
Report of meeting from external body

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Agenda item 12

LTW 291

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Heathrow Airport Runway 3 – Public Transport Access

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide background information on public transport access plans for Runway 3 at Heathrow Airport.

2 Information

- 2.1. Following a public consultation early in 2008, the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that plans for a third runway and a new terminal at Heathrow airport should go ahead. Responsibility for promoting the scheme and obtaining all necessary planning consents will rest with British Airports Authority (BAA), the owners of the airport.
- 2.1.1. In its response to the DfT's 2008 consultation, London TravelWatch (in continuation of its long-standing policy on airport issues) concentrated on the question of public transport access to the airport.

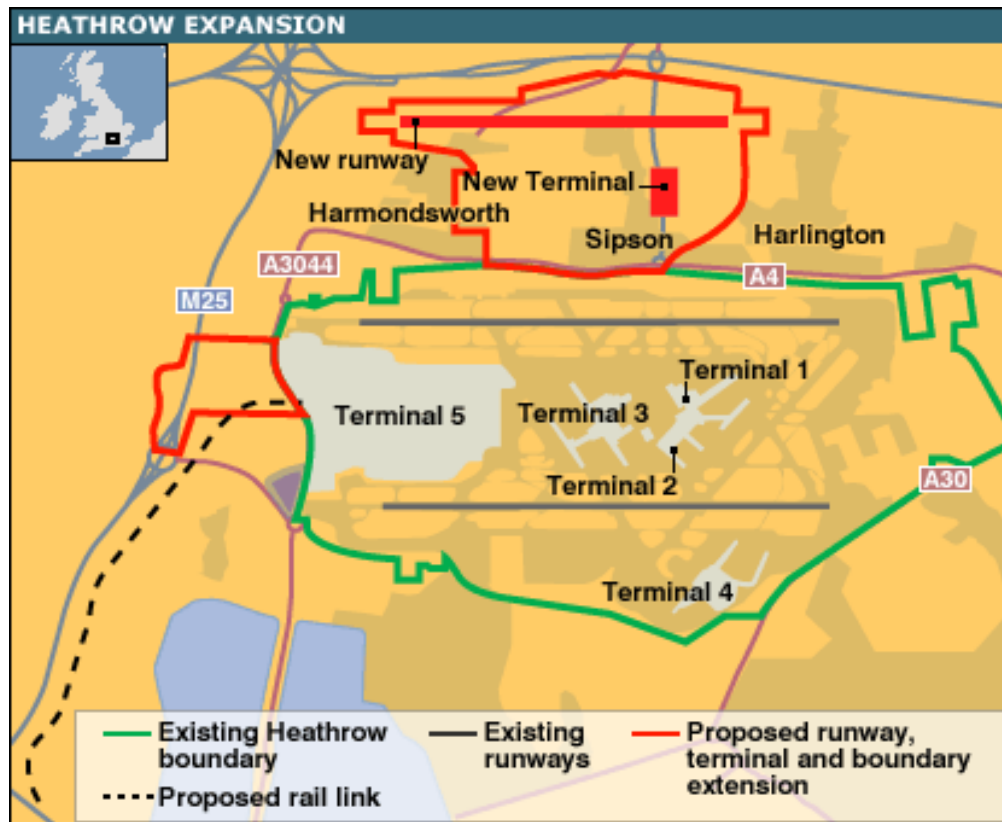
In addition, London TravelWatch asked that, as an alternative to expanding Heathrow, DfT should consider constructing new high speed railways to serve Heathrow, major British cities, and Europe via High Speed 1 (the new line used by Eurostar between St. Pancras and the channel tunnel). This would enable rail to replace air as the main mode for shorter distance flights, including for "interlining" connections at Heathrow with long-haul flights. Such a high speed rail network would yield many other potential benefits within Britain, including relief of congestion on existing commuter and inter-city lines in the London area.

This report focuses on these two issues, but first we must understand the location of the new facilities in relation to the existing airport.

- 2.2. The location of the new runway and terminal

All the existing facilities at Heathrow are located south of the A4 road. The new runway and terminal will be north of the A4. This new site is located over the railway tunnel used by Heathrow Express - which will also be used by Crossrail - as this approaches the airport from the north. However it is remote from both the Piccadilly line (which approaches the airport from the south-east along the A30), and from the proposed

Airtrack (shown as “proposed rail link” on the map) which would approach from the south-west and terminate at Terminal 5.



Therefore, it will be easy to build a new station to enable Crossrail to serve the new terminal, but much more difficult and expensive to provide direct links from the Piccadilly line and Airtrack.

2.3. Public Transport Access

2.3.1. DfT's position is summarised in the following extract from the Secretary of State's statement to parliament.

“Major improvements in rail access have already been announced, including increases in capacity on the Piccadilly line and the introduction of Crossrail services from 2017. This will provide a maximum capacity of 6,000 passengers per hour which will be able to accommodate the estimated demand for rail access to a three-runway airport.

The Government also welcomes the lead being taken by BAA to promote the Airtrack project providing direct rail access to the airport at Terminal 5 from the south and west. The Department will work with BAA and Network Rail to consider this and other schemes to improve connections from Heathrow to places like Waterloo and Guildford, Reading and other stations on the Great Western Mainline.”

The statement made no reference to bus services, nor any other public transport mode.

A summary of the DfT position is that they regard Crossrail (not yet fully funded, despite many public statements from which the lay reader would infer that it is) and London Underground's Piccadilly line upgrade scheme (also with its funding open to some doubt) as sufficient to cope with a third runway. Airtrack would be a nice bonus. For none of these schemes, nor for any other mode, does the government promise any additional money to cope with the extra traffic for the third runway.

Supporting papers issued by DfT make it clear that they expect BAA to develop detailed public transport access plans. The adequacy of these will be one of the many matters to be considered at the public planning enquiry into the new runway proposals.

If, as we would expect to be the case, the planning enquiry finds that completion of Crossrail, the Piccadilly line upgrade and Airtrack are all necessary adjuncts of airport expansion, then it would be up to BAA to secure any funding which may be needed to ensure their completion and to enable their passengers to access the new terminal.

Similarly, BAA would have to satisfy the planning enquiry regarding satisfactory provision for bus, coach, taxi, cycle and pedestrian access - both for air passengers and for airport staff.

- 2.3.2. In its response to DfT's 2008 consultation London TravelWatch raised a specific concern about the Piccadilly line. This was that - even after upgrading - whilst the Heathrow branch of the line might have sufficient capacity to carry additional passengers, the data supplied did not provide assurance that the same would be true in the central area where at present the trains are exceptionally crowded for much of the day. The papers supporting the government's statement do not address this issue, so it is one which London TravelWatch must continue to pursue.

In principle the same concern applies to capacity in the central area of Crossrail, although problems here are much less likely. Nevertheless this is a matter to which we must pay attention.

2.4. High Speed Rail

- 2.4.1. The Secretary of State's statement to parliament covered other transport infrastructure issues as well as Heathrow expansion. These included plans to spend up to £6 billion on opening up motorway hard shoulders as additional lanes in peak periods, and a supportive statement regarding a programme of main line railway electrification.

Most importantly the government has since embraced the concept of high speed rail for Britain. This is not as an alternative to Heathrow expansion, as London TravelWatch and many others had suggested, but as a complementary facility. It has created a new company - High Speed 2 - to consider the case for high speed rail services from London to Scotland. As a first stage High Speed 2 is remitted to develop a proposal for an entirely new line between London and the west midlands.

The company is expected to submit a feasibility report by the end of 2009, with specific route options and financing proposals. In regard to routes, the Secretary of State says that he "... sees a strong case for this new line approaching London via a new *Heathrow*

International hub station on the Great Western main line, to provide a direct four way interchange between the airport, the new north-south line, existing Great Western rail services and Crossrail into the heart of London.”

- 2.4.2. London TravelWatch has already issued a website statement, saying *inter alia* “ ... we will need to look closely at the proposed routes of any high speed rail links as they are developed, and we await these with interest. However, we would expect the link between London and a Heathrow hub to be built entirely independently from any existing route to avoid using existing lines that are already crowded. We would also want to ensure that users of local lines do not lose vital services at the expense of long-distance, high speed lines.”

This stance was chosen in order to emphasize the importance of the Secretary of State’s reference to “...an entirely new line ...” i.e. not one which uses existing tracks to get into a London terminus.

2.5. Conclusion

- 2.5.1. The government has made a policy decision that Heathrow airport should be expanded by building a third runway and associated passenger terminal. This decision gives BAA the go-ahead to submit detailed proposals for planning permission. As the project has many opponents - both on the principle of airport expansion and on where it should be permitted - and does not have cross-party political support - it is by no means certain that it will go ahead.

However London TravelWatch must work on the assumption that it will go ahead, and must therefore seek to ensure that plans for public transport access to an expanded airport are satisfactory for all airport users and do not have adverse consequences for other users in and around London.

The government has also signalled a strong interest in high speed rail by setting up the High Speed 2 company. London TravelWatch will have an important role to play in their work.

3 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 3.1 Not applicable – report is for information only.

4 Financial implications

- 4.1 Not applicable – report is for information only

5 Legal powers

- 5.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with

respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

6 Recommendation

6.1. That the board should :

- give initial consideration to BAA's public transport access proposals, and request BAA to commit to full consultation with London TravelWatch as these are developed in detail;
- welcome the government's decision to establish the High Speed 2 company to develop proposals for high speed rail lines in Britain.

6.2. That the secretariat should :

- engage with BAA as necessary, and arrange for them to provide periodic update presentations to London TravelWatch meetings;
- engage with Transport for London to check that they agree with BAA's estimates of the usage of Crossrail and the Piccadilly line, and that they are satisfied that the additional traffic generated by airport expansion can be satisfactorily accommodated throughout the journey from and to central London;
- check with Transport for London that they are satisfied with the design and capacity of all public transport facilities for the expanded airport and the capital and revenue funding arrangements;
- engage with High Speed 2 in their task of developing proposals for high speed rail lines. The secretariat should pay particular attention to such proposals as they affect Heathrow airport and rail capacity for carrying commuters and other passengers on any routes in and around London;
- engage with other groups (such as 2M - a consortium of 21 local authorities which has tabled alternative rail access proposals), as appropriate.