



## Programme Document

November 2025 (Rev 4)

## CONTENTS

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 TIMETABLE
- 3.0 MAIN ISSUES AND RESOLUTIONS
- 4.0 ENGAGEMENT
- 5.0 RISKS TO PRE-APPLICATION TIMETABLE

## Appendices

Appendix One – Pre-application timetable

Programme Doc Rev 1	Dec 2024
Programme Doc Rev 2	April 2025
Programme Doc Rev 3	July 2025
Programme Doc Rev 4	Nov 2025

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited is proposing a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) on land east of the former Upper Heyford Air Base, south of the Chiltern railway line, and southwest of Junction 10 of the M40 motorway known as OxSRFI.
- 1.2 The proposals are located within the administrative boundaries of Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. However, detailed highways modelling is underway and depending on the results may suggest highways mitigation is required in adjoining authorities (i.e. West Northamptonshire Council). However, modelling results received to date are informing the view that there is a low likelihood of physical off-site highways improvement works outside Cherwell District.
- 1.3 The proposed development currently comprises a number of elements, described in brief below:
- An intermodal rail terminal served via new connections to the Chiltern Main Line (part of the Strategic Rail Freight Network), including container storage;
  - Up to 603,850 sqm (approx. 6.5 million square feet) of warehousing, including ancillary office accommodation, plus up to 201,283 sqm of additional floorspace in the form of mezzanines. Maximum building heights are proposed at 25.5m;
  - Improvements to Junction 10 of the M40 involving works on the A43 east of the M40, new slip roads to and from the M40 an Ardley Bypass to the east of Ardley;
  - Improvements to Junction 9 of the M40 involving a dedicated slip road for vehicles travelling between the A43 and M40 northbound;
  - A Heyford Park Link Road which runs from Camp Road south-east of Heyford Park and south of the proposed development to a new junction on the B430;
  - A Middleton Stoney Relief Road around the north-eastern side of the village connecting from a new junction on the B430 to the existing B4030 which links over the M40 to Bicester which will remove key traffic flows from the centre of the village;
  - The Principal Access to the Main Site will be from a new roundabout on the B430 in the north-eastern corner of the Main Site, south of the railway line. This primary access will serve all HGV and car traffic accessing the site;
  - A Secondary Access into the Main Site will be provided from the Heyford Park Link Road for bus, pedestrian, cyclists and emergency vehicles only;

- Retention of the Grade II listed Threshing Barn at Ashgrove Farm as part of a Central Hub of estate management and communal facilities for the other development on the Main Site;
- Retained key landscape features and new landscaping and planting, including on the proposed earthwork bunds within the Main Site.

1.4 A non-statutory (Stage 1) consultation was held with the community, landowners and statutory stakeholders between 9th May – 4th July 2022 and comprised of 5 public exhibitions and two webinars. 330 people attended the exhibitions and 16 people attended the webinars. A Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was prepared and made available during the non-statutory consultation.

1.5 The statutory consultation with the community, landowners and statutory stakeholders (Stage 2) was held between 23<sup>rd</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and comprised 4 public exhibitions and two webinars. In total 184 individuals attended the exhibitions with 9 individuals attending the webinars. An updated Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was prepared and made available in September 2025.

1.6 This Programme Document summarises the key steps being taken during the ongoing Pre-application stage of the OxSRFI project. Aligned with guidance from the Planning Inspectorate it summarises the following:

- A timetable of the project's Pre-application process, the main events with dates and milestones demonstrating how the Pre-application process will be completed;
- The main issues for resolution which have emerged from public consultation and dialogue with consultees, and activities that will address them. Key updates and progress is reported at a high-level through updates to this Programme Document over time;
- Proposals for, and updates regarding, engagement with statutory consultees and local authorities during the pre-application period and any intended financial support agreements, such as Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs); and
- Identification of key risks to achievement of the Pre-application stage and the process by which these risks are being tracked and managed.

## 2.0 TIMETABLE

2.1 A timetable of the project's Pre-application process is provided at **Appendix 1**.

### 3.0 MAIN ISSUES AND RESOLUTIONS (ongoing)

3.1 The following section sets out some of the main issues and areas of active work and investigations or design, including brief references to proposed resolutions to them – these are presented in alphabetical order. The review of comments received during the Statutory Consultation is ongoing by the Applicant, but the section below has been updated to reflect the latest position as relevant to each topic.

3.2 As suggested by PINS, the applicant will produce and maintain an Issues Tracker throughout the pre-application stage of the DCO process informed by dialogue with statutory consultees. The Issues Tracker will be available for regular review by the Inspectorate, affected statutory bodies and local authorities in order to encourage dialogue and, where possible, achieve resolution. While the Applicant's intention remains to try and resolve as many 'issues' as possible prior to submission of the Application, the Issues Tracker is expected to evolve into a list of 'Potential Main Issues for the Examination' (PMIE) which PINS require to be entered into the examination as an application document.

#### Air Quality and Odour

3.3 Detailed assessments of the likely effects on air quality will be completed once the ongoing transport modelling data is available. To understand existing Air Quality in the area the assessment is making use of data collected by the Local Authority as well as project-specific NO<sub>2</sub> diffusion tube monitoring, and updated survey and data collection was undertaken in March and June 2025.

3.4 Overall, air quality is known to be generally good in the area around the application site and the Proposed Development is not located within, or in the vicinity of, any Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). The proposals will include a package of measures to minimise effects on air quality during both the construction and operational phases. Proposed construction mitigation focuses on best practice measures to minimise dust emissions within the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Operational measures focus on transport as one of the main sources of pollutants and include specific Travel Plan measures relating to use of public transport, walking and cycling, as well as enabling use of electric vehicles and other measures to minimise air pollution.

3.5 At the strategic level, the shift of freight from road to rail which is directly enabled by SRFIs reduces long-haul HGV mileage, playing a direct and positive role in reducing transport related air pollution and road congestion across the network as a whole.

3.6 In terms of odour, updated tests were carried out in August and September 2025 in the vicinity of the landfill and surrounding area to determine both the baseline odour character of the local area and whether the landfill in its current form (i.e. capped) has the potential to pose odour risks. The odour impact assessment from the landfill

excavation required as part of the construction process is ongoing but it is expected that the potential impact will justify a requirement for an Odour Management Plan (OMP) to ensure appropriate mitigation of the likely impacts.

#### Archaeology

- 3.7 Archaeological trial trenching has taken place across the majority of the site and some features of potential archaeological significance have been identified. The proposed scheme design includes measures to avoid features where feasible (for example on proposed highways corridors), and a programme of further mitigation for features which would be lost is being prepared. There has been positive engagement (ongoing) with Oxfordshire County Council's archaeologist to finalise the mitigation scheme.

#### Built Heritage

- 3.8 The site is located near to heritage assets (at RAF Upper Heyford) and others exist within the site itself (at Ashgrove Farm) which the proposals could impact upon directly or on their settings. Engagement has and will continue to take place with Cherwell District Council's conservation team and Historic England to agree the scale and type of potential impacts and agree appropriate mitigation.
- 3.9 The proposals will seek to balance consideration of any impacts on nearby heritage 'receptors' with the potential for impacts on other more sensitive (human) 'receptors' – for example regarding bunding and screening around the Main Site. Following dialogue and consultation responses from consultees, the assessment work will also take into consideration possible heritage (and other) impacts associated with the recently submitted planning application at Heyford Park for 9,000 homes which includes three wind turbines towards the north-eastern end of the former runway.

#### Climate change

- 3.10 As an SRFI, the proposals will play a direct role in enabling the transition towards a more sustainable economy with rail freight being around 76% more carbon efficient than road freight, and so through enabling a further shift of freight from road to rail, the proposals will play a direct role in reducing the effect of transport and economic activity on climate change. In addition to this, the design approach for OxSRFI is based on key design principles focused on the creation of a high-quality built and natural environment for employees and visitors to the site, including delivering highly efficient buildings with minimised carbon footprints during both construction and in operation. The overarching strategy is informed by an Energy Strategy and Green House Gas Assessment which set out measures to help mitigate effects from the development on climate change. More details about the climate change impacts formed part of the recent statutory consultation.

#### Cumulative effects

- 3.11 As part of the Statutory Consultation, several comments received by both the Local Planning Authorities (Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council) and some residents, raised questions about the potential cumulative effects from the range of developments across multiple sites proposed within the wider Bicester/Heyford Park/M40 J10 area. The draft Environmental Statement which formed part of the statutory consultation included a cumulative assessment of committed (approved or allocated) sites, with the Transport Assessment including consideration of a wide list of developments across a wide area (including nearby employment proposals around M40 Junction 10). Further to dialogue with the Local Planning Authorities and Dorchester as an adjoining developer landowner, the Applicant will also include a proportionate assessment of two recently submitted 'speculative' schemes at Heyford Park (application for 9,000 homes) and Puy du Fou (application for a leisure facility). This will enable interested parties and the Examining Authority in due course to take a view on wider issues regarding local effects should all of the current proposals be approved and delivered in due course.

#### Ecology

- 3.12 Having undertaken a full suite of surveys in 2021 and 2022, updated surveys have been completed (from late 2024 to present) to ensure an up-to-date evidence base to support the application, with the final surveys concerning bats. The application site consists largely of agricultural land, but there are areas known to contain some ecological interest, and a package of mitigation measures is being devised. This includes retention or enhancement of key features wherever possible, but also creation of new habitats as part of a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy which will form part of the proposal. Although not mandatory for the project, the proposed development is targeting delivery of a 10% biodiversity net gain.

#### Health Impact, and Equalities Impact Assessment

- 3.13 The Applicant included a draft Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as part of the statutory consultation material, and a separate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will also be included within the scope of the final DCO Application. Although not 'scoped in' earlier in the process, this is to reflect best-practice, and PINS guidance since the project began. The HIA relates to a range of elements in the ES, including with regard to socio-economic impacts, but also air quality and noise. The HIA considers the implications of green infrastructure and 'active travel' and the opportunities to support and enable positive health impacts through measures linked to walking and cycling.
- 3.14 The EqIA will also consider, and may help inform, the proposed Framework Travel Plan, as well as give consideration to wider socio-economic issues, to assess how the site will contribute to addressing inequalities, and ensuring equality of access to the opportunities and benefits offered by the proposed development.

#### Landfill

- 3.15 Part of Ardley landfill would be disturbed by works required to deliver the principal highways access and eastern rail sidings. As referred to below, constructive engagement is continuing with the Environment Agency (EA) to agree the appropriate approach (procedural and environmental) to those works, including with reference to the waste permitting regime. The applicant is working within an enhanced pre-application process to structure ongoing discussions with the EA and confirm the extent of works required.

#### Landscape

- 3.16 Given the strategic nature of the proposals, the scheme has the potential to give rise to landscape and visual impacts. Further to comments received during the statutory consultation process, engagement will continue to take place with Cherwell District Council to agree the approach to the assessment of impacts and detailed issues regarding proposed mitigation. In particular, the Applicant is considering whether further mitigation measures may be required associated with proposed residential development nearby, and including the recently submitted proposals for 9,000 new homes Heyford Park. The Applicant is also engaging with the promoter of Heyford Park (Dorchester).

#### Noise

- 3.17 Noise will be generated during the construction and operation of the proposed development. Updated baseline noise surveys were completed in 2025 prior to the statutory consultation to ensure a robust starting point for the assessment of impact. Engagement with Cherwell's Environmental Protection Officer agreed the approach to the surveys, and once the assessment of traffic impacts is complete we will discuss the likely impacts and proposed mitigation required for nearby receptors, prior to finalising and submitting the DCO application.

#### Rail

- 3.18 Close and collaborative working with Network Rail since 2021 has ensured a good understanding of the relevant rail capacity and infrastructure context on the Chiltern Line and beyond. The Applicant is working with Network Rail to revisit the earlier pathing and gauging assessments to ensure the evidence base is robust and up to date, but Network Rail has confirmed that the proposed OxSRFI can meet the requirements of the Planning Act 2008 and NPS regarding rail freight capacity and connectivity. Rail reports formed part of the Statutory Consultation and work is ongoing prior to finalisation and submission of the DCO.
- 3.19 The Applicant has also updated the illustrative design of the rail terminal which was presented as part of the Statutory Consultation. The design of the terminal will demonstrate the deliverability of an operationally efficient rail freight terminal, tied into the wider earthworks and access strategies for the site.



- 3.20 The potential for a future new rail passenger station near Ardley has been raised by relevant parties (particularly, the Local Planning Authority, OCC, and some local residents as part of statutory consultation responses). The OxSRFI scheme will not deliver a passenger station but will not prejudice the potential delivery by others on the site of the former Ardley Station if there is a suitable 'rail case' and business case in due course.

#### Traffic and Highways

- 3.21 Highways modelling for a scheme of this scale is complex and agreeing likely impacts and appropriate mitigation can be challenging and time consuming. A Transport Working Group was set up with Statutory Consultees in 2021 (National Highways, Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council) and meets approximately monthly. The significant work to date has ensured we have a good and shared understanding of the likely impacts and of the likely mitigation required, but detailed highways modelling began in early 2025 to fully assess the proposals. Modelling remains ongoing but is progressing well. Analysis of the modelling results is ongoing and due to be completed by the end of 2025, and will help to resolve issues and inform mitigation prior to the finalisation of the Transport Assessment and submission of the DCO.

## 4.0 ENGAGEMENT

### Statutory Consultation – 23<sup>rd</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025

- 4.1 The Statutory Consultation process lasted for 6 weeks and included several methods to help inform and engage with the local community, landowners and statutory consultees and other stakeholders. This included posting of letters and newsletter leaflets, emails, social media posts across multiple platforms, displaying posters in the local area, correspondence with Parish Councils, and the Local Planning Authorities. The public consultation process was centred around four exhibition events and webinars, and notifications in local and national newspapers. All the consultation material was included on the project website.
- 4.2 As part of the Statutory Consultation, the Applicant received 68 comments in total on the OxSRFI proposals from local residents, with 33 further comments from consultees. A Consultation Report will be submitted with the DCO application which sets out the comments and the Applicants response.

#### Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire District Council

- 4.3 A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) has been agreed with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire District Council which continues to assist with the Pre-application stage of DCO preparation. Further to comments received during the

statutory consultation, the Applicant's team are continuing to engage with Officers across the Councils to discuss the proposals, the assessment of likely impacts and appropriate mitigation. There is regular dialogue with Council Officers, and it is expected that this will continue up to the submission of the DCO application being targeted for the first quarter of 2026.

#### Parish Councils

- 4.4 The Applicant had engaged with Parish Councils through emails to Clerks before the public project pause by the Applicant in 2023, and some briefing meetings were held around the time of the (non-statutory) consultation in 2022. Following the project restart in 2024, the Applicant wrote again in September 2024 to Parish Councils in the vicinity of the proposals and followed up with further contact in March 2025. This included contact with the wider Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum of Parish Councils.
- 4.5 As part of the statutory consultation in September to November 2025, Parish and Town Councils within the vicinity of the OxSRFI site were contacted to ensure they were aware of the proposals and how they could find out further information –for their convenience, Parish and Town Councils were also sent USB sticks with all the consultation material on for them to view or share with local residents as required.
- 4.6 Beyond those activities set up by the Applicant as part of the consultation process, the Applicant attended meetings with Bicester Town Council and Ardley Parish Council to give presentations and answer questions during both public meetings.

#### Network Rail

- 4.7 A Basic Services Agreement is in place with Network Rail. Engagement will continue with Network Rail throughout the Pre-application stage of the project. Regular (approx. monthly) meetings have been underway since late 2024 and remain ongoing.

#### Transport Working Group

- 4.8 The TWG has reviewed and agreed methodological and other technical elements of the emerging Transport Assessment which has enabled the detailed modelling to progress and also inform the detailed transport and highways arrangements. The TWG is meeting approximately monthly, and will continue to meet throughout the remainder of 2025, ahead of submission planned late in early 2026. Comments received during the Statutory Consultation will also inform the transport and highways mitigation measures proposed and these will be discussed in further detail with the TWG.

#### Landowners

- 4.9 The Applicant will continue to engage with landowners whose land is required to deliver the scheme. Engagement with landowners started in 2021. The majority of the 'Main Site' is now under the applicant's control, with dialogue about other areas of land also continuing to progress.

Natural England

- 4.10 Following comments received as part of the Statutory Consultation, the Applicant's ecologists are continuing to engage with Natural England to agree and finalise impacts and mitigation. These discussions are being informed by updated survey information from 2025.

Historic England

- 4.11 The Applicant's conservation consultants are continuing to engage with Historic England throughout preparation of the application to agree impacts and mitigation. As referred to above, the new major development proposals at Heyford Park will also be part of the context for these discussions.

Environment Agency

- 4.12 The Applicant is continuing to engage with the Environment Agency (EA) on the project in respect of ground conditions, flood-risk and water quality issues, associated ecological issues, and the landfill and waste issues referred to above associated with the Ardley Landfill site. The EA provided comprehensive comments to the statutory consultation, and the Applicant is continuing to engage with the EA on all of the above matters.

Statutory Undertakers

- 4.13 The Applicant will continue to engage with Statutory Undertakers throughout the pre-application stage of the project to agree diversions required as part of the scheme.

## **5.0 RISKS TO PRE-APPLICATION TIMETABLE**

Traffic and Highways

- 5.1 The Applicant continues to be aware that a protracted highways modelling process presents one of the main risks to meeting pre-application timetables for schemes of this nature. In order to manage this, the Transport Working Group is based around collaboration and communication, and meets regularly to try and mitigate the risk of major delays. The detailed modelling is well advanced following sign-off and agreement of required technical and methodological issues, and will continue through

the remainder of 2025. The Applicant is covering costs associated with resourcing the TWG.

Local Planning Authority (LPA) and statutory body resources and capacity

- 5.2 The Applicant recognises that LPA and statutory body resources are often stretched and their capacity may represent a risk to delivering the Pre-application programme. However, the updated PPA with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council will enable these authorities to meet reasonable costs associated with feeding in comments and reviewing documents as part of the DCO preparation process.

Landfill interactions and work with the Environment Agency (EA)

- 5.3 Given the nature of potential impacts on part of the existing landfill, work is ongoing with the EA to agree the extent of any further assessment or mitigation required and also the process necessary to accommodate and deliver the OxSRFI proposals.

Appendix 1 – OxSRFI pre-application timetable

	2021				2022				2023				2024				2025												2026		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Inception meeting	02/21																														
PINS project update meetings			07/21	11/21	02/22		07/22								10/24			*						**			***		****	*****	
Scoping Opinion adopted			07/21																												
First consultation						*****																									
Scheme review										*****																					
Engagement with statutory consultees																															
Submission of draft documentation																										03/10					
Statutory consultation																															
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM)																											07/11				
Submission of DCO Application																															

\* PINS meeting held to provide an update on the scheme  
\*\* PINS meeting proposed to provide an update on the scheme  
\*\*\* PINS meeting to be held post statutory consultation  
\*\*\*\* PINS meeting to discuss draft documents  
\*\*\*\*\* PINS meeting to be held ahead of DCO submission  
\*\*\*\*\* First consultation held between May – July 2022  
\*\*\*\*\* Project paused to review highways infrastructure proposals