical work. This includes ground surveys, environmental and ecological assessments, rail engineering, archaeology and other aspects of the information that will inform our PEI.

We have also made progress with our critical highways assessments but not at the pace we had previously envisaged.

In order to design and test (via complex simulation modelling) how Rail Central will integrate into the road network, we have carried out detailed studies. We have also run our data through the new Northamptonshire County Council highways model which was created and validated this year.

This means that we have tested our designs against the best and most up-to-date assessment for how the local and regional highways network operates. We can therefore design our scheme and, in particular, off-site junction work such as J15A on the M1, to manage demand.

Because we waited to run our data through the new model and to have discussions with Northamptonshire County Council and Highways England that could inform and improve our approach, we took the decision to adjust our provisional timetable for Phase Two statutory consultation and move that into the new year.

Phase Two consultation is expected to take place early in 2018 and we will be in touch when we have further details on the revised consultation schedule.

There will be a full programme of advertising and notices to let people know about the Phase Two consultation and how they can get involved if they would like to.



On-site landscape surveys



Rail Central uses the latest highways model covering the M1 (pictured) and the local network

Snapshot – technical work and surveys

Our design process is focused on creating a standard-setting SRFI (in terms of function and operation) balanced with ensuring the proposed development respects its setting and includes mitigation where needed to off-set any potential impacts.

Our technical and survey work – alongside feedback from consultation – is shaping both the scheme design and mitigation design.

Since our previous community update newsletter, we have:

- Carried out detailed ground surveys including **archaeology** assessments – you may have noticed some trial trenching and excavation work over the summer. This is important to build a detailed and robust understanding of the ground conditions and, where they may exist, any archaeological or heritage assets. This work is now largely complete and will be covered in the relevant chapters of our PEI.
- Developed our approach to **landscaping, screening and visual impact** – building on the preliminary material used at Phase One consultation, we have developed more detailed proposals for planting, bunding, landscape design and how we integrate structural landscaping into the proposed development. This includes proposals for strengthening the perimeter of the proposed scheme (ie to create screens of trees, where appropriate) as well as green landscaping within the logistics park area where it will improve its appearance and support environmental and ecological objectives.

- Deepened our knowledge of ground levels, the site's topography and factors that enable us to develop **more detailed engineering proposals**. Our application will include a series of plateaus for proposed development (ie level areas where plateaus where commercial buildings can be constructed) within what is called the parameters plan. Our engineering team has progressed the structural and construction aspects which is feeding into our overall land use plans.
- Completed **habitat surveys** and work on **ecology and biodiversity** – to ensure that we can design for and manage any impacts of the development on ecology. We have recently completed further surveys and assessments, some of which are seasonal.
- Worked on more detail for **construction** and how (subject to consent) Rail Central could be built out. This involves looking at phasing (ie what aspects of the development need to come forward first) and how construction activity can be best coordinated (ie in respect of construction traffic management).
- Progressed our work on **rail connectivity** and engineering including discussions with Network Rail.

Our PEI report, which will be available at Phase Two consultation, will also include chapters on issues raised during Phase One consultation such as air quality, noise, lighting and land use.

Highways – the importance of up-to-date modelling

A Strategic Rail Freight Interchange – which is sometimes called an 'inland port' – depends on having good connectivity and access. This connectivity to rail and road is a principal reason for Rail Central being proposed in this location.

The importance of connectivity was highlighted at Phase One consultation – concern about potential traffic impacts was one of the most frequently raised responses.

We are now well advanced on proposals for a substantial redesign to J15A of the M1. This is the key junction for the scheme and having a suitable solution

here determines the type and range of additional highways work that we would undertake on the local network.

We took the decision to wait for and work with the up-to-date information in Northamptonshire County Council's new highways model so that our modelling and highways design would be robust and appropriate. We are confident our proposals for highways design and mitigation will be effective and proportionate.

We anticipate confirming details for J15A this autumn and, with those in place, setting dates for the Phase Two consultation to happen in the new year.

Logistics – a crucial and expanding industry

We all depend on the logistics industry – it plays a vital role in the way we live, bringing goods and products to where they are needed and supporting our economy.

Effective supply chains mean raw materials get to manufacturers on time, mean goods will reach retailers when they need them, and items are put on the supermarket shelves where we expect to find them.

Increasingly, effective logistics and smart supply chains mean customers can have what they want even quicker and businesses can operate even more efficiently, giving those with the best supply chains valuable commercial advantage.

Beyond servicing, the sector is also very important to the national economy.

More than two million people are employed in logistics related jobs across the UK and there are 56,000 businesses in the sector. It's a modern, high-tech industry which has grown rapidly in recent years as the internet has transformed customer behaviour. To keep pace, companies have modernised their logistics facilities, invested in technology, created new jobs in the supply chain and trained their staff differently.

This change in demand on the sector has meant that logistics has diversified to adapt and consequently employs a dynamic and sophisticated workforce. The sector is often misunderstood as only offering jobs on the warehouse floor, but in fact a wide range of jobs are available in both warehouse and office environments, including managerial, skilled technical, administrative and IT roles. Logistics includes above average proportions of people employed as managers, directors, senior officials and in administrative roles.

Research from the British Property Foundation (BPF) has shown that people employed in the logistics sector are more likely to work full-time, earn more than the national average, and in recent years people have seen their wages grow.

Rail Central – how does it fit in the national picture and what will it deliver locally

Logistics is identified as one of the major economic strengths of the South East Midlands with potential for rapid growth in the future.

South Northamptonshire Council identified logistics as a key sector of the economy in its Economic Growth Strategy (2016), which highlights the importance of creating jobs for young people and improving skills levels and employment opportunities.

Rail Central has the potential to make a significant contribution to the local South Northamptonshire economy, as well as the regional South East Midlands economy. Rail Central would offer wide-ranging job opportunities, directly and indirectly. It would create jobs in the short-term (ie during construction) and the long-term (ie through the occupiers and the site's operations):

- Once fully constructed, the site will be large enough to accommodate around 8,000 jobs
- As companies occupy the site, there will be a range of jobs available including warehouse-based jobs and office based administrative, managerial and technical jobs
- Between 30% and 40% of jobs created could be managerial, professional and technical occupations based on the type of roles that the logistics industry offers nationally and locally, providing diverse opportunities for people with different skills levels
- Multiple companies will occupy the site and each will have its own supply chain of goods and services that it uses, meaning that indirect jobs and spending will be created locally
- The construction process will create a range of job opportunities in construction and engineering trades
- Companies occupying new warehouse buildings on the Rail Central site will also pay business rates to the Council, providing additional income which can contribute to financing and maintaining essential services.

Ensuring local employment and economic opportunities

It is important that local people and companies benefit from the investment, jobs and supply chain opportunities associated with Rail Central.

Rail Central is committed to maximising the benefits to local people and businesses.

We are in discussions with stakeholders and local skills & training providers to develop an approach that will create the best overall range of opportunities. **Through these discussions, we want to establish commitments to apprenticeships and investment in training, and to create a framework that delivers important opportunities locally as well as meeting the needs of the future occupying businesses at Rail Central.**

Through this work, we will provide easy access to the opportunities on offer by making them visible and ensuring that the necessary training is in place locally so that people have the skills and expertise needed.

We are shaping our approach and commitment to skills and apprenticeships – further details will be included at Phase Two consultation.



What is Rail Central?

Rail Central is a proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) that responds to market demand and Government policy for the creation of a strategic network of rail freight interchanges (which is set out in the National Policy Statement for National Networks, NPSNN).

Rail Central would be a major new logistics and distribution hub with direct rail connections to the West Coast Main Line and Northampton Loop Line alongside road access to the A43 and M1, with approximately 7.4m sq ft of rail-connected and rail-served commercial space. Considered as an NSIP under the Planning Act 2008, it will be submitted to and examined by the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) and ultimately determined by the Government.

Submitting the DCO

Having completed our pre-application consultation in line with the NSIP process – and developed all of the necessary technical information in conjunction with that – we intend to submit our application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) in 2018.

Our DCO application will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) which will determine whether it is accepted for examination. Acceptance of the application means that it meets the standards required to be formally accepted for examination and is not a decision on whether the DCO will be granted.

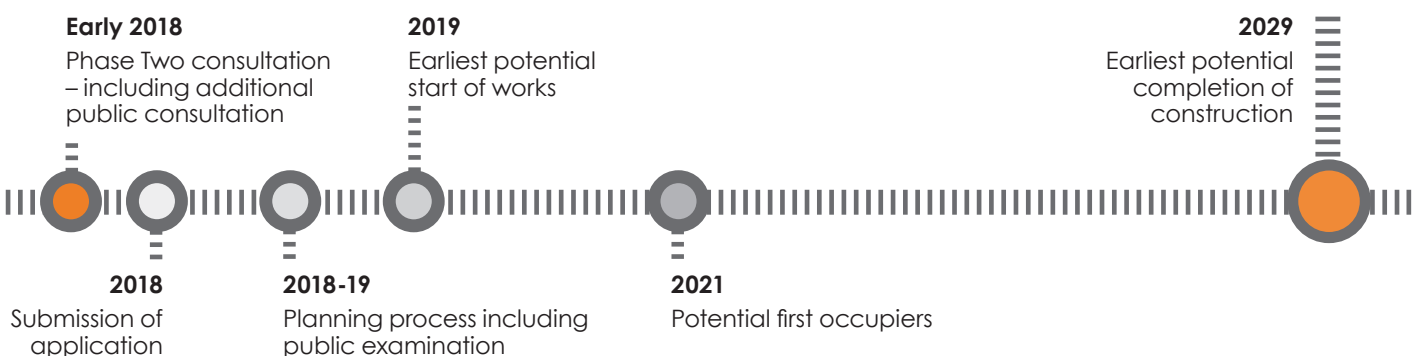
If the application is accepted, a decision on whether it is approved or refused is likely to be made in 2018-19 after a clearly defined examination process. More information on the process is available via the National Infrastructure Planning website at <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

3D model

During Phase One consultation many people said they would like to know more about how the scheme could look. In response and in line with our design development process, we will be visualising the proposals in a 3D model which will be part of the Phase Two consultation.


The model will be available as part of the Phase Two public exhibitions and, while illustrative, will provide visitors to the exhibitions with the opportunity to see the site and proposed development in context.

Timeline



Contact us

 www.railcentral.com

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(please note calls are charged at local rates)

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 **FREEPOST Rail Central**

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