

# UNLOCKING THE GATEWAY

From bottleneck to backbone:  
How the East Midlands can  
power UK growth

**E→ST  
MIDL→NDS  
FREEPORT**

**CLAIRE WARD  
MAYOR OF THE  
EAST MIDLANDS**



**East Midlands  
Combined County  
Authority**



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# FOREWORD

## CLAIRE WARD, MAYOR OF THE EAST MIDLANDS

The East Midlands has always been a hub for industry, for making and for moving. From powering the Industrial Revolution to the advanced manufacturing and logistics operations that serve global markets today, our region has been central to Britain's economic story for centuries.

Today, we are writing the next chapter of that story through our East Midlands Growth Plan and our Vision for Growth which highlights a series of Growth Strategy Areas. One of these is the Trent Arc, connecting Derby and Nottingham and presenting the largest concentration of assets and opportunities in the region. This crucial corridor incorporating the East Midlands Freeport sits at the heart of the UK and represents one of the most significant growth opportunities anywhere in the country. Our region is home to world-leading companies and universities producing 75,000 graduates each year. We have the workforce, the expertise and the ambition to deliver transformational growth.

Our region is now leveraging the public and private investment it deserves, with much more to come. I am grateful for the work of national agencies such as National Highways for their continued and significant investment in our region on a range of key projects including the A38 Derby Junctions and for the devolved Transport for City Regions funding from the Department for Transport, that gives the East Midlands control over £2bn of transport investment over the next 6 years.

The current tranche of investments will cement our relationships as we turn our focus on the next chapter and connectivity in and around Junction 24 of the M1, which is one of the most important pieces of infrastructure for unlocking growth in the region and the wider area. It is the gateway to the UK's only inland Freeport, to the UK's busiest express air freight airport and to associated development sites that will deliver tens of thousands of good quality jobs and billions of pounds of investment. We know the junction will soon be operating beyond capacity, and without intervention, will become a barrier to the growth our region and our country needs.

This document is a call for action. It demonstrates why Junction 24 matters, not just to the East Midlands but to overall UK economic competitiveness and our ability to deliver on the Government's growth mission. This report shows what can be achieved in the near future if we act now across the public and private sectors: 28,000 jobs, £9 billion in economic value and a model for how strategic infrastructure investment can unlock regional prosperity.

But growth must mean opportunity for everyone. I will ensure that the new jobs created are accessible to people in our communities who are currently furthest from the labour market. Through targeted skills investment, partnerships with local colleges and universities, and reinvestment of retained business rates into training and infrastructure, we are building clear pathways into high-quality careers in clean energy, advanced manufacturing and logistics. Unlocking Junction 24 is not just about traffic movements, it is about connecting people to opportunity and making sure the benefits of growth are felt across the East Midlands and the wider area.



## TOM NEWMAN -TAYLOR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EAST MIDLANDS FREEPORT

When East Midlands Freeport was approved in 2023 it was created as a lightning rod for economic growth to supercharge the region. As the UK's only inland Freeport, we offer something no other Freeport can: direct access to 85% of the UK population within four-hours, combined with the country's busiest express air freight operation, strategic rail freight connectivity and sites capable of accommodating the industries that will drive Britain's future.

Three years on, that proposition remains compelling. Businesses continue to express strong interest in our sites. The market for advanced manufacturing, clean energy technology and automotive innovation is growing. The East Midlands has the land, skills and strategic location to capture a significant share of that opportunity.

What we lack is the transport infrastructure to make it happen.

Development at two of our three tax sites is currently constrained by the capacity limitations at Junction 24.

At East Midlands Gateway Phase 2, SEGRO's Development Consent Order application (currently before the Planning Inspectorate) proposes specific mitigation works at the junction, and those works could in principle be delivered as a discreet early intervention.

At Ratcliffe-on-Soar, a planning condition attached to the Local Development Order by the Local Planning Authority prevents further expansion beyond agreed thresholds without first demonstrating adequate capacity on the strategic road network.

Every month that passes without a funded solution is a month in which development cannot proceed, jobs cannot be created and business rates that could be reinvested in regional infrastructure are not generated. This is constraining growth and undermining our ability to compete internationally. If we cannot come together to deliver the transport infrastructure our economy needs, what message does that send to global investors deciding where to put their money?

The analysis in this report is clear. Without intervention, Junction 24 will be at capacity by the mid-2030s, regardless of Freeport development. Congestion will worsen. Journey times will become unreliable. Freight movements will be delayed. And the competitive advantage that our location provides will erode.

The solution we are putting forward is not simply a road upgrade. It is a fully developed, integrated, multimodal transport package that addresses highway capacity while also improving public transport, enabling modal shift to rail, supporting active travel, and accelerating

decarbonisation across the corridor. It is a future-proofed solution, designed for the needs of the 2030s and beyond.

This proposal is the product of several years of detailed joint working with EMCCA, National Highways, local highway authorities, Midlands Connect and our private sector partners. It reflects extensive technical analysis, agreed scheme designs, costings and value-for-money assessments. The work has been developed in line with HM Treasury Green Book and DfT WebTAG guidance, ensuring it meets the standards Government rightly expects. This report represents that collective effort – a credible, deliverable and policy-compliant package that is ready to move forward with the right backing.

Crucially, East Midlands Freeport has already put real money on the table. We have committed £12.5 million in seed funding to drive the scheme through design and business case development, and we are prepared to invest up to £50 million from our secured future revenues, alongside our private sector partners, to ensure delivery. This is a major local commitment to national growth.

But despite this substantial investment, we cannot deliver the full package alone. We have the solution; what we need now is Government's commitment – a clear mandate, a funding framework, and the backing required to accelerate delivery. With Government support now, this programme will help to unlock the full economic potential of the East Midlands and remove the barriers currently holding back thousands of jobs, billions in investment and major national infrastructure.

This report is the case for that commitment.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Junction 24 of the M1 is the critical infrastructure intervention required to unlock the full potential of the East Midlands and deliver transformational economic growth for the region and the UK – aligned to the Mayor’s local plan and Trent Arc vision, it is a perfect example of how the East Midlands can put this Government’s Industrial Strategy into practice.**



## THE FREEPORT OPPORTUNITY

East Midlands Freeport comprises three strategic sites capable of delivering 28,000 jobs, £9 billion in gross value added and 4.2 million square metres of commercial floorspace over the next decade. Located at the heart of England’s transport network – within four hours’ drive of 85% of the UK population – the Freeport offers unparalleled access to domestic and international markets through road, rail and air freight connectivity.

### Investor demand

- **East Midlands Airport** – expanding express cargo, growing Asian routes.
- **Toyota** – supply chain transition, EV shift, modal shift to rail.
- **Uniper / AI Growth Zones** – clean energy, grid utilisation.
- **SEGRO / Maritime** – rail freight scale-up.
- **Life sciences cluster** – linking to East Midlands Airport logistics and university R&D.

### An immediate constraint

Development at two of our three tax sites is currently constrained by the capacity limitations at Junction 24.

At East Midlands Gateway Phase 2, specific junction mitigation works have been proposed through the Development Consent Order process and could potentially be delivered as a standalone early intervention. At Ratcliffe-on-Soar, a planning condition set by the Local Planning Authority prevents the site from expanding beyond agreed limits without first completing a transport assessment that demonstrates adequate capacity on the strategic road network.

Traffic modelling shows the junction will be overwhelmed by the mid-2030s irrespective of Freeport development. Without intervention, major development cannot proceed and the Freeport’s economic potential will not be realised.

### The risk of reinforcing inequality

Over eight million people can reach a Freeport site within 60 minutes by car. Only 1.3 million can do so by public transport – a ratio of more than six to one. This disparity means that communities without reliable car access are effectively locked out of the employment opportunities the Freeport will create. Derby and Nottingham, cities adjacent to these growth

sites, rank in the bottom 10% of all districts nationally for social mobility. In parts of the region, fewer than 40% of households have access to a car.

### A fast closing window for action

Standard National Highways delivery processes typically take five to ten years from inception to completion. The Freeport tax incentive window closes in September 2031 and we have major international investors ready to operate from 2028. Without acceleration, improvements would not be delivered until the mid-2030s, long after the opportunity has passed.

A decision at Spending Review 2027 is required to unlock delivery at pace. The scale and strategic importance of Junction 24 mean that progression solely through standard Road Investment Strategy processes will not meet the Freeport’s tax window or investor timelines.

International investors are seeking operational certainty from 2028. Without early commitment, delivery will slip beyond the Freeport tax window and into the mid-2030s.

## INACTION NO OPTION

### If Junction 24 is not upgraded:

- ✘ Up to 500,000 square metres of development and 28,000 jobs at East Midlands Gateway Phase Two cannot proceed
- ✘ The economic commitments in the Freeport’s Full Business Case will not be realised
- ✘ Around 11,000 new homes, including 3,500 affordable homes, in the surrounding area will be constrained
- ✘ Major elements of the Ratcliffe-on-Soar redevelopment will be blocked
- ✘ National and global supply chains that depend on the UK’s only inland Freeport – connected by air, rail and road – will face growing capacity constraints
- ✘ Investment across priority growth sectors including life sciences, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, automotive and logistics will be diverted to competitor locations better able to provide certainty and connectivity

# UNLOCKING GROWTH, REAPING THE REWARDS

Successful delivery will:



Increase junction capacity from 80,000 to **over 110,000 vehicles** per day



Improve public transport accessibility from 1.3 million to **3.5 million people** within 60 minutes



Shift modal share from 90% car to 65% car, 25% public transport and 10% active travel



Satisfy planning conditions at Ratcliffe-on-Soar and provide the transport capacity evidence required to unlock full development across the Freeport corridor



Unlock approximately **11,000 homes**, including up to 3,500 affordable units



Shift significant amounts of freight from **road to rail**



## WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS TO DELIVER A SOLUTION FOR CHANGE

An integrated, multimodal transport package can address capacity constraints while supporting sustainable growth:

- **Package One** comprises enhanced public transport, active travel infrastructure and demand management measures, requiring investment of £20-30 million. There are also significant opportunities to shift freight from road to rail across all three of our sites.
- **Package Two** delivers a preferred strategic highway capacity scheme at Junction 24, with construction costs estimated at up to £350m. This represents the scale of intervention required to future-proof the junction for the 2030s and beyond. Alternative configurations continue to be assessed through the normal business case development process.

## OUR ASK

Government endorsement to prioritise Junction 24 in Road Investment Strategy 4 and back a funding model that lets us co-invest will determine whether this growth happens. We're not asking for handouts.

### We are asking Government to:

- Formally endorse the multimodal approach for Junction 24 – combining sustainable transport (Package One) with strategic highway capacity improvements (Package Two) – and confirm its progression through the Road Investment Strategy 3 development pipeline, leading to committed construction funding within Road Investment Strategy 4.
- Designate Junction 24 as a national priority within Road Investment Strategy 4, providing the long-term certainty needed to attract private investment, lift planning constraints and unlock development across the Freeport corridor.

- Provide a clear ministerial mandate to National Highways and partner agencies to prioritise the scheme and work to accelerated timescales – the Freeport tax incentive window closes September 2031; standard delivery would not complete until the mid-2030s.
- Back our innovative blended public-private funding model that enables co-investment rather than relying on the Exchequer alone.

### The region is already stepping up:

- East Midlands Freeport has committed up to £50m from retained business rates.
- EMCCA has made Junction 24 a priority in the Mayor's Transport Plan and is aligning regional funding.
- Private sector developers will contribute proportionately through planning obligations.

This is not a request for handouts – it is a request for Government to back a credible, deliverable model that turns growth into infrastructure and infrastructure into growth.

The East Midlands has the sites, the sectors and the workforce to deliver growth at scale. Junction 24 of the M1 is where that growth begins.

# INTRODUCING THE EAST MIDLANDS OPPORTUNITY

The analysis presented in this report draws on work undertaken in partnership between East Midlands Freeport and Midlands Connect. This programme has developed a Strategic Transport Investment Plan identifying the infrastructure interventions required to unlock the Freeport and support wider regional growth. The evidence base includes traffic modelling using the Paramics Regional Transport Model (PRTM23), validated by National Highways and economic analysis aligned with Government appraisal guidance.

## THIS WORK DIRECTLY SUPPORTS THE MAYOR'S EMERGING LOCAL PLAN AND SPATIAL VISION FOR GROWTH

This includes delivery of the Trent Arc – the transformational corridor linking Derby and Nottingham. The Trent Arc represents one of the most significant regeneration and housing opportunities in the Midlands, bringing forward new communities, commercial space, clean energy investment and strategic employment sites. Unlocking transport capacity at Junction 24 is fundamental to realising that vision.

The East Midlands is a region of substantial economic significance. Home to around five million people, a population larger than Wales and Northern Ireland combined, and contains 368,000 businesses, representing 6.5% of all UK enterprises.

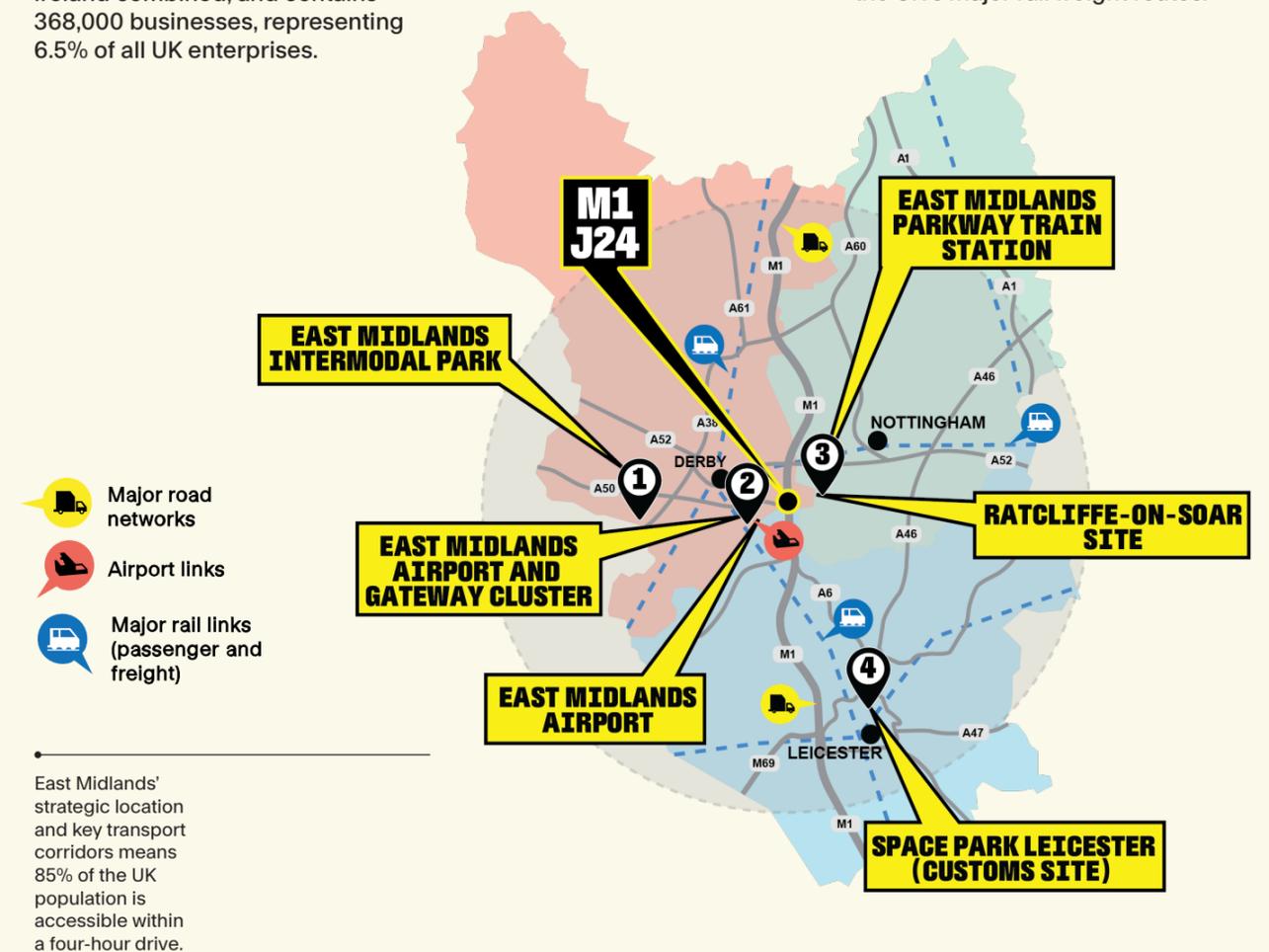
The region generates £157 billion in economic output, equivalent to 5.8% of the UK economy, reflecting sustained growth and strong investment confidence.

It remains a place where things are made: 10.6% of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, around 50% higher than the national average of 7%, reinforcing the region's long-standing industrial strengths. The East Midlands is also a national centre of logistics, forming part of the UK's "golden triangle" for distribution and benefiting from world-class multimodal assets - making the region one of the country's most important hubs for freight, supply-chain activity and connected growth.

This economic strategy is inseparable from housing delivery.

Across the Trent Arc and surrounding Freeport corridor, plans are in place for around 11,000 new homes, including significant affordable provision. Without transport intervention, these homes – and the communities they support – cannot come forward at the pace required.

The region's economic strength is built on its strategic location. Positioned at the heart of England's transport network, the East Midlands provides access to national and international markets that few other locations can match. The M1 motorway supports north-south freight and passenger movements. East Midlands Airport handles more express air freight than any other UK airport outside Heathrow, totalling over 394,000 tonnes annually. The East Midlands Gateway Strategic Rail Freight Interchange connects to 18 of the UK's major rail freight routes.



This connectivity underpins a significant export economy. The East Midlands accounts for 8% of England's goods exports, with over £27 billion in goods shipped annually. Machinery and transport equipment comprise 70% of these exports, reflecting the region's deep specialisms in advanced manufacturing. Five countries – the United States, Germany, France, Singapore and Hong Kong – account for nearly half of the region's export trade, demonstrating genuinely global market reach.

East Midlands Freeport was approved in 2023 to capitalise on these advantages. As the UK's only inland Freeport, it offers a unique combination of multimodal connectivity, available development land and proximity to existing industrial clusters. The Freeport comprises three strategic sites:

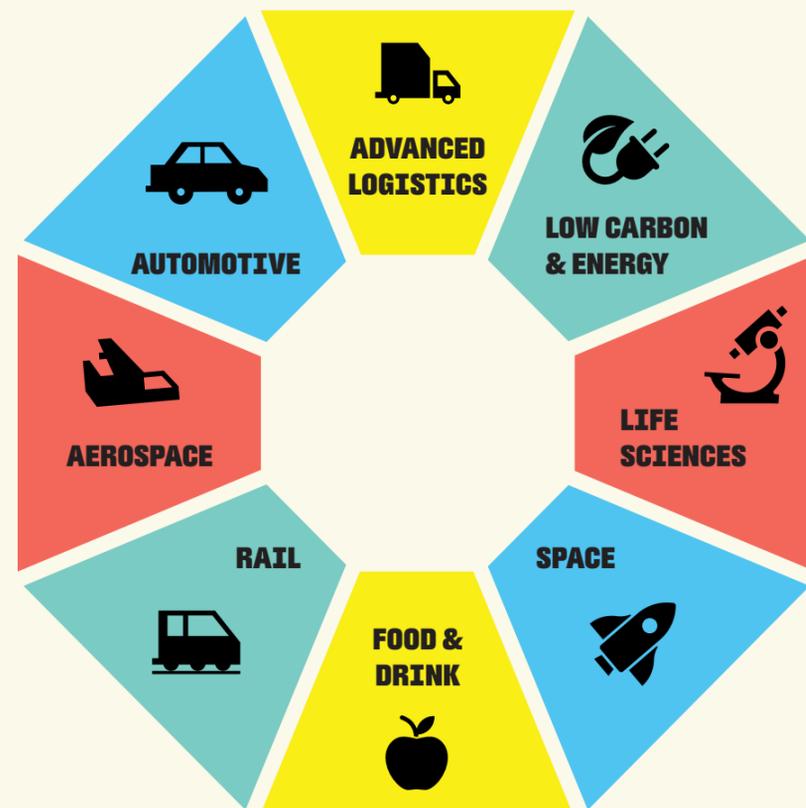
- **East Midlands Airport and Gateway Industrial Cluster (EMAGIC):** 160 hectares focused on advanced logistics, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing, anchored by the UK's largest express air freight operation and a strategic rail freight interchange.
- **East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP):** 173 hectares adjacent to Toyota Manufacturing UK, focused on rail-connected manufacturing, automotive and green energy.
- **Ratcliffe-on-Soar:** 200 hectares at the former power station site, focused on clean energy, zero-carbon technologies and advanced manufacturing, with direct rail freight connectivity and access to high-capacity grid infrastructure.

Together, these sites can deliver 28,000 jobs, £9 billion in gross value added and 4.2 million square metres of commercial floorspace over the Freeport's lifespan. They align directly with the Government's Industrial Strategy priorities: advanced manufacturing, clean energy and logistics infrastructure.

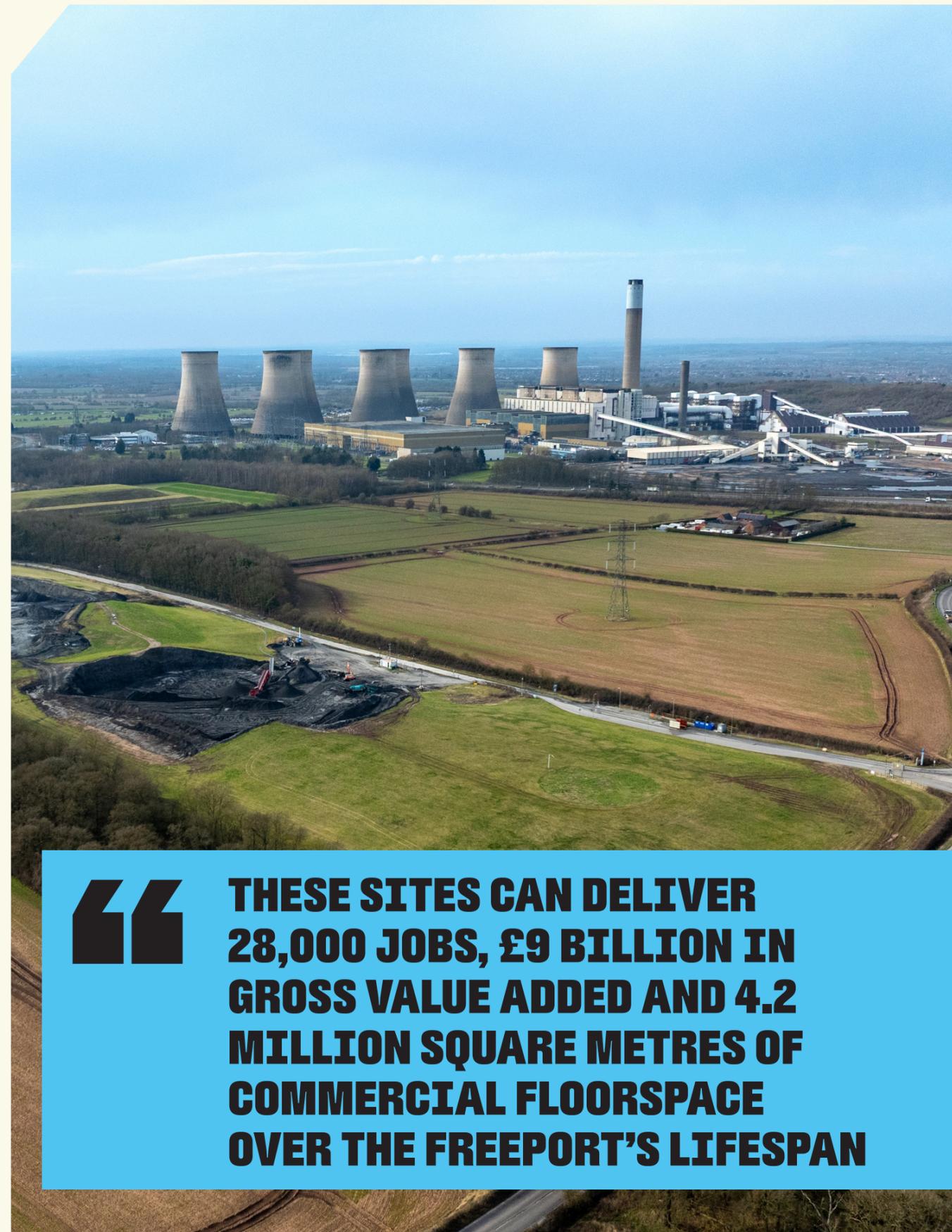
The Freeport's target sectors reflect existing regional strengths and future growth opportunities:

- **Aerospace and defence:** The East Midlands is one of the UK's top three aerospace clusters, home to Rolls Royce, with over 12,000 jobs and employment concentration four times the national average.
- **Automotive and electric vehicles:** The region hosts major manufacturing operations, including Toyota, with the sector undergoing structural transformation toward electric vehicles and battery production.
- **Advanced logistics:** The 'Golden Triangle' of logistics – the area of the Midlands renowned for distribution facility density – means the region is at the heart of UK supply chains.
- **Clean energy:** The Ratcliffe-on-Soar site offers a unique opportunity to transition from coal-fired power generation to a zero-carbon industrial future, supported by existing grid connectivity and rail freight infrastructure.

The economic case for East Midlands Freeport is strong. The market case is clear. The question is whether the infrastructure exists to realise this potential.



Established cluster strengths in the region



“ THESE SITES CAN DELIVER 28,000 JOBS, £9 BILLION IN GROSS VALUE ADDED AND 4.2 MILLION SQUARE METRES OF COMMERCIAL FLOORSPACE OVER THE FREEPORT'S LIFESPAN ”

# WHY M1 JUNCTION 24 MATTERS

Junction 24 on the M1 is far more than a motorway interchange - it is the gateway that powers the East Midlands Freeport and the wider regional economy. As the main access point for two of the three tax sites, and a strategic road link to the third, its performance is the difference between a Freeport that can thrive and one that is held back.



## JUNCTION 24'S IMPORTANCE STRETCHES WELL BEYOND THE FREEPORT BOUNDARY.

It sits at the crossroads of national logistics, regional connectivity and local access – a critical node in the UK's transport network where freight, passengers and industry converge. When Junction 24 moves, the region moves. When it stalls, growth stalls with it.

**Freight movements:** Heavy goods vehicles account for 15% of traffic using Junction 24 – significantly above typical motorway junction levels. This reflects the concentration of logistics and manufacturing activity in the area and the importance of the junction to supply chain operations.

The junction currently handles approximately 80,000 vehicles

per day. Analysis of traffic origins and destinations shows strong movements. Nationally, journeys include to and from Yorkshire, Lancashire, the West Midlands and South Yorkshire. Regionally this covers the majority of traffic travelling between Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire.

It's this combination of national strategic importance, regional gateway function and local access that makes Junction 24 uniquely critical. Its capacity constraints affect not only the Freeport sites but also the wider transport network and the regional economy.

The junction's performance also has implications for road safety. Between 2020 and 2023, five serious accidents occurred at Junction 24, resulting in nine casualties. Addressing capacity constraints will improve traffic flow, reduce stop-start conditions and support safer operations for all road users.

Rail freight is central to the East Midlands Freeport's competitive

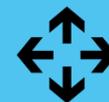
advantage, and improvements at Junction 24 must be integrated with enhancements to the region's rail network. At our EMAGIC site, Maritime's Strategic Rail Freight Interchange is already operating 24/7 and forms a critical part of the UK's national freight network, connecting the Freeport directly to major ports and distribution centres across the country. This existing, functioning rail infrastructure demonstrates the scale of modal shift that can be achieved when connectivity is aligned.

East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP) requires a dedicated rail spur to fully connect into the national rail freight network, enabling manufacturers and logistics operators to shift significant freight volumes from road to rail – we are working with Toyota and Network Rail on how to make this work. At Ratcliffe-on-Soar, existing rail infrastructure can be enhanced to support a growing clean-energy and advanced manufacturing cluster, providing a direct rail-connected alternative to road-based freight movements.



### NATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The M1 is one of the UK's most important freight corridors connecting London to the North. Junction 24 is a key interchange point, handling significant volumes of through traffic as well as traffic accessing local destinations.



### REGIONAL GATEWAY

The junction provides the primary access point to East Midlands Airport which is the UK's busiest express air freight operation and a growing passenger airport serving over 4.2 million passengers annually. It also serves the East Midlands Gateway logistics park, one of the largest strategic rail freight interchanges in the country.



### LOCAL ACCESS

The junction connects the M1 to the A50 and A453, which serve major employment sites, residential areas and the cities of Derby and Nottingham. It is integral to daily commuting patterns across Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

Strengthening rail infrastructure across the Freeport complements the proposed highway capacity improvements at Junction 24 by reducing HGV movements and supporting modal shift. Delivering these upgrades will require structured engagement with Network Rail and alignment with the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline to establish feasible funding pathways and integration opportunities.

Junction 24 does not operate in isolation. Traffic modelling indicates that Junction 25, the A453, the A50 and sections of the M1 mainline all face growing capacity pressures as a result of development and background traffic growth across the corridor. The case for an integrated multimodal solution at Junction 24 is strengthened by the need to manage network performance across this wider geography.

# THE CHALLENGE → A JUNCTION AT CAPACITY

Traffic modelling by National Highways demonstrates the severe capacity constraints the junction faces, which will worsen significantly over the coming decade.

By the mid-2030s, the junction will be at capacity irrespective of any Freeport development.

## BACKGROUND TRAFFIC GROWTH AND COMMITTED DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION WILL PUSH IT BEYOND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY.

Journey times will increase substantially, particularly during peak periods. Reliability will deteriorate. The junction's ability to support the national, regional and local transport network will be significantly compromised, with consequences felt across the wider economy.

The pressures at Junction 24 become significantly more acute when the Freeport's development needs are added, but the constraints extend far beyond the Freeport itself. National Highways has assessed that the junction cannot accommodate additional peak-time traffic without intervention. As a result, development at two of the three Freeport tax sites face capacity constraints:

**East Midlands Gateway Phase 2 (EMAGIC):** Approximately 500,000 square metres of development and 6,000 jobs are dependent on demonstrating adequate junction capacity. The East Midlands Gateway Phase 2 Development Consent Order (currently before the Planning Inspectorate) proposes specific mitigation works at Junction 24 that, if approved, could be delivered as a discrete early intervention ahead of a wider scheme.

**Ratcliffe-on-Soar:** A planning condition attached to the Local Development Order by the Local Planning Authority prevents the site from expanding beyond agreed development thresholds without completing a transport assessment demonstrating adequate capacity on the strategic road network. Major elements of the redevelopment

cannot proceed until this condition is satisfied.

These formal planning conditions block further development until a funded solution is identified and adequate network capacity is demonstrated.

The capacity problem at Junction 24 is compounded by limited alternatives for accessing the Freeport sites. Public transport connectivity is poor:

- Only 1.3 million people can access a Freeport site within 60 minutes by public transport, compared to over eight million by car.
- There is no direct public transport link between East Midlands Parkway station and East Midlands Airport, despite the close proximity between the two.
- Bus services to the sites are limited in frequency and coverage.
- Only 8.8% of East Midlands Airport passengers travel by public transport, compared to 17.8% at Birmingham Airport and 15.6% at Manchester Airport.
- Rail freight opportunities are available at all three sites (with a rail freight terminal in full operation at EMAGIC) but further investments are required to fully unlock the potential.

This lack of public transport options means the sites are heavily car-dependent. Two-thirds of commuters in the East Midlands travel to work by car, compared to a national average of 57%. Without viable alternatives, growth at the Freeport sites will translate directly into additional vehicle traffic at Junction 24.

The consequences of inaction are clear and far reaching, risking the Mayor's vision for growth across the Nottingham to Derby Trent Arc:

- **Economic:** The Freeport's Full Business Case commitments including 28,000 jobs, £9 billion GVA, and 4.2 million square

metres of floorspace cannot be delivered while key sites remain constrained.

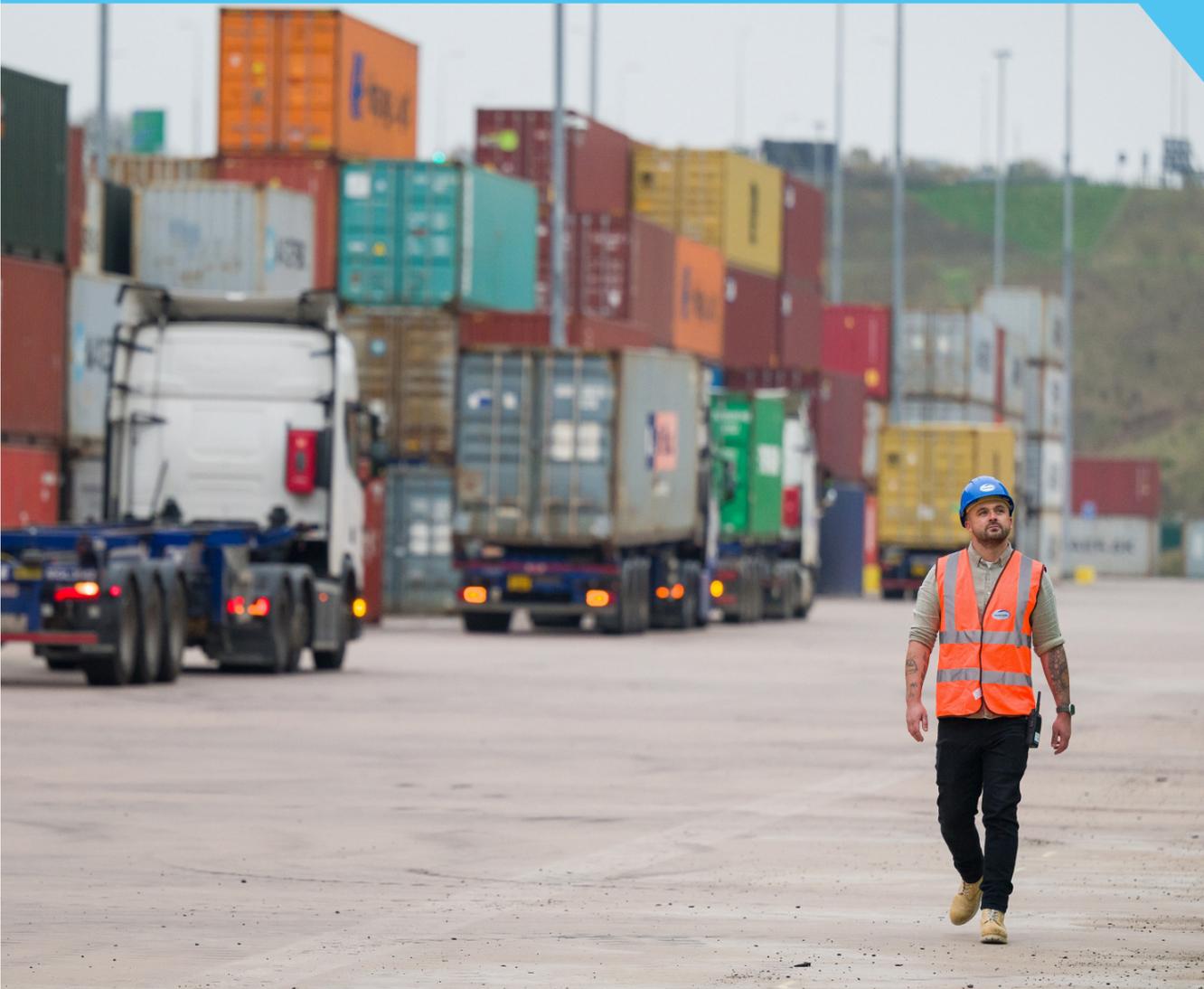
- **Housebuilding:** Approximately 11,000 homes in the surrounding area depend on demonstrating adequate transport capacity; without it, planned building will stall.
- **Inclusive growth:** The benefits of growth will not be felt by the communities who most need these opportunities unless we tackle accessibility and connectivity barriers. Without improved transport links – including public transport and active travel – people furthest from the labour market will remain disconnected from the high-quality jobs being created.
- **Regional competitiveness:** Increasing congestion threatens the East Midlands strategic advantage, undermining its attractiveness to international investors and reducing confidence in the region's long-term growth prospects.
- **Environmental:** Continued congestion will drive higher emissions, with stop-start conditions producing significantly greater carbon and air quality impacts than free-flowing traffic.

The window for effective intervention is rapidly closing. Businesses need certainty that the necessary transport infrastructure will be in place before development. With the tax incentive window closing in September 2031, traditional delivery timescales will come too late. Without decisive action now, the opportunity to unlock the region's full economic potential – and the national benefits it delivers – will be lost.

# THE SOLUTION

**Junction 24 is no longer just a pressure point in the network – it is the single greatest brake on the East Midlands’ ability to grow. Congestion at the junction is already constraining development, stalling investment decisions, and limiting the Freeport’s ability to bring forward jobs and new commercial space.**

**If left unresolved, the area risks choking on its own economic potential: every new business, every freight movement and every commuter journey adds strain to a network that is already operating beyond capacity.**



That is why addressing the challenge requires more than a traditional road upgrade.

Only an integrated, multimodal approach, combining targeted highway improvements with better public transport, active travel links and demand-management measures, can unlock the full potential of the Freeport and the wider region. Without it, increased car dependency will simply recreate the same constraints, undermining long-term competitiveness and growth.

Our proposed package comprises two main elements:

## PACKAGE ONE: INTEGRATED MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT

Package One addresses accessibility and sustainability through:

### Public transport enhancements:

- Improvements to East Midlands Parkway station, including better integration with the Ratcliffe-on-Soar site.
- Increased frequency on the Skylink bus service, with a new interchange at Ratcliffe-on-Soar.
- Enhanced connections between the Freeport sites and Derby, Nottingham and Leicester.

### Active travel infrastructure:

- Segregated cycle routes connecting residential areas to Freeport sites.
- Safe walking and cycling access within and between sites.
- Integration with the National Cycle Network.

### Demand management:

- Workplace travel plans coordinated across major employers.
- Shift pattern optimisation to spread peak demand.
- Shared mobility services and hubs at each site.

### A453 corridor improvements:

- Targeted capacity and safety improvements to support traffic

Package one requires investment of approximately £20-30 million and can be delivered relatively quickly, providing immediate benefits while longer-term highway improvements are progressed. It will also enable early modal shift and support rail freight growth across all three Freeport sites – strengthening the role of Maritime at EMAGIC, progressing the rail spur at EMIP and enhancing connectivity at Ratcliffe-on-Soar – reducing HGV movements and improving network resilience.

## PACKAGE TWO: STRATEGIC HIGHWAY CAPACITY

Package Two delivers the strategic highway capacity improvements required at Junction 24 to satisfy the planning conditions currently constraining development and enable full site delivery.

Significant work has been undertaken, including modelling, funding strategies, technical feasibility work and coordination across sectors. The preferred scheme is being developed through National Highways’ Project Control Framework (PCF), with Stage 0a due to complete in April 2026. This establishes the strategic case, identifies possible options, and determines whether the scheme should proceed.

Construction cost estimates are subject to ongoing assessment, with formal cost appraisal expected in spring 2026. Estimated at up to £350 million depending on the preferred

option, costs will be refined as the scheme progresses. East Midlands Freeport has adopted the PCF as the framework for developing this scheme, recognising it as the standard for major road scheme development in England.

Following Stage 0a, the scheme would progress through:

- **Stage 0b:** Strategic Outline Business Case, environmental constraints analysis and initial cost estimates.
- **Stages 1-3:** Options identification, selection and preliminary design, culminating in an Outline Business Case and planning application.
- **Stages 4-6:** Statutory processes, detailed design and construction preparation.
- **Stage 7:** Construction and commissioning.

The full PCF process typically takes five to ten years. Given the Freeport tax incentive window

closes in September 2031 and anchor investor demand for sites from 2028, acceleration is essential. We are asking Government to provide a clear mandate for National Highways to prioritise the scheme with an accelerated delivery timetable that enables development within the Freeport tax incentive window.

**The target outcome is to:** Increase junction capacity from approximately 80,000 to over 110,000 vehicles per day

- Reduce peak-time delays to less than 30 seconds.
- Provide capacity headroom for committed development and Freeport growth.
- Satisfy the transport capacity evidence requirements enabling planning conditions at Ratcliffe-on-Soar and East Midlands Gateway Phase 2 to be discharged, unlocking full site delivery.

## DELIVERY APPROACH

To date we've seen that effective delivery requires coordination across multiple stakeholders, including central government departments and agencies, local and combined authorities, infrastructure operators, landowners and the private sector, with clear governance and accountability arrangements to align funding, phasing and delivery responsibilities:

- East Midlands Combined County Authority integrates the scheme with regional transport strategy and contributes public transport investment, with the Mayor leading and convening partners including across Government.
- East Midlands Freeport coordinates the overall programme, develops the funding strategy (including via planning tools), co-funds, manages private sector engagement and oversees Package One delivery.
- National Highways leads technical development of the junction scheme through the Project Control Framework.
- Leicestershire County Council provides technical support and transport modelling expertise, as the lead local highways authority.
- Private sector developers contribute through S106/S278 (or separate contractual mechanisms) agreements proportionate to development traffic impact.
- Department for Transport provides clear Government mandate and route into Spending Review 2027 decision-making.

A formal governance structure has been established, with quarterly steering groups and monthly technical coordination, ensuring alignment across all parties.



**ONLY AN INTEGRATED, MULTIMODAL APPROACH CAN UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE FREEPORT AND THE WIDER REGION.**



# THE FUNDING FRAMEWORK

Delivering Junction 24 upgrades requires a blended public-private funding model that reflects the shared benefits of the scheme to national infrastructure, regional growth and private development interests.

**Development phase (approximately £12.5m):** East Midlands Freeport has committed seed capital to progress the scheme through detailed design, modelling and business case development – and this work is already well underway. This investment enables the project to proceed through planning to construction-ready status, de-risking the delivery programme and demonstrating commitment to partners and Government.

**Construction phase (up to £350m):** The construction funding model combines multiple sources:

- **Private sector contributions:** Developer S106/S278 contributions proportionate to traffic impact from individual sites – expected to secure around £80m.
- **East Midlands Freeport:** Up to £50 million from retained business rates, subject to business case approval and viable financing arrangements.

- **East Midlands Combined County Authority:** Exploration of contributions via the devolved transport settlement.
- **Government:** Balance of funding through Road Investment Strategy or alternative mechanisms e.g. Homes England, National Wealth Fund, Office for Investment.

## RETAINED BUSINESS RATES

The Freeport's contribution is enabled by the retained business rates mechanism established under Freeport policy. Development at Freeport tax sites generates business rates that are retained locally for 25 years rather than being remitted to central government. These retained rates can be used to fund infrastructure that enables further development.

East Midlands Freeport's first tax site (East Midlands Gateway Phase One) is now generating a secure income stream with a net present value of approximately £115 million over the retention period.

This provides a basis for borrowing against future income to fund upfront infrastructure investment. East Midlands Freeport has made a "first mover" commitment of up to £50m.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

The economic case for investment is strong. Unlocking the Freeport sites will generate:

- 28,000 jobs and £9 billion GVA over 25 years.
- Approximately £1 billion in retained business rates for reinvestment in regional infrastructure.
- Construction employment and supply chain benefits.
- Increased tax revenues from employment and economic activity.

Against this, the infrastructure investment of up to £350 million (including all packages) represents a benefit-cost ratio that compares favourably with other major transport investments and significantly exceeds typical thresholds for scheme approval.

PHASE	ESTIMATED FUNDING	PURPOSE	FUNDING SOURCES / MECHANISM
Development Phase	~£12.5m	Seed capital committed by East Midlands Freeport to progress the scheme through detailed design and business case development. Enables the project to reach construction-ready status, de-risks delivery, and demonstrates commitment to partners and Government.	East Midlands Freeport seed capital
Construction Phase	Up to £350m	Delivery of full construction programme through blended funding model.	<p><b>Private Sector Contributions:</b> Developer S106/S278 contributions proportionate to traffic impact from individual sites</p> <p><b>East Midlands Freeport:</b> Up to £50 million from retained business rates (subject to business case approval and viable financing arrangements)</p> <p><b>East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA):</b> Exploration of contributions via the devolved transport settlement</p> <p><b>Government:</b> Balance of funding via Road Investment Strategy (RIS) or alternative mechanism</p>

# ECONOMIC IMPACT → ASSESSING WHAT'S AT STAKE

The economic consequences of inaction at M1 Junction 24 are substantial and quantifiable.



## DIRECT FREEPORT IMPACTS:



**28,000 JOBS**  
across the three tax sites



**9 BILLION**  
gross value added over 25 years



**4.2 MILLION**  
square metres of  
commercial floorspace



**£1 BILLION**  
retained business rates  
for regional reinvestment

## HOUSING DELIVERY:

Approximately  
**11,000 HOMES**  
unlocked in the  
surrounding area

**30,000** new  
homes planned  
through the Trent  
Arc corridor

Up to **3,500**  
affordable  
housing units

## NATIONAL IMPACT:

Junction capacity  
increased to over  
**110,000 VEHICLES**  
per day

Public transport  
accessibility increased  
from 1.3 million to **3.5  
MILLION PEOPLE**  
within 60 minutes

**MODAL SHARE  
SHIFTED** from 90%  
car to 65% car, 25%  
public transport,  
10% active travel

## RAIL FREIGHT:

Support for  
**NATIONAL FREIGHT  
DECARBONISATION**  
objectives

**FULL  
UTILISATION**  
of Strategic Rail  
Freight Interchange  
capacity

**REDUCTION IN  
HGV MOVEMENTS**  
on the strategic  
road network

# SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

**The case for M1 Junction 24 upgrades extends beyond economic growth.**

**Investment will deliver significant social and environmental benefits that support wider Government objectives.**



## ADDRESSING TRANSPORT RELATED SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Transport-related social exclusion is a significant issue in the East Midlands. The region has concentrations of deprivation in urban centres, where car ownership is lowest and reliance on public transport is highest. Derby and Nottingham are identified as social mobility cold spots', ranking in the bottom 10% of all districts nationally.

**Currently, access to Freeport employment opportunities is highly unequal:**

- Areas with good car access can reach all three sites within reasonable commute times.
- Areas dependent on public transport have severely limited access.
- The disparity reinforces existing patterns of disadvantage.

**The integrated transport package addresses this directly:**

- Enhanced public transport services will extend access to employment opportunities.
- Improved bus frequencies and new rail connections will reduce journey times for non-car users.
- Active travel infrastructure will provide low-cost commuting options for local residents.

## ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Transport accounts for 26% of UK carbon emissions, with cars responsible for 59% of transport emissions in the Midlands.

**The East Midlands faces particular challenges:**

- Higher-than-average car dependency for commuting.
- Limited public transport alternatives, particularly for employment sites.
- Air quality issues resulting in approximately 400 attributable deaths annually.

**The integrated approach to Junction 24 supports environmental objectives through:**

- **Modal shift:** The target modal share of 25% public transport and 10% active travel (versus 90% car in a do-nothing scenario) will substantially reduce per-capita transport emissions.
- **Reduced congestion:** Free-flowing traffic produces lower emissions than stop-start conditions; addressing junction capacity reduces idling and improves fuel efficiency.
- **Rail freight:** Enabling full utilisation of strategic rail freight interchange capacity at our three Freeport sites supports modal shift from road to rail for freight movements.
- **Electric vehicle readiness:** The package includes provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure at employment sites and along key corridors.

## A HUB FOR FREIGHT DECARBONISATION

Junction 24 is uniquely positioned to support national freight decarbonisation objectives. By enabling the integration of enhanced rail freight infrastructure with improved road capacity and smoother traffic flow, the programme provides a credible pathway for shifting significant freight tonnage from road to rail. This reduces carbon emissions, lowers operating costs for logistics operators, and supports the Government's wider freight decarbonisation strategy. The combination of enhanced rail access at EMIP, infrastructure upgrades at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, and reduced congestion at Junction 24 positions the Freeport as a national exemplar in zero-carbon freight movement.

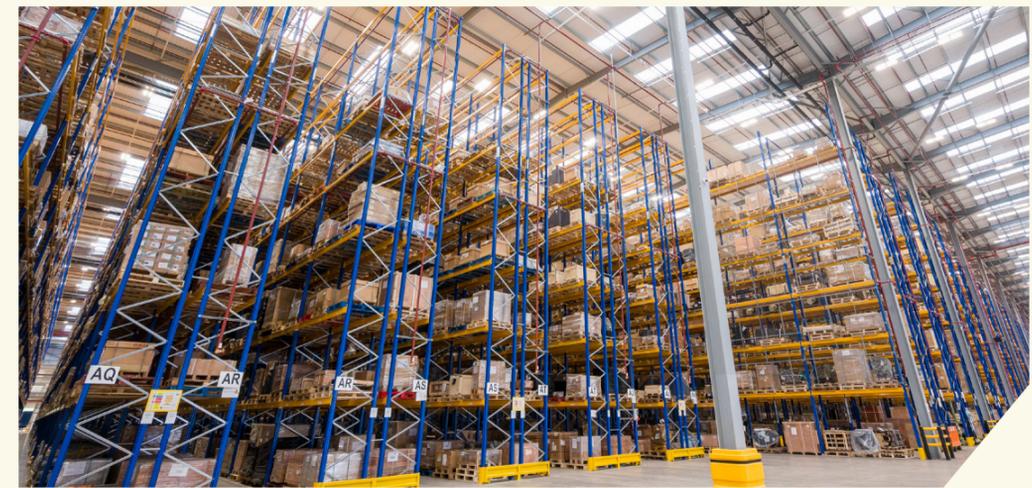
## ROAD SAFETY

Junction 24 has a poor safety record, with five serious accidents between 2020 and 2023 resulting in nine casualties. Capacity improvements will:

- Reduce conflict points and stop-start conditions that contribute to collisions.
- Improve traffic flow and reduce driver stress.
- Enable safer conditions for all road users including HGVs.

# HOW GOVERNMENT CAN HELP

Delivering Junction 24 within the Freeport tax window requires a strategic decision at Spending Review 2027 (SR27). Without early endorsement and funding certainty, the scheme will default to standard Road Investment Strategy timelines and miss investor operational targets for 2028.



## 1. FORMAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE MULTIMODAL APPROACH

We are asking Government to formally endorse the integrated solution for Junction 24, combining:

- Sustainable transport and demand management (Package One), and
- Strategic highway capacity improvements (Package Two).

This endorsement should include designation of Junction 24 as a national priority within Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3).

### Why this matters:

- It provides clarity and certainty to investors, developers and local authorities.
- It enables National Highways to proceed on a clear strategic basis.
- It signals that Government recognises Junction 24 as nationally significant infrastructure, not a purely regional issue.

It provides the strategic certainty needed to satisfy the planning conditions that currently restrict development at Ratcliffe-on-Soar and to support the conclusion of the East Midlands Gateway Phase 2 DCO process, unlocking development across the Freeport corridor.

## 2. A CLEAR MINISTERIAL MANDATE TO ACCELERATE DELIVERY

We are asking for a clear ministerial direction to National Highways and relevant agencies to prioritise Junction 24 and work to accelerated timescales.

Standard delivery trajectories would see completion in the mid-2030s – too late to unlock the Freeport’s full economic potential.

### The mandate should:

- Prioritise Junction 24 within RIS4 development and funding pipelines.
- Accelerate completion of Stage 0a and immediate progression to Stage 0b (Strategic Outline Business Case).
- Direct National Highways to continue working with East Midlands Freeport, EMCCA and private sector partners to identify and implement acceleration opportunities, building on the substantial technical and governance work already undertaken through PCF Stage 0a.
- Support a coordinated cross-government approach involving Department for Transport, His Majesty’s Treasury, Department for Business and Trade, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and relevant delivery bodies.

Similarly delivery agencies like Homes England, the National Wealth Fund and other agencies would ensure the housing, regeneration and infrastructure unlocked by Junction 24 is treated as a coherent national growth programme.

This is about pace and alignment – not new policy.

## 3. BACKING AN INNOVATIVE BLENDED FUNDING MODEL

We are asking Government to back, in principle, a blended public-private funding framework that reduces the call on the Exchequer and enables genuine co-investment.

### The region is already stepping up:

- East Midlands Freeport has committed up to £50 million from retained business rates, on top of the £12.5 million development funding.
- EMCCA has prioritised Junction 24 in the Mayor’s Transport Plan and is aligning regional funding.
- Private sector developers will contribute proportionately through planning obligations or separate contractual mechanisms.

**Government's role in this model would be to:**

- Provide gap funding where blended sources do not fully cover scheme costs.
- Enable financing flexibility, including prudential borrowing against future retained business rates (e.g. via National Wealth Fund).
- Share risk proportionately, recognising the national supply chain and productivity benefits of the scheme.
- Provide a modest enabling allocation to progress design and business case work at pace.

Approval in principle of this framework would provide the certainty required to move from concept to delivery.

**WHAT THIS REPRESENTS**

This is not a request for handouts.

**It is a request for:**

- Recognition that Junction 24 is a nationally significant growth bottleneck.
- Backing for a practical, deliverable funding model.

- Political endorsement that gives investors confidence to commit within the Freeport window.

With Government endorsement, the East Midlands can co-invest and deliver.

Without it, nationally significant growth – clean energy, advanced manufacturing, housing and logistics – risks being delayed beyond viability.

**OUR COMMITMENT**

**East Midlands Freeport commits to:**

- Deploy up to £50 million from retained business rates toward Junction 24, subject to business case approval and viable financing route.
- Provide seed capital funding (£12.5 million approved in principle) to progress scheme development through to detailed business case.
- Coordinate the overall programme across public and private sector partners.
- Chair the Junction 24 governance arrangements and maintain momentum through delivery.

- Work with developers to secure proportionate contributions through planning obligations.

**THE VIEW FROM OUR PARTNERS**

Haroon Akram, Director of Strategy Investment & Business Development, Harworth said "Isley Woodhouse is a new residential settlement to the south of East Midlands Airport, which will deliver 4,250 much needed single-family homes to accommodate the recent and future growth of employment at the East Midlands Growth Point. Public investment and political support to prioritise capacity upgrades to the strategic road network is a critical path to the enablement of housing delivery within this side of Parliament and will crowd in further private sector investment to deliver a high-quality, sustainable new settlement."



**East Midlands Combined County Authority commits to:**

- Integrate Junction 24 as a priority intervention in the Mayor's Transport Plan.
- Align regional transport funding (CRSTS, BSIP, Active Travel) with Package One delivery.
- Contribute to construction funding through future capital programmes.
- Lead on public transport and active travel elements of the integrated package.

**Private sector developers commit to:**

- Invest in wider enabling works e.g. around site remediation .
- Progress planning applications that enable site development.
- Contribute to infrastructure costs proportionate to traffic impact.
- Coordinate delivery programmes with the Junction 24 timeline.
- Support modal shift through workplace travel planning and sustainable design.

These commitments represent a substantial mobilisation of regional resources and capability behind the Junction 24 programme. They reflect confidence in the economic case for investment and determination to deliver the Freeport's potential. Government support would unlock this commitment and enable delivery to proceed.

**NO TIME FOR DELAY**

The alternative to action is not simply delay. It is a direct threat to the Government's own growth mission. Without a funded and accelerated solution for Junction 24, the East Midlands Freeport cannot deliver the jobs, investment and fiscal returns it was designed to generate. Every month without commitment increases risk, erodes confidence and pushes nationally significant opportunities out of reach.

**Each month without a solution means:**

- Developers cannot commit to Freeport sites, slowing delivery of nationally important industrial and clean-energy projects.
- Foreign investors look elsewhere, viewing the region, and by extension the UK, as unable to provide the basic infrastructure required for growth.
- The tax incentive window closes in, leaving businesses unable to operationalise investments on time, diminishing the value of the Freeport programme.
- Retained business rates are not generated, removing a key tool for locally funded infrastructure and increasing pressure on central budgets.
- Competitiveness deteriorates as congestion worsens, weakening productivity and undermining the UK's pitch as a reliable, investable location for advanced manufacturing and logistics.

- Delivery of jobs, homes and commercial space stalls, limiting the regions and the country's ability to meet economic and housing targets.

The risks are clear: without urgent action, the region becomes less competitive, less investable and less capable of delivering the growth the Freeport model is intended to unlock. The UK cannot afford to lose high-value investment - particularly not to international competitors actively courting the same sectors.

The window for intervention is finite. Decisions taken in 2026 will determine whether Junction 24 can be delivered in time to support Freeport operations within the tax incentive period. Delay beyond this point increases costs, reduces investor certainty and risks forfeiting outcomes that Ministers have already backed through national policy.

The East Midlands has the sites, the sectors and the skilled workforce to deliver growth at national scale. But none of this can be realised without the infrastructure that enables it.

Unlock Junction 24, and the region delivers jobs, homes, investment and new fiscal returns. Delay, and the opportunity, and the foreign investment attached to it, moves elsewhere. This is a moment for clear commitment and joint leadership. The time to act is now.



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