



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr James Digby
Director
Ashfield Land
St. Catherine's Court
Berkeley Place
Clifton
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BS8 1BQ

18th November 2017

Ref: AL/TG/1711

Dear Mr Digby,

Thank you for your letter to Tommy of the 14th November in response to questions that arose during our meeting on the 27th September. Having read your letter, I do have several further points I would like to raise and I should be grateful if you could consider them and provide me with an update.

I am not clear on what progress has been made in progressing your application to statutory consultation since we met. Whilst I understand that the Development Consent Order process involves a substantial amount of technical work, particularly on highways, it would be helpful if you could outline at what stage the discussions with Highways England and Northamptonshire County Council are at, what further work you expect must be done including on capacity studies for the West Coast Main Line and GRIP feasibility, and when you would anticipate being ready to move to consultation.

I was interested to read about the Sustainable Travel Plan, particularly on car sharing and investment into additional bus services and connections. Given that you expect Rail Central to draw labour from across the county (and presumably further afield), are you giving consideration to a park and ride scheme? This would certainly decrease the pressures on the local road network, given the potential for 16,000 additional journeys to and from the site each day. I would question the relevance of including walking in your Sustainable Travel Plan, as it is exceptionally doubtful that many of these hypothetical 8,000 workers will be near enough to the site to walk there.

You state that studies are in progress for both the Northampton Loop Line and the West Coast Main Line are in progress. This is not what was said at the meeting nor in line with my understanding from Network Rail. In October, Network Rail confirmed to me that, on behalf of both developers, they have carried out a 'modular' capacity study that looks at the Northampton Loop Line at current performance levels only, with the remaining sections of the West Coast Main Line being excluded. The exclusion was because it would be an extremely difficult exercise to model without details of the origins and destinations of the trains you hope to run.

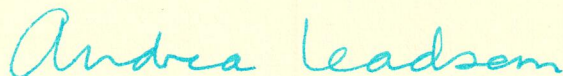
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

I also understand that the contracts for the capacity study of the Northampton Loop Line were signed on the 11th August and the report has subsequently been issued to both developers. The contract between Ashfield Land and Network Rail for the GRIP feasibility study (Stage 2 of the process) was signed at the end of June with the expectation that this report would be delivered this autumn; I understand that this is due to be completed shortly if it hasn't been finalised already. Whilst you state that you are confident that freight paths are available, I have asked Network Rail to expand on their statement that they have "*been clear with both developers that the West Coast Main Line is nearing capacity*", and to ask what percentage capacity is still available and how many hypothetical daily freight paths that would translate to.

On HGV movements, I would be grateful for some further clarification on your methodology including details of the range of factors you are considering. You highlight that you are anticipating 6,686 HGV movements per day; how many freight path equivalents is that? The average freight train can typically replace around 60 lorries¹, and rail freight's heaviest bulk cargo trains are equal to 160 HGVs²; assuming the minimum SRFI criteria of 4 freight paths per day, this equates to a maximum of 640 HGVs being taken off the roads. A substantial number of the HGV movements, some 6,046 per day, are going to be road-connected only, without the requirement to use the rail-connectivity at all.

I look forward to receiving your response.

With best wishes,



The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

¹ Network Rail | Value and Importance of Rail Freight | July 2010

² House of Commons Transport Select Committee | Priorities for Investment in the Railways – Third Report of Session 2009-10, Volume II | February 2010