

London’s airport expansion, draft housing SPG and greenbelt swaps

Hon. Sec. Drummond Robson minuted the Forum on 6th December at Colliers International. Our Host was Jonathan Manns. Full minutes at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

DISCUSSION TOPIC 1: Heathrow infrastructure plans

The infrastructure implications for the third London Airport. The Chairman introduced **Simon Earles**, Planning Policy Director from BAA Heathrow Airport Limited who gave a short presentation.

Michael Schabas Rail expert from First Class Partnerships and **Dan Lewis** of IoD also led the discussion.

See key extracts from the government’s view and projected planning timetable at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/heathrow-airport-expansion> See also

https://your.heathrow.com/takingbritainfurther/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Transport-Fact-Sheet_FINAL2.pdf

And Network Rail’s proposed rail extension – to be applied for in 2017.

Simon Earles explained that Heathrow is currently operating at de facto capacity (98 per cent), as well as a major transfer hub which accounts for some 32 per cent of its passengers. He argued that the expansion proposals will act as a catalyst for

the whole UK’s infrastructure growth. Some key statistics from 2015 are set out below.

The government’s 25th October decision gave a preference for Heathrow over Gatwick or the alternative Heathrow Hub proposal as the basis for a future planning application. The ambitious programme is also associated with the strategy for HS2 with links to Old Oak Common.

BAA’s proposals offer benefits of jobs and trade with forecasts of 180,000 new jobs (40,000 locally) and 10,000 apprenticeships. There are already 76,000 employed at Heathrow. Lord Blunkett has

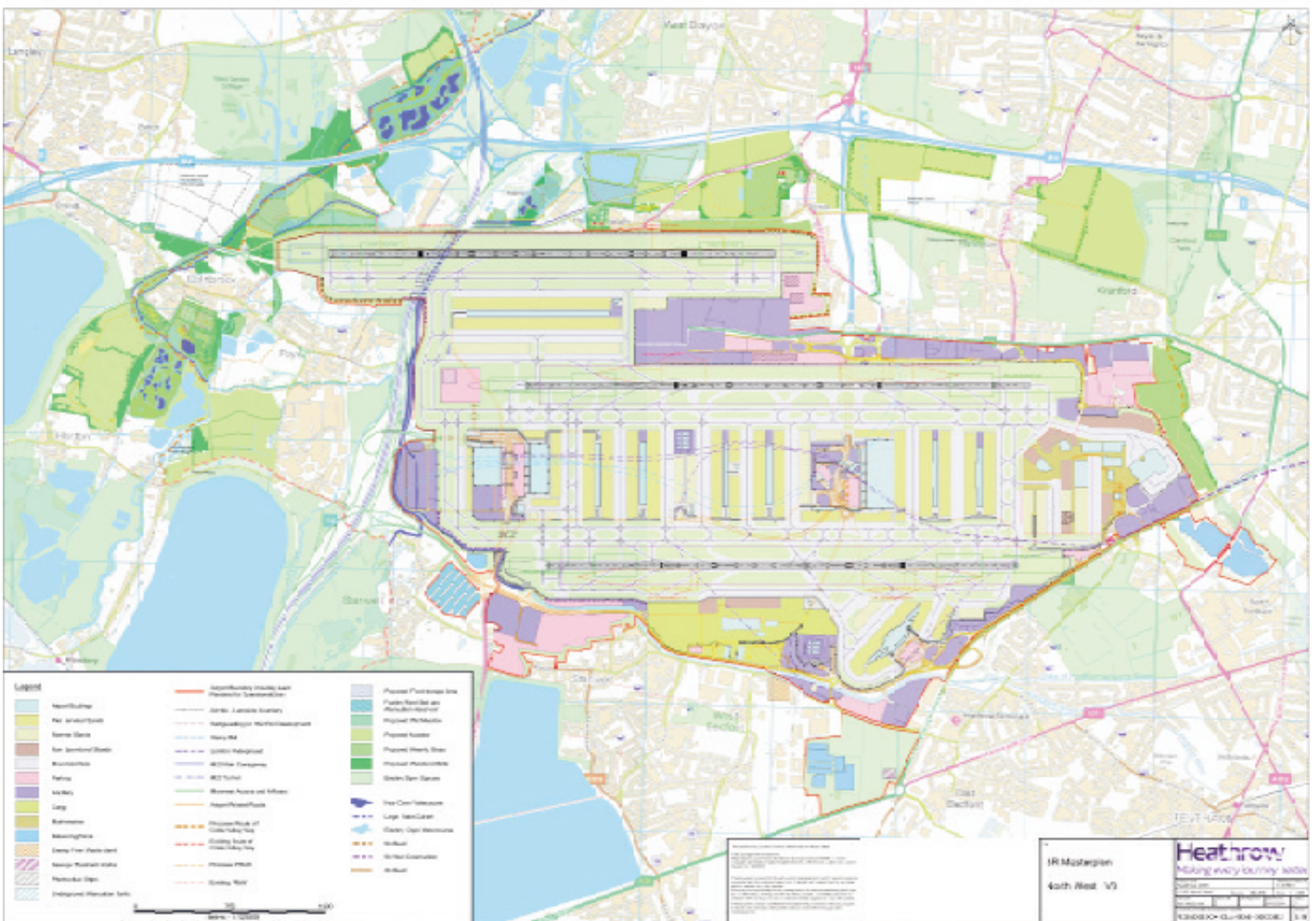


Figure 2.1: Heathrow Airport Northwest Runway scheme map

been appointed Chair of Heathrow Skills Taskforce. It would facilitate 40 new long haul destinations, meet tough environmental (notably air quality and noise) standards enforced by new independent regulators and improve connectivity by rail, bus, coach to Britain's major towns.

If expanded Easyjet would use it for domestic and discounted connecting flights.

BAA are publicly committed to compensate displaces to the value of the un-blighted market value plus 25 per cent.

The Department for Transport's Benefit Costs Ratio has been assessed as 14:1

Crossrail will connect terminals 2, 3 and 4 to the Capital.

Realising this proposal is necessary for Britain to continue to compete globally.

Heathrow Consultation is anxious to reflect local views. The Heathrow Strategic Planning Group is open to

- London Borough Hounslow (Current Chairmanship)
- London Borough Hillingdon (invited to attend but currently not participating)
- London Borough Ealing
- Spelthorne Borough Council
- Runnymede Borough Council
- South Bucks District Council
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (Opposed)
- Slough Borough Council
- Heathrow Airport Limited
- Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
- Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership
- Surrey County Council (in respect of strategic transport and other relevant functions)
- Bucks County Council (in respect of strategic transport and other relevant functions)
- London LEP (to be invited but currently not participating)
- Greater London Authority (Observer status only)



only)

- Transport for London (Observer status only)
- Government (coordinating representative from DCLG/BIS) (Observer status only)
- Old Oak and Park Royal Development Commission (OPDC) (Observer status only)

It is also hoped that DCLG will contribute. To date 82 per cent of responses have been positive.

Below is BAA's current assessment of the timeline for the planning process (Development Consent Order under 2008 Planning Act) with gov-

ernment timetables in orange and Heathrow's part in Purple. Included in the process will be The Runway, Terminal 6, alterations to the M25 and other associated development. A range of consultants have already been engaged to include Turner and Townsend, Arup, CH2. Other professional disciplines will include planning, environmental and surface access. Grimshaws have also been engaged in plan preparation. (See first image of the minutes).

Commenting on the timeline SE said that fol- >>>

Minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 6th December 2016 at Colliers International. Our host was Jonathan Manns.

Brian Waters (Chairman)
 Alan Thompson: A.P.Thompson, Architects
 Andrew Rogers: Association of Consultant Architects
 Colin Manns: Architects Journal
 Emily Barnes: Camargue Corporate and B2B Communications
 Dan Lewis: CE Future Energy Strategies
 James Murray:
 Jennifer Dodds: Solicitor Bond Dickinson LLP
 Jonathan Manns: Colliers International
 Judith Ryser: Isocarp/Ugb/Cityscope Europe
 Michael Schabas: First Class Partnerships

Nigel Abbott: WYG (and formerly Cluttons)
 Peter Eversden: London Forum
 Riëtte Oosthuizen: HTA Design
 Ron Heath: Living Architects
 Simon Earles: BAA Heathrow Limited
 Stephen Butters: CPRE (Formerly Secretary)
 Tim Wachter: RICS
 Tom Ball: London Forum
 Drummond Robson: Honorary Secretary and Robson Planning

Apologies were received from Duncan Bowie, and Jessica Fern

Following the government announcement of 25th October 2016 expressing the preference for Heathrow there will be 9-12 months of scrutiny of a Development Consent Order Application (DCO) for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Pre-application

The process begins when the Planning Inspectorate is informed by a developer that they intend to submit an application to us in the future. Before submitting an application, the developer is required to carry out extensive consultation on their proposals. The length of time taken to prepare and consult on the project will vary depending upon its scale and complexity. Responding to the developer's pre-application consultation is the best time to influence a project, whether you agree with it, disagree with it or believe it could be improved.

Acceptance

The acceptance stage begins when a developer submits a formal application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate. There follows a period of up to 28 days (excluding the date of receipt of the application) for the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, to

decide whether or not the application meets the standards required to be formally accepted for examination.

Pre-examination

At this stage, the public will be able to register with the Planning Inspectorate and provide a summary of their views of the application in writing. At pre-examination stage, everyone who has registered and made a relevant representation will be invited to attend a preliminary meeting run and chaired by an Inspector. This stage of the process takes approximately 3 months from the developer's formal notification and publicity of an accepted application.

Examination

The Planning Inspectorate has six months to carry out the examination. During this stage, people who have registered to have their say, are invited to provide more details of their views in writing. Careful consideration is given by the Examining Authority to all the important and relevant matters, including the representations of all interested parties, any evidence submitted and answers provided to questions set out in writing and explained at hearings.

Decision

The Planning Inspectorate must prepare a report on the application to the relevant Secretary of State, including a recommendation, within 3 months of the six month examination period. The Secretary of State then has a further 3 months to make the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

Post decision

Once a decision has been issued by the Secretary of State, there is a six week period for Judicial Review.

Although it could be resolved by 2022 a more realistic timetable is believed to be in the range 2026-29.

Discussion.

Peter Eversden asked for clarification of the relative importance of long and short haul travel, more information about surface access and soundproofing of schools. SE responded by referring to the statistics set out above, stressed the numbers of through movements as opposed to those using Heathrow to start or end their air journey. He added that much of this will be in the hands of operators such as IAG. (For the split of their passenger numbers see <http://www.iair->

Aviation directly supports around **230,000 jobs** with many more employed indirectly

Aviation contributes around **£20bn annually** to UK GDP

Heathrow alone directly employs more than **75,000 people**, making it one of the **biggest single site employers** in the country

In 2015, UK airports handled around **£155bn of air freight** to/from countries outside the EU

Aviation supports an inbound tourism industry across the UK worth nearly **£19bn**

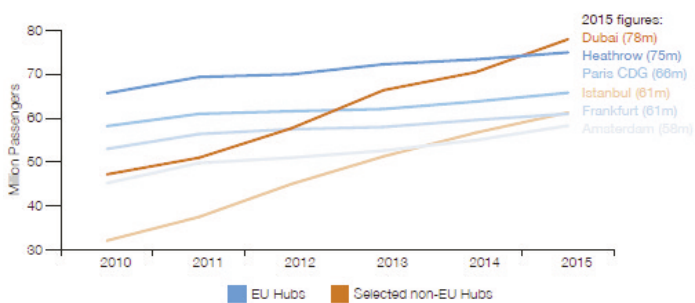


Figure 1.2: The UK has been facing increasing competition from international hub airports in recent years.

Key economic benefits

260k additional flights from Heathrow a year

16m more UK long haul seats in 2040

6 new UK routes by 2030

Between **38,000 and 77,000** additional local jobs by 2030

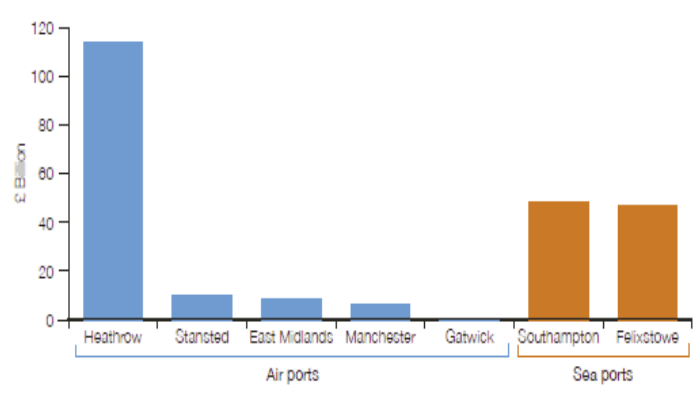


Figure 3.1: Heathrow freight by value compared to other ports in 2015

Heathrow expansion

“No more airport-related traffic on the roads compared to today. Really? How?”

Heathrow
Making every journey better

Increasing capacity at Heathrow without an increase in airport-related traffic on the roads compared to today is surprising. But Heathrow already has a strong record in this regard.

Over the last 25 years:

- Passenger numbers have risen by almost 80% but airport related road traffic has remained broadly static (Diagram 1).
- The number of passengers using public transport every year has nearly doubled from 10 million to 19 million.
- The proportion of Heathrow colleagues driving to work alone has fallen from 8 in 10, to 1 in 2.

With expansion, over the next 15 years:

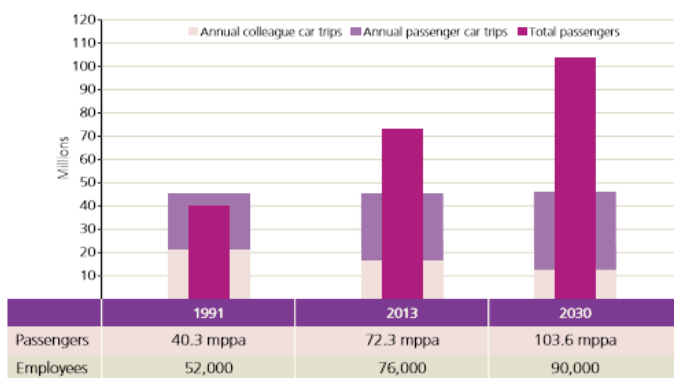
1. Public transport use by passengers will be increased to over 50%

The number of passengers taking public transport from 2013 will double from 18 million to close to 35 million passenger journeys by 2030.

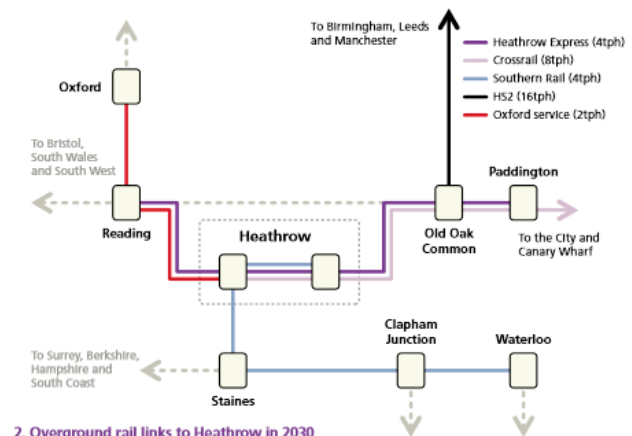
- **By rail:** With new transport links like Crossrail, Western Rail Access, Southern Rail Access and HS2 rail use by passengers will increase from 4.1 million in 2013 to 16.5 million annual journeys by 2030 (Diagram 2).
- **By bus/coach:** Heathrow is already the UK's busiest bus and coach station. 31 bus routes currently serve Heathrow at a frequency of around 80 buses per hour. This includes 13 routes that provide early morning or 24-hour services.

Existing routes will be improved and new connections developed, including an increase in bus routes and 24-hour buses, funded in part by Heathrow. These measures will increase passenger use from 6.1 million in 2013 to 8.5 million annual journeys by 2030.

Heathrow has invested over £25 million on projects to increase public transport use and reduce traffic over the past 10 years. In 2015, Heathrow made an additional £1m available to unlock ideas for new public transport schemes from Local Authorities surrounding the airport, and supported this with technical expertise and knowledge to make funded projects happen.



1. Airport-related traffic remains at similar levels to early 1990s providing confidence Heathrow can grow without increasing traffic



2. Overground rail links to Heathrow in 2030

Early 2017

Draft Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) published

The NPS will set out the Government's position for developing a new runway by 2030.

Spring – Summer 2017

Select Committee Scrutiny of Draft NPS

The opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of the draft NPS by the appointed Select Committee.

Late 2017/early 2018

Publication of final Airports National Policy Statement

Government publishes final NPS in Parliament, with a subsequent debate followed by a vote.

2018 – 2021/22

Promoter takes forward scheme

Once the National Policy Statement has been designated, Heathrow is able to begin the formal process of seeking planning permission, which includes further consultation with local communities.

Early 2017

Start of national and local consultation on contents of draft NPS

This will include a series of local and regional events around the country and in the vicinity of the selected airport. Expected to last for 16 weeks until Spring 2017.

Summer – Autumn 2017

Analysis and review of responses & revision of NPS

Full analysis of all responses received during the public consultation and associated events. Government reviews responses to the consultation and final report from the Select Committee and the NPS is revised to take these into account.

Late 2017/early 2018

Designation of National Policy Statement

Assuming the final NPS passes the parliamentary vote, it can be designated by the Transport Secretary.

2025 – late 2020's

New runway operational

Assuming the planning and construction process runs in line with the timetable set out by Heathrow, the new runway is expected to be operational between 2025 and late 2020's.

group.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=240949&p=irol-newsArticle_Print&ID=2227553.

SE confirmed that soundproofing of schools was already taking place.

Tim Wachter picking up on this theme argued that short haul flights are funding long haul, which again SE thought was a matter for the airlines. He also thought that TfL's wish list of improvements had been reduced from £20bn to £15bn.

In response SE said that Highways England and National Rail had assessed the need as being low single digit demand but it has been difficult to engage with GLA even though the Company continues to do its best.

PE pressed his concern that with the increase in flight paths comes a growing bill for sound proofing. CAA and the government are committed to a fundamental review of SE airspace running beyond the timeline of the airport expansion. Meanwhile there is a signed contract to compensate and insulate for which BAA would be happy to be held to account.

Ron Heath referred back to previous airport expansion proposals including Roskill saying that >>>

Stansted is still looking for another runway. He wondered where we go next.

Brian Waters stressed the growth in passenger demand and the need to do something about it. DR added that it is unreasonable to speculate for ever and that there is a need to increase runway capacity now. It does not preclude further expansions elsewhere in the future.

Michael Schabas began by saying that he has just produced a new book "The Railway Metropolis – How Planners, Politicians and Developers Shaped Modern London" (Price: £ 45.00 ISBN: 9780727761804, Format: Hardbound, Publish Date: 19/12/2016, Publisher: ICE Publishing). This is being reviewed for Planning in London.

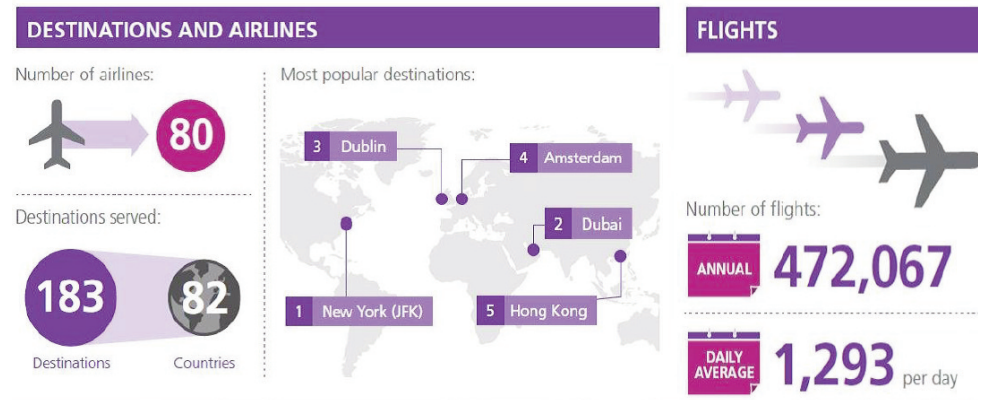
He continued to say he was a fan of Heathrow and uses it about 12 times a year. His support comes from the need to link planes to where people live and work, and so should not be in the Thames Estuary. However he speculated the proposal is unlikely to happen even though the next 10 years will be spent debating it. The proposals could work equally well for Heathrow and Gatwick with planes being shared between them. Heathrow has fantastic interlining. Airlines such as Easyjet would have no interest in interlining.

Both he and Dan Lewis argued that the expansions of all the airports should be allowed to proceed: Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, without subsidy to any of them. Studies he undertook with John Prideaux in 1996 showed that with Crossrail and Thameslink it would be possible to use of the three airports.

MS considered that the return on capital at Gatwick would be better than Heathrow. The question he would prefer to ask is where it would be best to locate the additional capacity at the lowest

cost to the taxpayer and the quickest to achieve and where the net benefit is highest. He contrasted the situation with Manchester where no new runway is being sought. He doubted whether Heathrow is being financially incentivised as the result of the government's decision.

Dan Lewis said that privately funded infrastructure is likely to have the effect of restricting supply and that if the aim is to increase capacity this will mean public subsidy. In answer to a query by PE he added that airlines like Ryanair are not taken with



Heathrow expansion: "No more airport-related traffic on the roads compared to today. Really? How?"

2. More efficient use of cars will be encouraged and empty journeys reduced

Many taxis and private vehicles dropping off passengers have an empty return journey, resulting in approximately 40,000 additional vehicle movements a day to and from Heathrow. This is over a quarter of current airport-related traffic.

To reduce this, a matching service for connecting passengers will be introduced for drivers that have dropped off at the airport. Membership of this scheme could be predicated on prescribed passenger service standards and vehicle environmental performance.

To encourage the taxis and private vehicles that come to the airport to be more sustainable, Heathrow has already installed electric charging infrastructure in its car parks and is investigating how to introduce this in taxi feeder parks.

3. Colleague car parking will prioritise car sharing and encourage public transport options

New transport options such as Crossrail, extended bus routes and bus service timetables and new rail routes to the west, north and south, will help colleagues to make the shift to public transport. The use of public transport by colleagues is expected to increase from 32,000 journeys per day in 2013 to 51,000 journeys per day by 2030.

Heathrow already runs the largest employee car-sharing scheme in Britain. With incentives, it is predicted to increase significantly from 2,400 shared journeys per day in 2013 to 15,800 journeys in 2030.

Heathrow also has plans in place to prioritise parking passes for those that are car sharing and use low emissions vehicles.

4. Alternative measures like congestion charging could be implemented

This would only be introduced once suitable public transport alternatives are in operation, and following a public consultation.

The proposals would need to be appropriate and fair so that, for example, exemptions are in place which could include disabled passengers, taxis or residents of local communities.

Generated revenues could be used to contribute towards major rail, London Underground and road infrastructure improvements, sustainable travel initiatives, and local community transport projects.

5. Freight movement efficiencies will improve

Servicing, deliveries and cargo operations generate around 12,500 vehicle movements a day in the Heathrow area. Almost 75% are related to cargo and mail operations.

Without intervention, a 30% increase in freight-related vehicle movements is forecast by 2030.

A plan is in place to limit freight vehicles to similar levels to today and help operators clean up the vehicle fleets through:

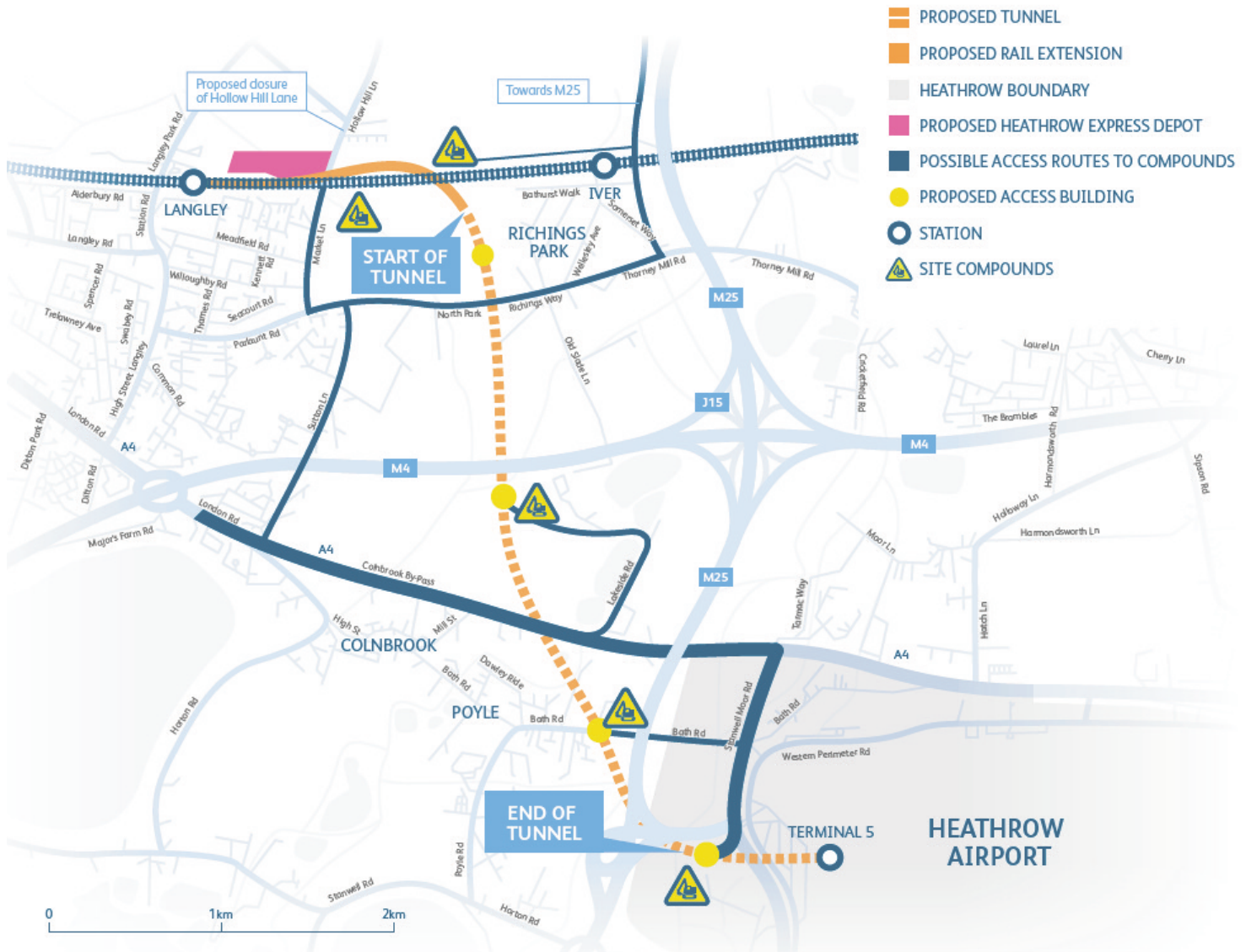
- **Operational efficiencies:** Optimising the fleet mix, increasing load factors and providing off-airport distribution centres to reduce shuttle movements to the local warehouses. As the cargo operation grows at Heathrow, there will be opportunities to improve.
- **Monitoring of use of local roads:** Heathrow will work with TfL and other authorities on re-timing journeys that are not time critical to outside peak periods, monitoring of routing for HGVs and other freight vehicles, as well as ensuring there are appropriate measures in place for those that do not comply.
- **Congestion charge use:** A potential congestion charge would help drive change towards a cleaner fleet and fewer vehicle movements
- **Controlling airspace access:** By tying vehicle licensing to the age and emissions of freight vehicles.



In summary:

Below is what the average traffic demand based on an average September day would look like in 2030 compared to 2013. This allows a comparison of the effects of the interventions on local traffic to be assessed during the busiest periods of the airport operation.

TRIPS BY:	2013	2030
Passengers total – Kiss and Fly, Park and Fly, Taxi	89,000	101,000
Heathrow colleagues	46,000	33,000
Total	135,000	134,000



the hub principle which implies that for them the hub decision is an interim one.

There was discussion as to whether a National Planning Policy Statement should precede or follow the decision.

Tom Ball said that the thinking behind Roskill was to keep planes out of Central London to reduce security and noise risks. ES responded saying that the government has set out its position which accepts these risks.

BW said that changes in technology with capped movements, and quieter aircraft change the policy basis. Also the boundaries of any scheme of noise compensation will be set by the Inspectorate.

Dan Lewis IoD Policy Unit's Senior Adviser, was concerned about the level of public infrastructure subsidy which results in a false choice of where expansion should take place. He added that lifting the cao on aircraft movements at Stansted would facilitate greater growth there. In each case private sector should be contributing more. Nonetheless Heathrow Expansion as an interim is to be welcomed.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 2: Mayor of London's Draft Affordable Housing Strategy

The Mayor's draft Affordable Housing Strategy SPG has just been published. Riette Oosthuizen of HTA Design LLP tabled a paper offering a summary of it.

HOMES FOR LONDONERS DRAFT AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND VIABILITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE 2016

- The headline in the SPG is that proposals will be expected to meet or exceed a threshold 35 per cent provision of affordable, habitable rooms across the development (without grant), If this is offered, no viability analysis or further information is required. In this instance there is also provisions to ensure the applicant intends to build the permission with a review mechanism triggered if an 'agreed level of progress on implementation is not made within two years of the permission being granted'.
- Some schemes would not qualify for this option, including where off site affordable hous-

ing or cash in lieu is proposed, applications which involve the demolition of existing affordable housing (especially estate regeneration schemes) and applications where the applicant claims vacant building credit applies.

- The SPG is under consultation between 29 November 2016 to 28 February 2017. Developments that do not offer 35 per cent affordable accommodation will justify this in viability assessments and be expected to include overage provisions in case the profitability exceeds that expected in the submitted viability assessments, with the LPA being a beneficiary. There will be post permission and post development reassessments with surplus profits split 60:40 between the Council and developer,
- The Mayor's long term goal is to increase the threshold to 50 per cent. The new London Plan is currently being developed and will incorporate this aim with a consultation to be published in Autumn 2017.
- The SPG also includes a preferred tenure split target for schemes to deliver:
- at least 30 per cent low cost rent (social rent or >>>

affordable rent) with rent set at levels that the LPA considers 'genuinely affordable', i.e. significantly less than 80 per cent of market rent. There appears to be a move towards a 'London Affordable Rent';

- at least 30 per cent as intermediate products, with London Living Rent and/ or shared ownership, London Living Rent is capped at one third of median gross household income in a borough;
- the remaining 40 per cent to be determined by the relevant LPA (but would include a mixture of the above or any other products that could be evidenced as 'genuinely affordable').
- The SPG also seeks to introduce a standardised approach to viability across London. The SPG clearly sets out what information and assumptions should be included in a viability appraisal. The Mayor will use the residual land value methodology to determine the underlying land value once the costs of the development (includ-

ing developers' profit) are deducted from the gross development value.

- Information relevant to planning determinations should be publicly available alongside the other application documents in order to foster a greater understanding of and trust in the planning system. Only in very exceptional circumstances there may be legitimate reasons for keeping limited elements of viability information confidential. In submitting information to the Mayor, an applicant does so in the knowledge that the Mayor may not accept the applicant's claims that information should not be disclosed to the public.
- The SPG shows the Mayor's support for large scale and professionally managed Build to Rent schemes, and sets out a few fundamental principles for LPAs and developers to take into account.
- The draft SPG defines Build to Rent as:
 - a development, or block/ phase within a devel-

opment, of at least 50 units:

- the homes to be held as Build to Rent under a covenant for at least 15 years (i.e. cannot be sold);
- all units to be self-contained and let separately, unified ownership and unified management of the development;
- professional and on-site management; and
- longer tenancies offered (ideally three years or more) with defined in-tenancy rent reviews; and
- a property manager to be part of an accredited Ombudsman Scheme and a member of a recognised professional body
- Where a developer is proposing a Build to Rent development which meets the definition, the affordable housing offer can be entirely discounted market rent (DMR), managed by the Build to Rent provider and delivered without. These units can be owned and/or managed by Build to Rent landlords themselves.

• London Living Rent is a new type of intermediate affordable housing, and is aimed at single people, couples and other households with more than one person with a maximum household income of £60,000. Without sufficient current savings to purchase a home in the local area. RP's would be expected to encourage London Living Rent tenants into home ownership with the assumption that these units would be sold on a shared ownership basis after 10 years.

• No current provision is made for Starter Homes. The Mayor will provide an update following more clarity on the Government's position on Starter Homes and the regulations that are to follow the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

See also <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/supplementary-planning-guidance/affordable-housing>

RO said that in terms of applicability local authorities would have to do a lot on what is needed, especially in relation to major schemes. She wondered how the market would react on complex sale and rent mixes. She expected more detail on starter homes in the spring of 2017.

Discussion

Peter Eversden welcomed the SPG. It appears that schemes guaranteeing 35 per cent won't have to prove viability but what happens if the local authority wants 45 or 50 per cent? What happens for example in Westminster where there is a massive fund but no land available to spend it.

BW asked whether in those circumstances the Council should be required to pay it back. This would be a valid Freedom of Information question. There is nothing on overage clauses. Transport for London has lots of land. Should this be required to



provide at least 50 per cent affordable housing since it is already in public ownership?

PE said that the wide divergence between haves and have nots in the housing market is unacceptable and the Housing and Planning Bill does not appear to help.

Jonathan Manns drew attention to the difference between the absence of any income benchmark for schemes net of any grant and those which do attract grant when the benchmark is 30 per cent.

DR wondered how the draft guidance would work given existing national planning guidance which it differs from, fearing it would simply become a source of confusion for applicants. He also said that in the case of smaller schemes there are cases of reviewers acting for local authorities who have no interest in agreeing realistic viability assessments, preferring to require unjustifiable affordable housing which force the applicant to appeal with a unilateral undertaking to obtain an impartial assessment, thereby delaying the scheme.

Ron Heath said that many housebuilders were only interested in market housing which if they were allowed to build would progressively reduce the price differential between the two and eradicate the need for social housing.

RO said that the quality of what is built is as important as affordability. She thought that the model does not work with the present targets and so will not deliver at the proposed increased level.

Mike Coupe reporting on a National Forum report by Janice Morphet said that generally affordable housing was not being delivered. He also thought that small and medium sized housebuilders could make a major contribution here, given that volume housebuilders appear to imple-

ment large schemes but very slowly.

DR added that it was always easier for local authorities to appear to be delivering on their housing land supplies by granting permission of a few large schemes than having to deal with lots of small ones. They then discover that the hoped for rate of supply is not met and have to review their development plans. BW characterised this a phantom housing.

RO said that Islington doesn't accept joint venture social housing. It holds onto land which is then sold for the cost of delivery plus ground rent only.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 3: Green Belt Swaps

Green Belt Swaps have recently become current again with decisions on Birmingham's local plan adoption to include a new sustainable urban extension near Sutton Coldfield justified because Birmingham is "full up".

In the Prime Minister's Constituency of Windsor and Maidenhead 3,000 dwellings are proposed. Sajid Javid, the Local Government Secretary, has indicated he backs the plans for land swaps. See

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/thousands-of-homes-for-may-s-local-green-belt-8vmn723r7?shareToken=76d59fafbf6659ef5ab7f5962c59611d>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/green-belt-loosened-to-tackle-housing-shortfall-7dvdhjt69?shareToken=2f429dd177259d1215b791800d154d27>

Ron Heath spoke of Epping Forest where there are currently proposals for a green belt review as part of the local plan (See below). The District is currently 93 per cent Green Belt.

He said that there is not much proposed to be released for development from the Green Belt but

Harlow "will take a big chunk" in view of population pressures in the area.

The Chairman said that the purposes of Green Belt should be revisited to reconsider separating settlements, outstanding landscape and openness, in view of the fact that there is so much of it. The land quality should be graded.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

MC said that the quality of the landscape is not an issue, but preserving the setting and special character of historic towns is.

DR said that it is always important to recognise that green belt is not an environmental classification, but an administrative tool. It is often misunderstood, and perhaps misapplied.

Stephen Butters said that Green Belt land is "Sacred" and so swaps should not be contemplated. In answer to a query from Dan Lewis about using the lesser quality green belt for housing in return for improvements to it.

DR said that his own experience was that in the case of 2,500 acres of it wide ranging masterplan proposals to develop some 2.5 per cent of it in return for a range of environmental enhancements and improved public access to much of the remainder were virtually ignored in a local plan inquiry where there is still a shortfall on delivered housing supply. ■

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the annual joint venture with the National Planning Forum and Cambridge University Land Society in March 2017 at Dentons 1, Fleet Place.

Topics are expected to include the new Planning Act due January 2017 and to be addressed by the Government's Chief Planning Officer, Steve Quartermain.



*Please advise the Hon Secretary if you would like to attend:
robplan@btconnect.com*