

# Statement of National Importance

Sevington Inland Border Facility, Ashford

June 2025

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## Introduction

This Statement of National Importance has been prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle ('JLL'), on behalf of the Department for Transport ('DfT'), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ('Defra') and His Majesty's Revenues and Customs ('HMRC') (collectively 'the Applicant'), in support of a full planning application for Crown Development for the continuing operation of Sevington Inland Border Facility ('IBF'), Mersham, Sevington, Ashford, TN25 6GE ('the Site').

The application for Crown Development has been submitted pursuant to section 293D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of article 4(1)(c)(iii) of the Town and Country Planning (Crown Development Applications) (Procedure and Written Representations) Order 2025.

Full planning permission is sought for the following description of development:

*'Retention of the existing buildings, Goods Vehicle parking spaces, entry lanes, refrigerated semi-trailers, staff car parking spaces, access, site infrastructure, utilities, hardstanding, landscaping and ancillary facilities and associated works; and ongoing use of the site for an Inland Border Facility and Border Control Post, operating 24 hours per day, seven days per week.'*

The Applicant has voluntarily entered into an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') to robustly assess whether the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and an Environmental Statement ('ES') with technical appendices supports the planning application.

The purpose of this Statement is to set out the reasons for which the Applicant (the appropriate authority) considers that the development to which the application relates is of national importance. This Statement has been prepared following the guidance set out in the Written Ministerial Statement ('WMS') made by Matthew Pennycook as Minister of State for Housing and Planning on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The WMS sets out that 'The Secretary of State will in general only consider a development to be of national importance if, in her opinion, the development would:

- involve the interests of national security or of foreign Governments;
- contribute towards the provision of national public services or infrastructure, such as new prisons, defence, or border infrastructure;
- support a response to international, national, or regional civil emergencies; or

- otherwise have significant economic, social, or environmental effects and strong public interest at a regional or national level.’

### **Provision of national infrastructure – border infrastructure – for border security in the national interest**

The development is for the ongoing operation of critical national infrastructure, specifically border infrastructure, which has been required for border security in the national interest since the UK’s exit from the European Union (‘EU’). The WMS expressly points to border infrastructure as being of national importance.

The IBF has been of national importance since inception, and to this effect was originally consented through The Town and Country Planning (Border Facilities and Infrastructure) (EU Exit) (England) Special Development Order 2020 (‘SDO’). There have been a number of iterations of the development on the Site which reflect the national importance of the development, consented under a SDO, and this application seeks a continuation of this development of national importance. The legal prerequisite of a SDO is national importance, and this high bar had already been satisfied; for the purposes of the planning application nothing has materially changed that position. Notwithstanding the temporary nature of the original planning permission granted through the SDO, there remains a critical requirement for the continuing operation of the IBF, for essential trade across the Short Straits.

The Site is strategically positioned on the Strategic Road Network, with excellent connectivity to the Short Straits portals, fulfilling the operational criteria for the Sevington IBF. The Site was specifically selected for this reason, and the location remains of high importance. There are no other alternative sites that have been identified. As such, the Site, as well as the use, are of national importance.

Securing the continuation of the existing operations on the Site is of high strategic importance and would serve the critical purpose of border security in the national interest. The Site remains strategically vital to facilitate border security checks, including documentary and physical checks taking place on goods entering and exiting the UK, alongside sanitary and phytosanitary (‘SPS’) checks at the BCP, to provide protection in respect to the UK’s biosecurity and public health. The majority of checks are customs and transit, and these remain unaffected by the EU reset.

The Sevington IBF became a necessity following the UK becoming a contracting party to the Common Transit Convention (‘CTC’) following its exit from the EU. Under the terms of the CTC and Transports Internationaux Routiers Convention (‘TIR’), physical border controls for goods moving between the customs territories of Great Britain and the EU under transit became a requirement from the end of the EU Exit transition period. This involves documentary and a proportion of physical inspections on goods moving to and from the EU to maintain compliance.

The facility acts as a government office of departure (for outbound journeys) and destination (for inbound journeys), where hauliers can start and end journeys when moving goods in and out of the UK, under the CTC or TIR. The IBF enables HM Government (‘HMG’) to undertake the required level of inspections on import and export of freight from the UK to / from all third countries using any mode of transport to ensure excise, customs and Value Added Tax (‘VAT’) compliance (carried out by Border Force and Defra), the starting and ending of transit movements and stamping and licencing checks

(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ('CITES') and carnets).

The Borders Target Operating Model ('BTOM') introduced a risk-based approach from April 2024, which will see annual BCP physical checks of approximately 8,700 for Products of Animal Origin ('POAO') and 37,800 for Plant and Plant Products ('P&PP') at the Short Straits. The BTOM also committed the UK to start inspections on live animal imports at BCPs for goods arriving from the EU, in line with the regime already in place for the Rest of World ('RoW') imports. Maintaining the biosecurity of the UK, at the point where the majority of the UK's food and live animals enters from the EU, is imperative.

Accordingly, securing the continuation of the existing operations on the Site is of high strategic importance and will continue to serve the critical purpose of border security in the national interest.

## **Conclusion**

This Statement has been prepared by JLL on behalf of DfT, Defra and HMRC (collectively 'the Applicant'), to demonstrate the national importance of the proposals for the ongoing operation of Sevington IBF.

The development has been shown to remain of national importance, in accordance with the criteria set out within the WMS, for the purpose of Crown Development Applications.

The proposals are for the ongoing operation of national infrastructure, specifically border infrastructure, which is required for border security in the national interest. Due to the IBF's national importance and the essential need for passage of goods through the Short Straits portals, it is sought to secure operations beyond the expiry of the SDO.

Accordingly, it is considered that the application for Crown Development should be accepted on the basis of the demonstrable national importance of the proposals.