



Stage 2 - Statutory Consultation: Summary of Key Themes & Issues Report

On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Prepared by Oxalis Planning Ltd

December 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STAGE 2 STATUTORY CONSULTATION SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This summary report sets out a summary of key themes, issues, and queries arising from the Stage 2 statutory consultation for the proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (“OxSRFI”) held from September through to early November 2025. This statutory consultation process followed an earlier, non-statutory Stage 1 consultation undertaken in 2022. A similar exercise of providing a summary of the key themes and issues raised during Stage 1 consultation was undertaken and a report was published by the Applicant. Both reports are published on the project website: www.oxsrfi.co.uk.
- 1.1.2 This Report provides summaries of the issues raised from the statutory consultation process, presenting them in themes to give an initial overview of the range of topics which formed the main focus of response received. This draws on responses via all of the means of communication offered by the Applicant, including comments forms filled out during the public exhibition events supplemented by verbal discussions held at the exhibitions, comment forms received via the project website, and letters or other comments received via e-mail or post.
- 1.1.3 Therefore, this summary report seeks to set out the themes and issues arising from the responses submitted by a wide range of stakeholders including local residents and businesses and other community groups, as well as statutory and other consultee bodies.
- 1.1.4 However, Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited (“the Applicant”) is now actively reviewing and considering all comments received as part of the ongoing scheme assessment and design processes ahead of completing and submitting the application. Therefore, this report summarises the issues raised at a high-level, but does not seek to provide a detailed response to all issues at this stage. A more detailed and comprehensive Consultation Report will be prepared and submitted with the application for the development, and that report will include details of how the scheme was revised in response to issues or suggestions raised during the consultation process.
- 1.1.5 The structure of the report is first setting out the Stage 2 Consultation process before quantifying the responses received, and then describing key themes, issues, and queries arising.

2.0 BACKGROUND - ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PRIOR TO STATUTORY (STAGE 2) CONSULTATION

- 2.1.1 The formal, statutory process undertaken recently (in 2025) followed earlier stages of informal and non-statutory consultation, as summarised in this section.
- 2.1.2 Initial informal dialogue and engagement on the emerging proposals for the OxSRFI was first undertaken in 2019 with various bodies. This first focused on briefings provided to officers and members of Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) with informal briefings held in 2020 and 2021.
- 2.1.3 The project Transport Working Group (TWG) was established in 2020 which involves representatives from the County and District Councils as well as National Highways. A wide range of technical highways matters have been discussed throughout the development of the emerging scheme, including key technical methodology, data and assumptions to underpin the Transport Assessment (TA) which will form part of the final application.
- 2.1.4 Initial contact was made in early 2021 with the local MP for North Oxfordshire, and following that, with individual Parish Councils. A briefing document was prepared and used to inform discussions with local Ward Councillors and Parish Councils. This was shared with nearby Parish Councils in June 2021, including the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum which represents 11 Parish Councils, to provide an overview of the emerging proposals and followed engagement and awareness raising associated with the Environmental Statement (“ES”) Scoping process.
- 2.1.5 The project website was created and launched in June 2021 with initial project information including that relating to the ES Scoping process. The website provides a way for comments and questions to be submitted by interested parties, including local residents. Its content has been updated and expanded over the lifetime of the project since 2021 as work to prepare the application has progressed and as more information is available. The website has also been a main focus during consultation processes (both Stages 1 and 2) and has contained all relevant draft plans and documents.

‘Stage 1’ Consultation

- 2.2.1 The informal early engagement led up to the non-statutory (Stage 1) consultation process undertaken in 2022.
- 2.1.1 The Applicant approached this as if it were a statutory process, and in accordance with section 47 of the Planning Act 2008 and relevant guidance the proposed approach to community consultation sought to ensure that information and opportunity to comment was provided to those ‘*most likely to be affected*’ by the proposed development. This

included consultation with all parties who are required to be consulted for statutory consultation under the Planning Act 2008. This included:

- a. writing to the prescribed bodies pursuant to the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009;
- b. writing to the relevant local authorities pursuant to section 43 of the Planning Act 2008;
- c. writing to persons with an interest in the land pursuant to section 44 of the Planning Act 2008 and erecting site notices for any unknown or unregistered interests; and
- d. publishing newspaper notices in the Bicester Advertiser, Oxford Mail, Guardian and the London Gazette.

2.1.6 The Applicant identified a 'Core Area' for the community consultation. This area was shared for comment with the District and County Council in advance of the Stage 1 consultation, and amended in accordance with comments received, as referred to in the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) adopted by the Applicant in 2022. The consultation period was held over an 8-week period from Monday 9th May 2022 until Monday 4th July 2022, exceeding the minimum requirement of a 28-day period (despite being non-statutory) to ensure local people, groups and bodies had time to review and comment on the consultation material.

2.1.2 The Core Area for Stage 1 was extensive and included all or part of the communities of the following parishes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ardley with Fewcott • North Aston • Middle Aston • Steeple Aston • Bucknell • Fritwell • Heyford Park • Lower Heyford and Caulcott • Middleton Stoney • Upper Heyford • Somerton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stoke Lyne • Chesterton • Hardwick with Tunsmore • Souldern • Fringford • Caversfield • Bicester Town • Kirtlington • Hethe • Deddington • Tackley • Rousham
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2.1.3 Parish Councils within the Core Area were used as a key point of contact to help ensure wider awareness within the local communities in addition to measures and activity to engage directly with local people and communities. In addition, the Applicant team informed local elected members, District and County Councillors whose divisions

include part of the Core Area, as well as Parish Councillors within the Core Area of key dates and information about the consultation process. This was largely through e-mail correspondence (but with some letters and newsletters posted where email was not an option).

- 2.1.4 In advance of Stage 1 commencing, leaflets were distributed by post to 4,011 addresses in the vicinity of the SRFI site across the consultation area and posters with details about the exhibition events were also attached to posts around the vicinity of the site. In addition, as mentioned above, letters were sent to interested parties and consultees replicating a statutory (Section 42) consultation process.
- 2.1.5 The Stage 1 consultation for OxSRFI involved five public exhibition events held across May and June 2022, and two online webinars. The exhibitions were manned by a team of representatives of the Applicant, including many of the consultant team to ensure it was possible to provide technical information and explanation about the emerging proposals. A full recording from the second webinar was posted on the project website for residents to review.
- 2.1.6 The documents consulted on for the Stage 1 consultation focused on Preliminary Environmental Information Reports (PEIR), in the form of early draft Environmental Statement (ES) chapters which were all available for review and comment on the project website along with draft plans including the Illustrative Masterplan and Parameters Plan.
- 2.1.7 In addition to the process and activities established for the Stage 1 process, the Applicant and project team also continued to engage with key consultees and stakeholders through direct meetings and dialogue. This included with CDC and OCC, with a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in place from 2021, and regular meetings of the TWG, as well as ad hoc and other discussions with technical and statutory consultees about the ongoing ES and other application work.
- 2.1.8 A summary report presenting the key themes and topics from Stage 1 was produced soon after the close of the consultation period in July 2022. That Summary Report remains on the project website, and captured the following main issues from the community response to the proposals:
 - Traffic impacts and transport issues (including from construction);
 - Loss of countryside / industrialisation of area;
 - Need for the proposed SRFI;
 - Location of the proposed development;
 - Impact on wildlife/ecology;
 - Noise impacts; and
 - Landscape and visual impacts.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF STAGE 2 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Statutory consultation process followed a very similar approach to that taken for the Stage 1 consultation process as described above.
- 3.2 An updated Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was published by the Applicant in September 2025 following consultation and dialogue with CDC and OCC regarding a draft SoCC. The updated (2025) SoCC is on the project website (www.oxsrfi.co.uk). The SoCC details the Applicant's proposed consultation strategy in respect of the proposed development including the statutory consultation identified as 'stage 2' and was prepared in accordance with section 47 of the PA 2008 and the accompanying guidance. The final SoCC reflected comments and suggestions from the Councils – this included extending the consultation area to communities in the vicinity of the proposed (relatively modest) highways mitigation works around M40 Junction 9, and increasing the number of webinars (from one to two).
- 3.3 Consistent with the guidance, and with the approach taken to Stage 1, the consultation strategy focused on raising awareness about the proposals and consultation process with communities and people who both live and work within the local community of the proposed development. While there was a focus on those living and working within the identified 'core consultation area' defined in the SoCC, the Applicant also undertook engagement and awareness raising activities which extended outside of that area.
- 3.4 Formal notices (required by Section 47 of the Planning Act) were deliberately published early, alongside the SoCC, to provide people advanced notice of the consultation starting. This was supported by the website and social media channels giving early updates regarding the forthcoming statutory consultation process.
- 3.5 As committed to in the SoCC, newsletter leaflets were distributed in early September in advance of the start of public consultation across the extensive 'core consultation area'. In excess of 8400 newsletter leaflets were distributed to residential and other premises using Royal Mail, notably higher than the figure used during Stage 1.
- 3.6 In addition, to further raise awareness of the Scheme and consultation process, newsletters were posted (and emailed) to Parish Council clerks in advance who were encouraged to post or display (physically and/or virtually) the newsletters on local display boards or community online fora. These were sent to all Parish Councils in the 'core consultation area' plus Evenley Parish Council in West Northamptonshire (located further north along the A43 trunk road).

- 3.7 Clerks also received USBs containing consultation documents for their own use to aid their engagement in the process, as well as to support any local 'hard to reach' groups or individuals who might find it harder to access the same information online or via the hard copies deposited in Bicester Library, and at Cherwell District Council's offices from the first day of the consultation period.
- 3.8 Letters were sent to a broad range of consultees including not only those in accordance with Section 42 of the Planning Act as prescribed by the APFP Regulations, but also a more extensive list of parties with whom the Applicant team considered it appropriate to consult. Similarly, the Applicant consulted Section 43 and Section 44 parties with letters sent (via Royal Mail).
- 3.9 One letter to a local resident, considered within the 'hard to reach' category due to difficulties with postal delivery, was hand delivered a letter to ensure the letter was received.
- 3.10 Also, as required by the APFP Regulations formal notices of the consultation pursuant to section 48 of the Planning Act were posted in local and national newspapers. In addition to these 'traditional' press channels, the Applicant also made use of the project website and social media channels to publicise the consultation process. This was undertaken via posts on Facebook, X (previously Twitter) and Instagram to promote the statutory consultation process, provide summary details of the proposals, and direct interested parties to the project website.
- 3.11 The community focused, public consultation activity centred on four public exhibitions, held in a similar format, and in some of the same venues, as the Stage 1 exhibitions to ensure a geographic spread in various communities most likely to have an interest in the proposals. The venues included Bicester Hotel, Golf & Spa which was a direct response to suggestions made by OCC that an event close to Junction 9 of the M40 was considered appropriate.
- 3.12 As at Stage 1, the exhibition display boards were detailed and set out comprehensive information on a range of topics and issues regarding the proposals, and the ongoing EIA process. An electronic copy of the exhibition display boards was also posted (PDF) on the project website on the date of the first exhibition.
- 3.13 The weekday consultation exhibitions were held between 1.30pm and 7:30pm to ensure opportunities for working people to attend, and to enable attendance working around the typical school day. The weekend event was held from noon to 5pm. The dates and venues were as follows:
- Wednesday 1st October – Middleton Stoney Village Hall, OX25 4AN

- Friday 3rd October – Heyford Park Chapel, OX25 5TE
- Saturday 11th October – Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall, OX27 7PA
- Thursday 16th October – Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa, OX26 1TH

- 3.14 The event held in Ardley village was on a Saturday to ensure availability to a full range of individuals. The dates of the exhibitions were spread across several weeks to increase opportunities for interested people to fit attendance around work or holiday commitments. In addition, two online webinars were held to provide further opportunities for people to engage in the process and comment on the proposals. The webinars each lasted approximately an hour, and recordings of the presentation and discussions on both, including answers to questions posed during the session, were posted on the project website to serve as a resource for other interested parties.
- 3.15 In addition to the above, during the consultation process the Applicant accepted invitation to speak to two Town/Parish meetings – one for Bicester Town Council and the other for Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council – to present information about the OxSRFI scheme and answer questions from members in attendance.

4.0 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED - KEY THEMES AND TOPICS RAISED

4.1 Introduction

4.3.1 As referred to above, the Applicant notified a wide range of consultee groups and bodies, as well as raising awareness about the proposals direct with the communities surrounding and in the vicinity of the proposed development.

4.3.2 The statutory consultation process generated the following by way of responses:

- A total of 80 responses from members of the public, including:
 - 7 completed 'hard-copy' paper questionnaire response forms handed in at the exhibitions;
 - 14 online response forms via the website; and
 - Approx. 60 other comments or queries submitted via email by local residents;
- A total of 36 responses from consultee bodies and organisations.

4.3.3 This section of the report provides a summary of the main themes and topics raised in the consultation responses. These are split into two broad categories below: residents/public, and consultees/other stakeholders.

4.2 Resident/public response

4.2.1 The local community and consultees were able to comment via a range of means of communication, as set out in the SoCC, including:

- Via email (using the online comments form on the project website);
- In person at the consultation exhibitions – verbally, and by completing a comments form;
- By post (via the PO Box) by sending completed questionnaires or other written correspondence.

4.2.2 This summary of issues draws largely on the written responses received (comments forms and letters or emails), but also on verbal discussions had with visitors to the exhibitions, not all of which resulted in comments being submitted in writing. These verbal as well as written points are considered relevant and useful in understanding, in general terms, those issues and themes most commonly raised through the consultation process.

4.2.3 The comments form completed by some visitors to the exhibitions (or online) included five specific questions, plus an open box for any other comments, and a review of the responses provided – including to the questions posed on the comments forms – have been used to provide the summary below.

- 4.2.4 The four in-person exhibition events were attended by 184 individuals. The two webinars were attended by 9 individuals.
- 4.2.5 The summary of the key themes and topics raised below sets the issues out in an approximate order to indicate the frequency with which they were referred to (with the most frequently cited issues listed towards the top of the list):
- Potential **future cumulative effects** with other proposed developments nearby, if all were approved;
 - **Traffic and transport** issues (including from construction traffic) and proposed OxSRFI highways mitigation works;
 - **Concerns raised about environmental impacts** including on local biodiversity, noise, local heritage assets;
 - Potential impacts on current (and future) residents of **Heyford Park**;
 - Change to rural **landscape** and character, including reference to general landscape and visual change).

Potential future cumulative impacts

- 4.2.6 One of the most prominent themes emerging from the comments received was that of questions and some concerns from local people regarding the potential for significant future impacts should a number of current proposals, including OxSRFI, be approved and delivered. In particular, the two main proposals noted are that of the proposed 'new town' at Heyford Park (on the site of the former RAF Heyford) and the Puy du Fou leisure/tourism proposal. Both of these schemes are in the vicinity of the OxSRFI proposals, albeit the Heyford Park proposals are considerably more proximate and share much of the OxSRFI's main site's western boundary. The Puy du Fou scheme is on the opposite (eastern) side of the M40 motorway, close to the village of Bucknell, but would be primarily accessed via the Baynards Green roundabout which forms a wider part of the M40 Junction 10 complex. In addition, two further emerging proposals (by Albion Land, and Tritax) for distribution warehousing schemes to the north of M40 Junction 10 are due to be considered by the Planning Committee of Cherwell District Council in early 2026¹.
- 4.2.7 Notwithstanding the fact that the OxSRFI proposals have been in the public domain since 2021, many of the comments received during the Stage 2 consultation reflect the fact that the Heyford Park new town, and Puy du Fou leisure park proposals are currently subject of live planning applications submitted to Cherwell District Council during 2025. The timescales for decisions, the outcomes of those decisions, and the timing of delivery of any of these schemes, if approved, are not yet known, although it seems highly likely that neither will be determined before OxSRFI is submitted to the

¹ The Albion and Tritax applications were recommended for approval at Planning Committee in the summer of 2025, but decisions were never formally made, and both applications are being taken back to Planning Committee.

Planning Inspectorate. It is known that both the Heyford Park and Puy du Fou schemes would have relatively long, phased construction periods (the new town would take well in excess of a decade to complete). However, the Stage 2 comments reveal local concerns regarding the potential for overlapping or simultaneous construction periods of more than one of these major projects and the potential for disruption and disturbance from construction traffic, but also potentially from construction activity itself.

- 4.2.8 Comments received also refer to other potential issues (beyond highways and construction), including for example the cumulative effects on local communities from any combined effects from lighting at these various sites once operational, and general comments about the cumulative landscape effects of development across all of these sites.

Applicant Response

- 4.2.9 The Environmental Statement (ES) will include consideration of the likely cumulative effects of the proposals with other known ‘committed’ and planned schemes which may share ‘receptors’ with the OxSRFI proposals – in other words, other development proposals which could have an impact or effect (positive or negative) on some of the environmental features, communities, or locations as OxSRFI might. As required by the standard approach to Environmental Impact Assessment, these committed projects are defined as those with planning permission, or allocated for development in the local plan (or via some other formal public programme). The list of suitable sites for the cumulative assessment in the ES was agreed with the local planning authority, and is presented in ‘matrices’ favoured by the Planning Inspectorate as part of the draft ES Chapter 16. A further advanced, final version of Chapter 16 will form part of the final application to provide a fuller narrative regarding the likely scale and type of cumulative effects which may be experienced if OxSRFI is approved alongside those other commitments.
- 4.2.10 The Heyford Park ‘new town’ proposals and Puy du Fou scheme are not commitments – they are planning applications which remain yet to be determined, and neither are subject to a local plan allocation. As such, neither has any formal status in planning terms. Indeed, at the time of writing, both are subject to outstanding objections from statutory consultees, and from the wider community, which are yet to be resolved. In this context, it is entirely consistent with best practice and the EIA regulations not to include them in the formal assessment. Indeed, given the ongoing and incomplete nature of the planning processes associated with both and the uncertainty about whether, and when, either might be approved, it would be complex and speculative to attempt to incorporate them.
- 4.2.11 However, leaving aside the various issues above, the questions raised about the potential future cumulative implications are not wholly unreasonable, and a natural focus of local interest (and some concern). The proximity of these two current

proposals to the OxSRFI location, and the additional presence of the further progressed – but still not committed – Albion and Tritax proposals close to M40 Junction 10 – raise in particular potential questions about the cumulative impacts of traffic on a relatively small part of the local and strategic highways networks. The Transport Assessment (TA) being prepared as part of the OxSRFI proposals includes modelling which includes a wide range of committed sites and developments, including the sites allocated and included in the Cherwell Local Plan, as well as a very long list of sites with planning permission across Cherwell District. The approach taken, and the list of sites included, was agreed by the TWG (referred to above). In addition, given the indications from CDC's Planning Committee in the summer of 2025, the Albion Land site is included as a commitment, and the TA also includes consideration of the impacts should the Tritax scheme at Junction 10 also be approved.

- 4.2.12 In light of the legitimate interest expressed in understanding likely cumulative issues were one or both of these additional major proposals (Heyford Park and Puy du Fou) approved, the various thematic final ES, including the Transport Chapter, will include an additional narrative to provide judgements about the potential for cumulative effects of OxSRFI when considered alongside both Heyford Park and Puy du Fou. In light of their status this will be a proportionate, largely non-technical element of the ES, but will directly help provide information in response to the issues raised.

Traffic and Transport

- 4.2.13 Traffic and transport impacts and issues was one of the most dominant themes within the responses, and as described above, there is some overlap with more general comments made about the potential for future cumulative effects from OxSRFI and other currently proposed schemes which could feasibly be approved over a similar timeframe to the determination of the OxSRFI project.

- 4.2.14 There were several frequently raised issues under the broad heading of traffic and transport. These are set out below.

- *Impacts on local roads*

- 4.2.15 This included some concern and objection regarding the potential for the proposed development to cause an increase in road traffic to the detriment of local communities nearby. For example, there were responses from residents in Middleton Stoney, Heyford Park, Ardley, Somerton and North Aston raising concerns about the potential for increased through-traffic or 'rat-running' as a consequence of the development proposed. In many cases comments raised about traffic were focused more on concerns about potential cumulative effects (of OxSRFI with other sites), than on the individual effects of the OxSRFI alone. See above regarding other comments received on cumulative issues.

4.2.16 Many comments sought reassurance regarding HGV routeing (and preventing HGVs from using local, village roads) as a way to minimise impacts from the scheme and retain traffic on the main roads. Also linked to ‘rat-running’ concerns, some comments suggested traffic calming measures should be introduced in a number of villages. The proposed HGV routeing and enforcement measures, including use of physical measures and ANPR to prevent HGVs heading south on the B430 was welcomed by some.

4.2.17 Another frequently cited reference was to the diversion of traffic onto the B430 corridor during very busy times (or closures) on the M40 and A34.

- *OxSRFI M40 Junction 10 proposed improvements (the focus of Question 2 on the comments forms)*

4.2.18 Many responses acknowledged the severity of existing traffic problems in the area of Junction 10 of the M40, and some referred to previous attempts to improve Junction 10 and reluctance to see further disruption caused by additional construction works. However, as a result of the existing challenges (likely to get worse with additional development) some respondents were generally welcoming of the proposed improvements to Junction 10 of the M40. Others suggested the proposed improvements to Junction 10 do not go far enough, and that a more comprehensive scheme should be proposed. For example, there were suggestions that a new motorway junction is required, or that the proposals should include additional new highways capacity and links beyond those currently proposed.

- *Proposed new OxSRFI Sustainable Transport initiatives (the focus of Question 3 on the comments forms)*

4.2.19 The Stage 2 consultation material included considerable new information about elements of the OxSRFI scheme relating to sustainable travel, including ‘active travel’ (cycling and walking), and public transport accessibility. This received a range of responses from local residents, with many acknowledging the need and opportunity to provide improvements in accessibility but expressing some scepticism as to whether they will be delivered effectively. Other comments expressed no confidence that bus access would be used by employees of the OxSRFI site, even if the bus routes and facilities are delivered as proposed.

Applicant responses

4.2.20 The high level of local interest in highways and traffic issues was clear from the Stage 1 consultation process, and this has remained through Stage 2. It is understandable for local communities to have such an interest, and common for local people to have a particular perspective on local transport issues and problems.

- 4.2.21 Highways and traffic remain a key focus for the Applicant as part of the TWG which is helping steer and review the work being undertaken to prepare the Transport Assessment (TA). Stage 2 consultation material was informed by early outputs from the ongoing highways modelling using the OCC owned Bicester Transport Model (BTM) which has been updated and verified to inform the TA. Should the results of the modelling indicate, as is suggested by some local respondents, that the proposed significant works at Junction 10 will not adequately mitigate the additional traffic impacts of the OxSRFI, the Applicant would – working with the TWG – consider what additional measures or works may be required. However, to date, the outputs have suggested that the proposals would deliver a betterment to the performance of Junction 10 over the situation expected without OxSRFI. The modelling to date also suggests that the proposed package of highways works – including Junction 10 improvements – are successful in attracting traffic back to the strategic road network and off of other, less suitable and local routes, therefore directly and positively responding to one of the issues raised by local people.
- 4.2.22 Some of the issues raised in response to the Stage 2 consultation are beyond the direct scope of the OxSRFI proposals – for example, concerns about the B430 traffic diversion route when the M40 and/or A34 are closed which is the preferred and official diversion route used by National Highways currently. However, many other issues are understood to be of direct relevance and importance to how the OxSRFI proposals are delivered (if approved), including HGV routeing to ensure heavy traffic accessing the site avoids local communities and local roads. A draft HGV routeing strategy formed part of the Stage 2 consultation material, and a finalised version will form part of the final application when submitted.
- 4.2.23 The sustainable transport strategy evolved considerably between the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultation processes, including in response to direct input from the TWG. Although not taken into account in assessing ‘worst-case’ traffic impacts in the TA, the strategy remains a key part of ensuring the site is accessible by a range of modes of travel, as well as forming part of the wider ‘place-making’ and design agenda with walking and cycling forming part of the extensive green infrastructure as part of the proposals. Delivery of the measures proposed will be explicitly required through the DCO, and include a proposed Sustainable Transport Working Group to help steer ongoing management and delivery of the strategy post-approval.

Local environmental impacts

- 4.2.24 The issues raised regarding a number a potential environmental effects cover a range of Environmental Statement topics. A number of particular points emerge among the most frequently cited concerns, and these are summarised below:
- *Impact on wildlife/ecology*

4.2.25 General concerns or questions were raised about the impact of the development on local wildlife and ecology, partly linked to the loss of currently green, agricultural land (also see separate points below regarding landscape issues). Some highlighted concern about the impact of any increases in noise, light, and air pollution on flora and fauna.

4.2.26 Notwithstanding this, some comments acknowledged and expressed some interest in the proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity through the OxSRFI scheme.

- *Increased local noise, air quality and light pollution*

4.2.27 Comments made about increased 'pollution' generally included remarks about at least two if not all three of these issues. Usually tied to broader points about development of currently countryside (agricultural), where raised these were general concerns expressed about the potential adverse effects on nearby villages (and local wildlife – see above) of increases in noise and lighting associated with the potential for '24 hour' operations on the SRFI site, and worsening air quality as a result of additional traffic.

Applicant responses

4.2.28 These issues are all explicitly part of the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment and will be addressed fully by ongoing assessments. The Stage 2 consultation material (PEIR) included draft ES chapters on all of these topics, and set out emerging conclusions regarding the likely impacts.

4.2.29 The draft Ecology (and Arboricultural) ES (PEIR) chapter sets out the results and findings following an extensive range of surveys of all relevant species undertaken over several years. The notable evidence base held by the Applicant shows that in general terms, the OxSRFI site contains few notable species or habitats and is in many ways typical for agricultural land. While this largely limits the range of species and habitats found, the site is known to contain a number of species of interest, and the proposals include considerable design and mitigation measures to limit harm and deliver benefits. This includes a number of retained areas protected from built development, as well as provision of extensive new planting and other new habitats to enable delivery of a gain in biodiversity. This includes measures specifically targeted at farmland birds, as well as other protected species known to be present, or to make use of, the site.

4.2.30 It is acknowledged that the draft assessments of Air Quality and Noise were only partially complete, pending the ongoing traffic modelling being undertaken as part of the TA (also see above), and explicitly did not provide a full picture of the likely effects of the OxSRFI, as is normal at this stage, noting that the consultation was being undertaken in respect of preliminary environmental information.

4.2.31 The transport modelling is ongoing, and data from that will inform updated, completed assessments of Noise and Air Quality in the final ES which will form part of the final

application submission. The Applicant's intention is that the findings from those updated assessments will be discussed with the relevant statutory consultees ahead of submission. However, the existing baseline conditions are considered to mean that the likelihood of significant effects in air quality are considered very low, with mitigation in part through the extensive 'active travel' and other sustainable transport measures proposed (and referred to above). Similarly, the ongoing noise assessment indicates no significant effects are likely on any nearby receptors, albeit a small number of residual adverse impacts may remain post-mitigation. This is the focus of ongoing work by the Applicant with the intention to remove or reduce further as many of these potential effects as possible.

Change to rural landscape and character

- 4.2.32 Impacts on the local landscape and local character was a general concern raised through comments received. In some cases, this included specific comments that the proposed mitigation measures (of mounding and planting) would be insufficient to minimise the likely effects on the landscape.
- 4.2.33 Such comments often included reference to concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land as a result of the proposed development, and a consequential change to the character of the site and immediate surrounding area. Related issues raised in comments refer to a perceived loss of access to the countryside from nearby communities.
- 4.2.34 As above, some of the comments made about landscape and local character change were made with reference to other sites either already approved or allocated, or new (speculative) sites currently subject to live planning applications in the vicinity of the OxSRFI site, including significant new development proposed at Heyford Park and other distribution warehousing sites close to Junction 10.

Applicant responses

- 4.2.35 The tone and nature of many of the comments received suggest an 'in principle' set of concerns about the loss of current countryside to development and to broader change in the wider local context. The focus of comments was largely on wider landscape change as opposed to specific concerns about visual effects from specific viewpoints or properties, which the Applicant considers reflective of the success of the proposed mitigation (earthworks and landscaping) which will limit views to only relatively limited and filtered views of new buildings once in place. However, the Applicant accepts there will inevitably be landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, and is continuing to review and consider the proposed mitigation to ensure those effects are minimised.

4.2.36 The Applicant notes that a small number of comments refer to concerns about impact of the proposals under the misunderstanding that the site is in the Green Belt – it is not.

Potential future impacts on Heyford Park

4.2.37 A number of almost identical responses were received from some residents of Heyford Park raising issues regarding potential effects on current residents, but also explicitly on potential future residents. This second category of issue was raised in the context of approved as well as recently proposed additional residential led development on the former RAF base. Heyford Park sits immediately adjacent to (to the west of) the main OxSRFI site.

4.2.38 These responses were apparently coordinated via the Heyford Park Community Action Group and so follow a very similar format and content, and refer to a number of issues which in summary are:

- Loss of greenspace and open countryside, reducing access to the countryside with potential impacts on worsening mental health;
- Impact on the historic environment of the former RAF Upper Heyford base which is a conservation area – a unique and historical landscape will be damaged;
- Adverse impacts from a long construction period if OxSRFI is approved – noise, air pollution and traffic;
- Impacts on local transport links from new employees at OxSRFI, and concerns that OxSRFI would prevent future plans for a passenger station on the site of the former Ardley station to the north which is considered needed for Heyford Park residents;
- Environmental impacts of the OxSRFI scheme, namely on biodiversity, air quality, noise and light pollution;
- Cumulative impacts with numerous other sites including Heyford Park, plus Puy du Fou and other proposed warehousing schemes.

4.2.39 These comments are concluded with an overall view that concerns about these issues are not outweighed by the benefits of OxSRFI.

Applicant responses

4.2.40 The Applicant is aware of the importance of ensuring an appropriate and acceptable relationship between the OxSRFI scheme and neighbouring communities. Indeed, through the proposed significant improvements to local highways as well as cycling and walking routes, and further investment in bus accessibility, it is considered there

are likely to be significant benefits to many local residents. However, as referred to above in response to similar issues raised, the Applicant remains focused on seeking to minimise as far as possible any likely residual effects, including with regard to issues such as noise, and lighting effects.

- 4.2.41 The Applicant remains in active dialogue with Historic England (and CDC conservation officers) regarding the relationship between OxSRFI and the heritage assets on Upper Heyford (an important example of a Cold War airbase in Europe). The Applicant has adapted some of the proposed mitigation in direct response to the preferences and advice of these consultees to ensure minimised, 'less than substantial' harm to any heritage assets or their setting.
- 4.2.42 It is the Applicant's view that there are potentially significant synergies between OxSRFI and major residential led growth adjacent at Heyford Park, and will continue to seek to ensure any residual adverse effects are minimised or eliminated. The potential interest in a future new passenger railway station as part of the new town is understood by the Applicant, and although a location (as well as funding, or rail business case) remains to be confirmed, the OxSRFI scheme would not prejudice delivery should it be located on the site of the former Ardley Station. Indeed, the OxSRFI scheme would deliver new infrastructure which could enable a station in that location if the rail case and funding were secured by others. The Applicant remains in direct dialogue with Network Rail and Oxfordshire County Council on rail related issues.
- 4.2.43 It is considered that the issues raised by some residents of Heyford Park raise interesting contradictions given the proposals for a major 'new town' on the site of the former RAF Upper Heyford.
- 4.2.44 The new town development scheme would, if approved, see much of the existing conservation area (and setting of listed buildings, and scheduled monuments) considerably changed by around 9000, but potentially up to 13,000, new homes plus other commercial and town centre uses. The new town would have a much more direct relationship with heritage assets than the OxSRFI scheme, and include buildings and wind turbines significantly taller than the proposed OxSRFI warehouses.
- 4.2.45 Similarly, the OxSRFI construction period is anticipated to be up to 7 years from start to completion (with later phases of that period focused on specific building plots within the site). A new town of 9000 (or 13000) new homes would see construction over a considerably longer period (potentially decades), with associated construction traffic and noise throughout that period.
- 4.2.46 As above, although dialogue with local consultees and residents often directly links the potential for a new passenger station to the potential development of the Heyford Park 'new town', it is understood that the new town planning application does not make any provision for a new station.

4.2.47 The issue of cumulative impacts is noted, and referred to above – the OxSRFI application will include consideration not only of the approved ‘committed’ developments, but in light of dialogue with consultees, will also consider potential future (but currently not confirmed or approved) schemes including Heyford Park. It is anticipated that other live applications, including Heyford Park, will similarly be asked to provide an appropriate consideration and assessment of cumulative effects with other known or potential major schemes.

Other issues raised

4.2.48 Various other comments were raised within the responses, albeit less frequently than the issues set out above, including:

- Positivity/support for the proposed rail freight terminal, recognising the importance of enabling a shift of freight from road (HGVs) to rail and understanding the site’s locational credentials re: road and rail access;
- Assurances sought regarding delivery of the rail freight terminal as opposed to only delivering warehousing (an issue which would be controlled and secured through the DCO drafting);
- Acknowledgement of the significant investment in local highways infrastructure as part of the OxSRFI proposals (even if accompanied by the view that more may be required in the future if all potential development schemes are approved).

4.3 Consultee/Other Stakeholder Responses

4.3.1 A range of consultees (36 in total) provided responses and comments in response to the Stage 2 statutory consultation process. This section provides a list of those bodies which commented, and provides a high-level summary of key issues or questions raised.

4.3.2 The responses received included those from:

- Dorchester Living
- Anglian Water
- Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council
- Berks, Becks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
- Bicester Bike Users Group
- Biffa Waste Services
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Bucknell Parish Council
- Callum Miller MP
- Cherwell District & Oxfordshire County Council (joint response)

- Chiltern Railways
- Cllr Boucher-Giles
- Cllr Epps
- Deddington Parish Council
- England's Economic Heartland
- Environment Agency
- Euro Garages Ltd
- Evenly Parish Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Heyford Park Community Action Group
- Historic England
- Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum
- Middleton Stoney Parish Council
- Ministry of Defence
- National Highways
- Natural England
- Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society
- Somerton Parish Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Stratford on Avon District Council
- Thames Water
- Upper Heyford Parish Council
- Viridor
- Wendlebury Parish Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Oxfordshire Council

- 4.3.3 A range of issues and topics are covered by the comments or queries received, with some overlap with those raised by the local community. Understandably, the comments from Parish Councils and local politicians in particular tend to reflect the same issues and points as those covered by the responses from residents in the communities they represent. Avoiding major duplication, some of the key questions and issues raised by consultee bodies include the following:

Accessibility and transport, including rail

- 4.3.4 There were concerns raised about the potential impact on nearby roads and communities from additional traffic, and a desire to see traffic retained on strategic routes (focused on the M40) and out of village centres. Some welcomed the emerging highways mitigation proposals in general, but are aware of other sites being proposed for new, additional development, and the need to ensure that cumulative issues associated with a number of relevant live planning applications are being considered as part of the wider planning process. Some comments received reflect on the ongoing

TA process, and the importance of that to inform final comments and input to the OxSRFI process.

- 4.3.5 Questions included interest in how the scheme might interact with aspirations for a new passenger rail station nearby in the future, with some consultees assuming a new Station would be on the site of the former Ardley Station (to the north of OxSRFI). Further assurances regarding the Chiltern Main Line's capacity to accommodate freight traffic without adverse impacts on passenger rail capacity was also sought from a number of consultees.
- 4.3.6 There was positive recognition from some consultees of the efforts made to enhance and improve the local connectivity and quality of cycling and walking routes around the site and beyond.

Local and environmental potential impacts

- 4.3.7 There were a number of comments relating to impacts on and off-site ecology and biodiversity, as well as the adjacent (geological, not primarily ecological) SSSI, with requests for additional explanation and detail about compensation and mitigation for likely impacts associated with delivery of the OxSRFI scheme. Similarly, interest was expressed regarding the potential for impacts on other local sites (designated and other sites) or habitats, including hedgerows.
- 4.3.8 Technical issues and queries were submitted regarding groundwater and ground conditions, and the detail of the proposed drainage (surface water) strategy. A small number of consultees noted the potential for impacts on nearby heritage assets nearby, as well as interest in better understanding the interaction between OxSRFI and local minerals and waste policies.
- 4.3.9 Neighbouring landowners, developers and businesses are keen to understand the interactions with and any potential impacts on their existing, planned or proposed operations, including at Heyford Park, but also with regard to other facilities or sites close to M40 Junction 10.

5.0 KEY ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Stage 2 Consultation responses have ensured that the Applicant is aware of issues of interest, and some concerns, from the perspective of local communities and other stakeholders.
- 5.2 The Parish Councils in particular have been effective in raising issues regarding the potential effects of the development on the local communities, and there is some consistency between the issues raised from those consultee bodies and those received from members of the public.
- 5.3 Statutory consultees have raised a range of issues, including some technical points which are being or will be addressed in the ongoing EIA work and assessments which will form part of the final Environmental Statement. Some queries or issues raised reflect the fact that the material which formed the basis of the consultation remains draft with the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) forming updated draft ES chapters which did not all contain completed impact assessments. However, the ongoing ES work will reflect on the comments and issues raised, with a view to being addressed wherever possible in the final ES in 2026. In the meantime, the Applicant is engaged with or working closely with numerous consultees and will discuss and explore the issues raised in the responses received.
- 5.4 As set out in this report, there have been a number of commonly raised themes and issues in the comments received. For example, it is clear that existing traffic and transport impacts, and the level and type of potential future traffic conditions, are of particular interest and come concern to local residents, as well as to relevant consultee bodies. Part of the concern locally clearly relates to the potential for cumulative issues not from OxSRFI alone, but alongside other potential future major sites currently proposed for development. Notwithstanding the challenges associated with a lack of clarity or certainty regarding likely impacts, and regarding timing of delivery (if they are approved), this is an issue the Applicant is aware of and will continue to discuss with consultees to ensure a proportionate, appropriate assessment is provided.
- 5.5 The OxSRFI Transport Assessment is being prepared, overseen and steered by the TWG of key consultee bodies, and will provide a comprehensive assessment of the likely effects. That work explicitly factors in all committed development (approved and allocated for development), with additional work being undertaken to provide a view on the additional effects of other, non-committed but potential developments, including at Heyford Park.
- 5.6 Queries about a possible future ‘cumulative’ scenario are not limited to transport and highways, and despite not being ‘committed’ (and on the understanding that there is no certainty regarding whether they will be approved or delivered as currently proposed), all ES chapters will consider these additional schemes to help provide a judgement regarding any potential cumulative or ‘in combination’ effects.

- 5.7 The concerns and objections raised by nearby residents and communities have focused on a relatively limited number of issues. Naturally, many of the issues and concerns raised through local consultation have focused on the site-specific characteristics and effects of the proposals, for example the development of greenfield fields, loss of agricultural land and effects on the local landscape.
- 5.8 There is some recognition in comments received of the strong market interest from the logistics and distribution sector in this part of Oxfordshire and the M40 corridor, but also a continued quest for reassurance regarding the delivery of rail freight infrastructure and the terminal as well as highway infrastructure and warehousing. The Applicant is ensuring that the legal requirements of the DCO are clear with regard to delivery of the whole scheme as proposed, and will continue to seek to reassure consultees in this regard.