

Heathrow Expansion Consultation

Response from Transport for the South East

Dear Sirs

Response from Transport for the South East to Heathrow Expansion Consultation

1.1 Transport for the South East is an emerging sub-national transport bodyⁱ, and although Heathrow Airport is currently outside its area, the north-west runway proposal would extend into our area, and the airport has a significant impact on the transport system across the whole of the south-east.

1.2 The success of the economy in the south-east is strengthened by its links to Heathrow airport. This area is one of the highest performing economies in the UK, and one of the key factors that underpin this success is proximity to Heathrow Airport. Heathrow Airport has a major economic advantage because it:

- is a source of employment;
- supports inward investment; and
- helps attract foreign owned companies.

1.3 The international gateways in the Transport for the South East area are a focus for employment and commerce. Several large business parks have developed near Heathrow Airport (along the A4/M4 Corridor); the businesses located here see a benefit in being located close to a high-quality international hub.

1.4 The M4/A4/Great Western Main Line Corridor has benefitted from significant investment in recent years (Crossrail, Great Western Main Line electrification, new rolling stock and enhancements to Reading station). However, with Heathrow set to expand, this already very busy corridor is expected to come under increasing pressure. There is a risk that without improvement it could hold back the economic benefits arising from improved global connectivity delivered by expansion at Heathrow

1.5 Expansion of Heathrow has the support of business because of the better connections it will bring to emerging markets, support exporters and help UK businesses to grow. However, this support is not unconditional.

1.6 Like others, TfSE supports the need for an appropriate package of mitigation measures addressing surface access, air quality and noise impacts on the airport's neighbours.

1.7 Additional growth at Heathrow presents significant transport and environmental risks to the South East. It is critically important that viable public transport alternatives are put in place to enable access to and from Heathrow Airport by means other than the car. This will need to be accompanied by demand management policies.

1.8 There have been a number of studies that set out the potential implications of airport expansion. The conclusion we have reached is that on-, near- and off-airport infrastructure needs to be well planned and co-ordinated in order to reap the maximum benefits for the local economy, and to minimise the negative impact on local communities. We have concluded that surface access to airports is the most pressing problem, both now and following any expansion.

1.9 We highlighted in our response to Consultation One our disappointment about the lack of a coherent view from HAL on how Heathrow sits within the wider (national and regional) transport network. This is important because the case for expansion is founded on the idea that it will secure significant economic benefits. If those are to be realised a much more coherent strategy is needed and HAL should be leading the development of this.

1.10 The proposed Surface Access Strategy lacks ambition. It is too inward looking and also needs to be extended to help facilitate sustainable transport across the wider region, not just to and from the airport. This is particularly important given that a stated aim of the airport's expansion is to help facilitate economic development, much of which will be situated in the vicinity of the airport. The impacts of the airport's expansion are far greater than just travel to and from the airport itself, yet the strategy has little to say about this.

1.11 It is disappointing that the current strategy provides very little new transport infrastructure outside the Heathrow campus. TfSE would like to see much greater ambition and commitment for the provision of an extensive active travel network, bus improvements (including BRT), highway improvements and mitigations, and public transport investment.

1.12 TfSE does not object in principle to the proposed vehicle access charge, however we consider it should be payable by all users of the airport, not just passengers.

1.13 We would like to understand the amount of revenue that could be raised from both the Ultra-Low Emission Zone and vehicle access charge. It appears that this income will be managed in a similar manner to the airports existing revenue streams, which is unacceptable. We wish to see a firm and unequivocal commitment that this income will be reinvested into measures to support access to the airport, by means of a hypothecated fund to support local and strategic transport infrastructure improvements.

1.14 The vehicle access charge proposal is very reliant on charging to meet the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) requirements. However, to achieve this it is essential that there are good alternative transport options in place. For people living in parts of the TfSE area, such as Hampshire and Surrey there is no rail link to Heathrow, and public transport links to the airport are relatively sparse. This results in very high percentage of people using cars to reach the airport. If no new rail links are put in place, but a vehicle access charge is levied in the manner proposed many people in the TfSE area will face little choice but to pay the charge. Indeed, HAL predict that 88% of air passengers from inner Surrey will drive to the airport, reflecting the lack of a viable alternative.

1.15 It is unacceptable to introduce a substantial charge that cannot easily be avoided. For too many locations across the TfSE area, there is little existing or committed infrastructure to provide a reasonable alternative or subsidy to public transport to the airport as a way of encouraging modal shift.

1.16 There are some ideas about providing enhanced coach and bus services, but these alone will not secure the level of modal shift necessary to meet the ANPS requirements and 'No More Traffic' pledge.

1.17 This ongoing failure to adequately address surface access issues and HAL's position that they can meet their responsibilities without major infrastructure investment appears untenable, without sufficient evidence. TfSE believes that without additional sustainable surface access the airport will not be able to meet the ANPS and its sustainability requirements, nor meet the demands of future air travel growth.

1.18 In terms of Surface Access Proposals themselves, the proposals for both Western Rail Access and Southern Rail Access were identified by the Airports Commission report as being justified on the basis of a two-runway airport. This view has been endorsed by several of our members since then and bringing forward both these schemes remains a pressing priority.

1.19 It is disappointing that Heathrow do not have any kind of preferred Southern Rail Scheme. Given some of the proposals offer very different sorts of connectivity to the airport, we would expect HAL to be leading the way in promoting a scheme that HAL feels best suits the needs of the airport. This may not of course be the scheme that best meet the needs of the wider region, but it is very disappointing that despite the depth of data and analysis available, Heathrow are not able to offer their own view on the type of scheme Southern Rail needs to be.

1.20 We are aware that the DfT-sponsored M25 South West Quadrant study has also brought forward several options for further consideration that involve major investment in improved surface access schemes to and around the airport. These need to be integrated far more closely into the Expansion proposals so that a clear and consistent overarching approach to transport issues can be delivered

1.21 In conclusion the emerging TfSE Transport Strategy has concluded that there is a pressing need to facilitate an increase in radial and orbital journeys by public transport, particularly to/from Outer London and to/from Heathrow Airport to support the economy of the South East. We are yet to be convinced that the Heathrow Expansion proposals are contributing to this to the level that they could and should do, and there is danger of an opportunity being missed.

1.22 This draft response is an officer response to the consultation. The TfSE Shadow Partnership Board meets on 19 September 2019 to consider the draft response and a further iteration of the response may follow.
