

**HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**24TH OCTOBER 2002**

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 6TH NOVEMBER 2002**

**GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE  
DEVELOPMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE UNITED  
KINGDOM**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS,  
TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek the views of the Scrutiny Commission and Highways, Transportation and Waste Management Scrutiny Committee as input to future consideration by Cabinet.

**Background**

2. The government has invited the County Council's views on proposals for the development of air transport in the United Kingdom over the next 30 years, including the possibility of new and expanded airports in the Midlands. The Council's formal response will be decided by Cabinet at its meeting on 19th November, to meet the end of November deadline set by government. Prior to that meeting:
  - A preliminary Members Information Service bulletin was issued on 11th September
  - Copies of the consultation documents have been placed in the group rooms
  - A further Members Information Service bulletin was issued on 3rd October, setting out a statement by the Leader (copy attached as Appendix A)
  - Members' views were invited in the first MIS and those received to date are summarised below.
  - This report requests the views of Scrutiny.
  - Officers are in touch with adjacent authorities and the regional bodies to assess their likely response

3. This report summarises the consultation and highlights what are thought to be the key issues.

### **The Consultation Proposals**

4. The 1998 transport white paper committed the government to preparing a UK airports policy looking 30 years ahead. The Department for Transport's work on this has reached the 'options' stage and it is consulting on these on a regional basis. There will be a further white paper early next year, leading to legislation.
5. The documents for the Midlands cover mainly Birmingham and East Midlands airports. Forecasts for traffic growth are given against different scenarios. Of particular importance to these is the extent to which traffic growth to South East airports is constrained and hence produces increased demand in the Midlands.
6. To meet this growth a series of options for airport expansion is laid out. These include both maximising use of existing runways and providing new ones. Second runways at both Birmingham and EMA are set out as possibilities; that at EMA would lie to the south west of Diseworth with the airport covering the whole area in between. A possible new airport site has also been investigated, with Birmingham closing when it opened. The suggested location for this would be between Coventry and Rugby, south of the M6.
7. The studies have also examined the associated issues, including noise, pollution, economic impacts and implications for surface access. The relationship between airport expansion in different areas of the country is a key part of the analysis.

### ***'Growth scenarios'***

8. The forecasts for growth are based on four scenarios:
  - RASCO reference case (RRC) - assumes continuation of present policies, with south east traffic rising to 300 million passenger journeys a year (mppa) by 2030
  - South east constrained (SEC) - assumes capacity at south east airports is constrained at around 150 mppa, the level already in the planning system, but no constraint elsewhere
  - Facilitating growth (FG) - no constraints; south east airports well over 300 mppa by 2030 (this produces relatively less growth at midlands airports because passengers choose to fly from the south east)
  - UK-wide constrained (UKC) - severe constraint across the country, with south east traffic capped at 150 mppa.

9. This produces passenger forecasts for midlands airports, compared with year 2000 actuals, as follows:

(mppa)		RRC	SEC	FG	UKC
	2000	2030	2030	2030	2030
Birmingham	7.5	33	41	31.7	12.6
East Midlands	2.2	12.5	26.5	9.7	3.6

10. Freight forecasts for East Midlands in 2030, against 0.2 million tonnes a year now, would be 2.7 million under RRC and 3.2 under SEC, increases of 13 and 16 times respectively.

### **Key Issues**

11. The consultation document invites answers to a large number of questions, some quite detailed. Given the long timescale of the proposals, it may be appropriate to concentrate on the strategic issues in making the Council's response. The following paragraphs attempt to define these.

#### ***Issue 1 – How valid is planning based on forecasting 30 years ahead?***

12. Airport expansion involves major investment with significant wider planning implications, so looking as far forward as possible seems sensible. The DfT will have used the best available forecasting techniques, extrapolating from long historical trends of passenger growth.
13. Is there, however, a question as to the accuracy of forecasting so far ahead? How likely are major changes in context, for example increasing environmental concerns or major increases in fuel prices, and could a small change in growth rates now result in major variation in the forecast for 2030? This is of particular significance for Leicestershire, since it is only at the upper end of the forecasts that the requirement for a second runway at EMA appears

#### ***Issue 2 – Which of the different national growth scenarios should be supported?***

14. There are complex arguments for and against each scenario. Questions include the following:
- Air traffic is widely accepted as bringing economic benefits but how do these balance against the environmental damage it causes through noise, land take, local pollution and CO2 emissions? Is there any parallel with road traffic, where a similar tension between economic benefit and environmental disbenefit has led to the

previous 'predict and provide' approach to road building being abandoned?

- The South East Constrained scenario rations space in the south east. Much of the demand suppressed by this would transfer to regional airports, including those in the midlands. How acceptable would this be?
- The UK-wide Constrained scenario would have more limited benefit in supporting economic growth. Is this acceptable or does this swing the balance too far the other way compared to other scenarios?

### ***Issue 3 – How much growth at East Midlands Airport is acceptable?***

15. To help in this assessment, the analysis below looks at the impact of the RASCO reference case, which would result in passenger and freight throughput in 2030 of 12.5 mppa and 2.6 million tonnes respectively.
16. In considering this, existing Structure Plan and RPG policies, which would limit growth to within existing airport boundaries and subject it to rigorous environmental appraisal, are of only limited help, since 2030 is well beyond their periods. Furthermore, as with the national picture, looking so far ahead is highly speculative. A general assessment of the main issues, however, can be given.
17. *Economic benefits.* Expansion of air transport at EMA would, the document estimates, increase direct employment at the airport by around 18,000 jobs under the RASCO reference case. Direct off-site employment would increase by 3,000 and indirect employment by 7,500, producing a total of 28,500. The growth of direct employment would be driven mostly by the predicted large increase in freight. The expansion of scheduled flights, and the further expansion of air freight, would help to facilitate the expansion of established businesses and attract further inward investment, creating the 'indirect' employment noted above. Further expansion of holiday charter flights would not bring these indirect benefits.
18. Advice from a planning consultant employed by EMDA and others is that the current labour supply within the airport's catchment is not sufficient to meet this increase and that this would lead to pressure for further housing development beyond that predicted in the consultation document.
19. *Planning issues.* This growth, and particularly that in air freight, would put heavy pressure on employment land at the airport. The consultation document sets out a 'maximum use' option, short of construction of a second runway. This would involve a substantial increase in built development outside the existing boundaries south of the airport, for car parking and other purposes. Although the document seems not to make this clear, such an expansion would presumably be necessary to accommodate growth to the RASCO level.

20. Other employment land would be needed elsewhere, and it would be necessary to ensure this took place in sustainable locations, following regional planning guidance, and not on greenfield sites. There would be similar concerns for the extra housing required as a consequence of the increased employment, estimated at around 9,000 houses in the RASCO case. This would require an increase of around 10% in the current rate of housing completions in the core commuting area for the airport. Again, there would be a necessity to place the housing in sustainable rather than greenfield locations, a necessity which might make it difficult to meet the demand within a reasonable commuting range of the airport.
21. *Surface access.* The large increase in both workers and passengers could create significant problems of road congestion. EMA is poorly equipped to deal with this, since public transport access is very limited. Proposals in the M1 multi-modal study for M1 widening would provide for some increased traffic to EMA, but not to the upper end of the range. In particular, it is believed that expansion of the A42 to dual-three motorway would be required under some scenarios, particularly if there was relatively less growth at Birmingham airport.
22. The consultation document proposes an improved bus shuttle from the planned East Midlands Parkway station and possibly a tramway link, as well as the opening of a link with the Castle Donington freight line. However, even with the most favourable provision of public transport, the forecast is for 86% of passengers arriving by car against 14% by bus or train. No forecast is given for how the large number of employees might travel to work at the airport.
23. *Environmental problems.* Intensification of use of the existing single-runway airport would produce more land take, more aircraft noise, particularly at night, more local pollution, and more traffic in the area. Particularly noteworthy is the forecast increase in air freight, to more than 10 times the present level and presumably nearly all handled on night flights.
24. *Possible question.* Expansion of traffic to the 'RASCO' level would probably not necessitate provision of a second runway but would have the consequences noted above. How acceptable would be the trade-off between economic benefits and environmental disbenefits in these circumstances?

#### ***Issue 4 - Is there a case for a second runway at EMA?***

25. The consultation document does not make it clear, but it appears that a single runway could cope with approaching 20 mppa, perhaps more if aircraft sizes continue to increase. Such a capacity would not be required until after 2020 even in the South East Constrained scenario, and probably not at all in any of the others, although a decision not to

increase capacity at Birmingham could put more pressure on EMA and lead to further growth.

26. A second runway would have major environmental consequences, particularly:
- a severely detrimental effect on Diseworth and the surrounding area
  - the loss of around 600 hectares of agricultural land
  - a drastic impact on the local landform and much worse visual impact
  - the loss of important local buildings and possibly important archaeological sites
  - a further worsening of traffic noise and pollution
27. How acceptable would this be, balanced against the extra economic benefit brought about by further expansion of air traffic?

***Issue 5 – Is a new airport between Rugby and Coventry acceptable?***

28. This proposal would only be economic under the ‘South East constrained’ growth scenario. It would lead to the closure of Birmingham Airport and reduced use of EMA, down to 9 mppa compared with the 26.5 mppa otherwise forecast. Looking at the effects using the same headings as for the analysis of EMA:
- Economic benefits would tend to accrue to the West Midlands and points south, although there would be some impact on Lutterworth and Hinckley, including the Magna Park area.
  - Other planning issues would again be largely to do with the location of new housing and businesses produced by the airport. Coventry and Rugby could expect to be the places most affected.
  - Surface access, whilst potentially good on the axis from Northampton and Rugby round to Birmingham, with two motorways and the West Coast main railway line, would be much less good from Leicester and the north of the region, requiring a dog-leg journey via the M69. There would be a risk of much rat-running traffic south through Leicestershire villages.
  - Local environmental issues in Warwickshire would be very significant. A number of Leicestershire villages would lie under the flight path and so would be affected by noise as well as being affected by extra traffic.
29. The major benefits and disbenefits of this airport would be experienced in Warwickshire. Given the likely economic development associated with the airport, how acceptable would the problems of aircraft noise and extra road traffic be for south Leicestershire?

### ***Issue 6 – Is a large expansion of Birmingham airport acceptable?***

30. Since Birmingham is some way from the Leicestershire boundary, the Committee may feel it inappropriate to comment directly on expansion there. It may be worth noting, however, that the more Birmingham expands the less EMA is likely to, and vice versa. This applies not only in overall terms but also for the scheduled flights which form the major economic attraction. It may be worth noting also that Birmingham has much better public transport links now, with a far greater potential for easy upgrading.

### **Comments of Members and Other Authorities**

31. Three Member comments have been received so far, all strongly opposed to the proposal for a new airport between Rugby and Coventry.
32. It is too early to ascertain the formal responses of neighbouring authorities but there is believed to be considerable support for a major expansion of East Midlands Airport because of the economic benefits it could potentially bring to the three cities. To the south, there is believed to be a widespread opposition to the proposal for a new airport between Birmingham and Coventry.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

33. None direct.

### **Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure**

Mrs. L.A.S. Pendleton	16th October 2002
Mr. I.D. Ould	16th October 2002
Mr. N.J. Rushton	16th October 2002
Mr. G.H. Perkins JP	16th October 2002
Mr. M.J. Hunt	16th October 2002
Mr. Ian M. Morris	16th October 2002
Mr. D. Jennings	16th October 2002
Mr. E.F. White	16th October 2002
Mrs. M.L. Sherwin	16th October 2002
Mr. D.C. Bill	16th October 2002
Mrs. V.P. Bill	16th October 2002

### **Officer to Contact**

James Holden (0116) 265 7244

### **Background Papers**

None.