

**Public Inquiry into Appeal by Helioslough Ltd into a
proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange on land in
and around Former Aerodrome, North Orbital Road,
Upper Colne Valley, Hertfordshire**

Proof of evidence by Jim Morgan

on behalf of

First Capital Connect

Passenger Train Operations

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. My name is Jim Morgan, Managing Director of First Capital Connect (FCC)
- 1.2. I have worked at senior level in the rail industry for 43 years
- 1.3. The purpose of this document is to summarise FCC's concerns regarding the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Radlett.
- 1.4. FCC made two written representations to St Albans and City District Council in respect of Helioslough's planning application. For completeness, these representations are attached as Appendices 1 and 2 and will be drawn upon in support of this evidence.

2. THAMESLINK PROGRAMME

- 2.1. The £5.5 billion investment in the Thameslink Programme was authorised by Government in July 2007, after the appellant's previous planning application had been refused and their previous planning appeal had been lodged.
- 2.2. First Capital Connect's concern is the potential negative effect on train running performance, i.e. punctuality. This has improved on the Thameslink route every year since the start of our franchise on 01 April 2006.
- 2.3. The key output of the Thameslink Programme is to increase passenger capacity on the Thameslink route. This will be achieved by running longer trains (up to 12 carriages) and running more services, both peak and off-peak.

3. TRAIN PATHING

- 3.1. The majority of Thameslink off-peak services will run on the "slow" lines between Harpenden and Radlett junctions. Network Rail has been unable to demonstrate that these trains would not potentially suffer delay as a result of the time needed by freight trains to enter and exit the proposed SRFI.
- 3.2. Network Rail has been unable to confirm the potential routes by which the freight trains running to and from Radlett SRFI would join the Midland Mainline. This is highly significant in terms of the possible impact on train pathing of passenger services.
- 3.3. The core cross-London Thameslink route between Kentish Town and London Blackfriars and London Bridge is restricted to one line in each direction. In addition to trains from the Midland Mainline, trains from the Great Northern route will enter this cross-London core route just north of St Pancras International station. The on-time presentation of every train through the core route, with up to 24 trains per hour in each direction each hour (i.e. a train every 2 ½ minutes), will be critical to the successful operation of the Thameslink route timetable.

4. ENGINEERING WORKS

- 4.1. Network Rail have been unable to confirm whether work would be required to enhance the gauge of the Belsize and / or Elstree tunnels and / or the Tottenham Curve tunnels just south of Carlton Road Junction.
- 4.2. They have indicated that there are “specialist wagons” available which could accommodate 9ft 6 inch containers without the need for gauge enhancement, however such wagons are not considered to be cost effective as they reduce the competitiveness of rail freight in comparison to road freight.
- 4.3. On 22 May 2009 Network Rail confirmed to FCC in writing that “any gauge enhancement works which directly support the Radlett SRFI proposal would need to be financed by the Developer.”
- 4.4. First Capital Connect’s concern is the possible impact on train running performance while any necessary gauge enhancement work was implemented. Such work would be likely to require train services to be suspended on the lines affected and, in the case of tunnels, this could be for several weeks.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1. Until Network Rail is able to fully demonstrate to FCC that freight trains could operate to and from the proposed Radlett strategic rail freight interchange without any detriment to passenger services, we cannot support the approval of the planning application by Helioslough.