

Blisworth PC Annual Meeting

7th May 2019

ROXHILL NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY at J15 - PINS Ref TR050006

Blisworth PC submitted a comprehensive written representation against the Gateway application and attended four hearings (in a speaking capacity) including the preliminary meeting, the cumulative impact hearing and two open floor hearings where we made representations on subjects including climate change, concerns over the absence of strategic oversight, the absence of a policy review process and capacity and engineering issues on the West Coast Mainline. After each of these hearings we submitted further representations for each of the deadlines and commented on all information and assertions submitted by the Developer at each of the relevant stages. A number of members of SRC attended these meetings and some made representations from the floor.

The examination process closed on the 9th April and PINs have until early July to make their recommendation nominally to the Secretary of State for Transport, currently Chris Grayling, who will then have until early October to decide whether to agree or disagree with that recommendation. I received confirmation today that the recommendation is actually considered by the Transport and Works Act Order Unit and the DfT's legal advisers with the decision probably being made by Jesse Norman, the Minister of State for the DfT. If the decision goes against Roxhill they have 6 weeks to appeal. That would take us to the end of November, plus the period of any appeal.

ASHFIELD LAND'S RAIL CENTRAL at J15A – PINS Ref TR050004

Ashfield and Gazeley formally submitted their Application last September but it was initially rejected due to inconsistent or missing documentation but was finally accepted for examination in November. In March they requested a delay to the start of the statutory Examination process due, they say, to errors in their traffic forecasting software and failure to achieve agreement from both Highways authorities. This was probably a unique occurrence which led PINS to consult with all Interested Parties on the way forward. 160 responded, all critical of RCs performance, SNC and both Highways authorities in particular. However, it appears PINS has no powers to reject the application at this stage and, whilst acknowledging the detrimental impact on the community, the deferment application was granted. On the 24th April PINS laid out what is effectively an additional pre-examination timetable with a 16 stage programme and 4 Milestones that RC need to achieve to get their house in order. It is not clear what action PINS can take if Ashfield do not meet any of these Milestones but it appears they have already failed to meet the first one. I have written a letter to PINs to seek clarity on this issue and the exact nature of the consultation that Ashfield are required to undertake. I spoke with the case manager today who informed me that my questions are still being considered by the Examining Authority (some two weeks later). This deferment means that the examination will not start until mid-December, just in time for another Christmas.

Whilst it is believable that incompetence has led to this delay (given their past performance) I have no doubt that the request for deferment is nothing more than dishonest tactical manoeuvring to

manufacture a delay the start of the examination process until a clear decision has been made on the Northampton Gateway.

Due to their unreasonable and underhand behaviour we are now left twiddling our thumbs until we finally get sight of their revised highways proposals. If and when the examination ever transpires our full representation, stretching to many pages, will once again be out of date and will require amending a further time. We intend to use the extra time we now have to lobby as many relevant Government bodies and organisations as possible in the hope that someone will recognise the disjoint between national transport objectives and the cluster of SRFI applications currently making a mockery of them.

To end with a couple of positives; firstly Ashfield Land have completely abandoned trying to engage with a community that they have well and truly alienated so we won't have to see their irritating faces for some months and; secondly, I think that their recent actions have probably irritated the Examination panel appointed to judge their application which might well be to our benefit.

When the time comes it is essential that that Blisworth PC engage in the process in their own right and attend all the hearings in a formal capacity. Members of the public can keep up to date on progress by following SRC on Facebook