

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 7th September 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Environment

SUBJECT: Liverpool John Lennon Airport – Draft Masterplan Consultation

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the invitation from Peel Airports Ltd for the Council to comment on the Liverpool John Lennon Airport Draft Masterplan that has now been published for public consultation. Responses are required by 15th September.
- 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Recommended Response to the Draft Masterplan consultation as set out on this report be agreed and conveyed to Peel Airports Ltd.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Government's White paper 'The Future of Air Transport'

- 3.1 Government policy, set out in the White Paper published in 2003, endorses the long-term continued growth of LJLA, including the expansion of its passenger and cargo facilities and the extension of the runway. The Department for Transport (DfT) has asked airports to prepare Masterplans to 2030 showing how the proposals for airport expansion can be achieved.
- 3.2 Forecasts prepared for the airport show that by 2015, passenger numbers will reach 8.3 million from the currently level of 4.4 million passengers in 2005, and by 2030 it will reach 12.3 million passengers. In the same years, the amount of cargo handled is forecast to increase from 40,000 to 220,000 tonnes per annum respectively.
- 3.3 It is the ambition of the airport to capture the opportunity to serve new routes including long haul destinations, and capture synergies with the Port of Liverpool by developing an enhanced world cargo market.

The Masterplan Proposals

- 3.4 The main components of the Masterplan with implications for Halton are as follows:

3.5 Runway Extension

The Masterplan states that if LJLA is to develop long haul passenger services and its freight capability in the longer term, it needs to invest in the infrastructure to take larger aircraft with the tonnage and fuel loads necessary to reach the range of destinations indicated.

This will mean that the runway must be extended to the east in the direction of Hale by 314 m plus two additional 150 m starter strips at both ends. Most of the runway extension and eastern starter strip will be within Halton Borough.

This will require the diversion of Dungeon Lane, which forms part of the Borough boundary from its current route from Hale Road to a new route further east towards Hale linking the proposed Eastern Access Corridor with the proposed World Cargo Centre south of the existing runway.

- the option of extending the runway to the west was considered but there is insufficient land without development being beyond the current cliff into the Estuary. Such development would have an adverse impact on the special environmental and nature conservation interest of the Estuary and as such would not accord with the Government White Paper on Airports.
- The Masterplan states that a disadvantage of an eastern extension is that it would bring the runway closer to Hale Village. However as a result of providing a starter strip at the western end of the runway, the majority of aircraft would be able to take off earlier and fly over Hale at greater heights than at present. Additionally, the landing threshold would only be displaced 120m further to the east rather than the full length of the extension. As a result aircraft landing over Hale would only be slightly lower than at present.

3.6 New Road Link

To improve vehicular access, the Masterplan proposes that a new road be built to link the airport with the A561 Speke Road. Three routes have been considered including a junction with the southern end of the Knowsley Expressway, but the shortest route joining Speke Boulevard near the Jaguar factory is preferred by the Masterplan. It is anticipated that the construction of the road is unlikely to start before the end of the decade, with completion in the period leading up to 2015.

3.7 World Cargo Centre

To accommodate the forecast increases in cargo throughput, the airport has plans to upgrade facilities in two areas. The earlier of the developments will be to enhance cargo-handling facilities north of the

runway for mail and express parcels. Post 2015, the larger of the planned cargo developments, is the construction of the World Cargo Centre comprising airport parking and warehouses south of the runway on land that is currently undeveloped and in the Mersey Green Belt. This will be accessed by road via a diverted Dungeon lane to the proposed eastern access road.

3.8 Terminal Development

The existing terminal building will be extended including new piers and aircraft stands to accommodate the forecast numbers of passengers. A public transport interchange is also proposed to improve services for buses and coaches, which also allows for a future light rapid transport route. (This will presumably be based on any resurrection of the Merseyside tram system).

It is also proposed that a multi-storey car park and hotel will be built close to the terminal. (A planning application for this has now been made and Halton consulted as an adjoining authority).

3.9 Coastal Park Extension

A major expansion of the regional coastal park to make a further 50 hectares available for public use would be combined with the World Cargo Centre development. Part of this extension would be eastwards into Halton and would link up with the Mersey Way footpath.

3.10 New Jobs

The Masterplan states that the airport has the potential to increase direct on-site employment numbers to between 4,000 and 5,900 by 2015, and to between 4,500 and 6,700 by 2030. Including off-site employment, the total job growth from airport growth could reach 9,400 jobs by 2030, and could be as high as 11,300.

3.11 Environmental and Safety Implications

The environmental and safety implications of the proposed airport expansion have also been well researched and the results set out in the Masterplan.

3.12 Noise

Probably the biggest environmental impact of the airport expansion proposals will be the rise in noise levels caused by the greater number, frequency and size of aircraft using the airport.

The total 'air noise' (noise from aircraft that are airborne or on a runway during take off or after landing) to which local communities are exposed over a given time period depends on the noise emitted by individual

aircraft and the total number of aircraft movements. An overall measure of 'air noise' exposure is depicted by noise contours that show lines of equal noise exposure over a given time.

Current 'air noise' contours in 2005 shows the contour representing the high levels of annoyance, (69 dB LA eq lbh) is largely contained within the boundaries of the airport.

The contour representing moderate levels of annoyance (63 dB LA eq lbh) affects a number of properties in Hale Heath and Hale.

The contour representing the onset of low community annoyance (57 dB LA eq lbh) extends right over Hale but not as far as Runcorn (see Figure 11.2 of the Masterplan).

The forecast contours for 2015 are similar in shape to those for 2005, but cover a greater area. The contour representing 'high levels of annoyance' is almost completely contained within the expanded airport site. However, one property in Hale Heath, in addition to those that the airport has offered to purchase, would become subject to the high annoyance level. The airport will offer to purchase this property once it appears that this level of noise will arise.

The contour representing 'moderate levels of annoyance' in 2015 includes a number of properties which fall within Hale, Hale Heath or Speke, including Hale Village Primary School.

In the Government White Paper, mitigation measures are suggested for properties exposed to 'moderate levels' of annoyance. The airport already operates a Sound Insulation Grant scheme for secondary and acoustic double-glazing for those exposed to these noise levels.

The contour representing the onset of 'low community annoyance' in 2015 extends to parts of Runcorn in the east and affects a number of properties off Picow Farm Road and Greenway Road.

These additional properties within the contours for 2015 are already exposed to aircraft noise, but at a level slightly below the contour values.

The Masterplan also considers the perceptibility and significance of changes in airborne aircraft noise exposure. However, it points out that in these future contour predictions, no allowance has been made for any reduction in aircraft noise resulting from technology improvements and therefore the increase in noise that occurs in practice may be less than predicted.

In summary, the Masterplan states that the development in 2015 would cause perceptible, and in one area (the south east corner of Speke) a noticeable increase in overall noise, assuming no effect from improving

aircraft technology and lead to a relatively small increase in the population exposed to 'low community annoyance'.

No significant impact is predicted on either local schools or hospitals, with the exception of the primary school in Hale for which mitigation measures would be developed and implemented as found necessary.

The Masterplan also considered noise impacts in 2030, based on the predicted increase in passenger and cargo traffic. It concludes that assuming that no improvement occurs in the noise reduction of individual aircraft, a small increase of around 2dB would be expected from 2015 to 2030. However, in light of the expected reduction in noise from individual passenger aircraft, this theoretical increase may not occur in practice.

Night noise is also considered, although no night noise contours have been produced. Night noise is controlled by a quota system with a corresponding 'noise budget' and the ban on operations of the noisiest aircraft at night. The predicted growth in night-time activity will be carefully monitored, but the quota count usage is not expected to approach the 'noise target'.

3.13 Air Quality

Air quality assessments indicate that concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and air particle concentrations close to the airport will be similar to those currently being experienced. This is because the increase in air and ground movements are predicted to be offset by improvements in vehicle and aircraft technology. It is also predicted that the expansion proposals are unlikely to lead to a breach of the limits determined by Government.

3.14 Risk Assessment and Public Safety Zones

The Masterplan states that the preliminary risk assessment shows that the planned expansion of the airport can be accommodated without exceeding established measures of risk.

Currently the airport has a Public Safety Zone (PSZ) extending from each runway end. In Halton, this is shown on the Halton Unitary Development Plan and is subject to a policy (PR9) that complies with Government advice. It aims to control development so that there is no increase in the number of people working, living or congregating in or at the property or land. This effectively blights part of Hale Village for much new development. There is a concern that if the PSZ is extended as a result of the runway extension and increased flights, that the area of development restriction will also be extended to a larger part of Hale Village.

The Masterplan states that the airport will use the 1 in 100,000 per annum risk contour to determine the size and shape of the PSZ for 2030.

It is considered essential that this work is carried out as soon as possible in order to determine the potential impact on Hale Village of more extensive development restrictions.

The risk posed to hazardous installations in the vicinity of the airport due to aircraft accidents will also be carefully considered with reference to detailed scheduling information, and compared to the existing level of risk and Health and Safety Criteria.

Again, given the existence of chemical works qualifying as hazardous installations in Halton, close to the flight paths of the airport, this risk assessment should be carried out as soon as possible so that any increased risk to the population living close to these installations can be assessed.

3.15 Transport Implications

The transport implications of the airport expansion are covered by the Masterplan as 'Surface Access'. It states that there is a high standard road network that provides access to the airport with dual carriageway linkage to the strategic and trunk roads.

3.16 Public Transport

The airport has a comprehensive 'Surface Access Strategy' (the latest of which was published in May 2006) overseen by the Airport Transport Forum of which Halton Borough Council is a member. The aim of the Strategy is to seek improvements in public transport access to and from the airport, and reduce the reliance on unaccompanied private motor vehicle use for passengers and airport employees.

Public transport accessibility has recently been boosted by the opening in June 2006 of the Liverpool South Parkway railway station only three miles away, with a seven bus per hour shuttle link to the airport. The station provides passenger access to the West Coast Main Line, Trans-Pennine and West Midlands services. There are also frequent bus services to surrounding towns including the 82A to Runcorn.

A study has recently been undertaken to consider the feasibility of a bus link between the airport and Runcorn Railway Station. This showed that there is currently little demand for a dedicated link, particularly as a result of the opening of Liverpool South Parkway.

Public transport accessibility to the airport could also be improved in the future with the proposed re-opening of the 'Halton Curve' railway connecting with Cheshire and North Wales, and improve the general accessibility of this area to the airport by public transport. This project is being promoted through the Halton and Merseyside Local Transport Plan documents and Cheshire County Council along with the North Wales Authorities

The Masterplan states that although passenger public transport percentage is high compared to airports of comparable passenger numbers, it wants to achieve increasingly higher targets of passengers using public transport from 10% current to 12% by 2015 and 24% by 2030.

3.17 Parking Strategy

In order to achieve these targets of public transport usage, the Masterplan describes a parking strategy that has already been endorsed by the Merseyside and Halton Local Transport Plans. This strategy is designed to ensure that unauthorised car parking advertised as serving the airport is restricted. Recent enforcement actions to prevent unauthorised airport parking facilities in Halton have been successful. A planning policy to underpin this strategy can be incorporated into the Halton Local Development Framework now under preparation.

3.18 Highway Network Capacity

The capacity of the eastern approach to the airport will be greatly improved by the proposed Mersey Gateway bridge over the Mersey which the DfT has recently announced in principle approval for funding. This will be the sign-posted route to the airport from both the M6 (South) and M56.

In the vicinity of the airport, Speke Boulevard is currently the main highway access. The existing network can accommodate more activity at the airport given that most traffic is generated outside of commuter periods. However, the Masterplan considers that there will come a time in the medium term when more capacity within the 'Southern Corridor' (which includes Speke Boulevard) will be needed. Consequently the Airport and Liverpool City Council are doing a study to assess whether additional capacity within the 'Southern Corridor' is needed within the Airport Masterplan period. This study includes an evaluation of the need for the proposed Eastern Access Transport Corridor, referred to above, that would connect the airport directly with the A561/A562 to the east of Speke.

The three options for this route have direct implications for Halton. These are the environmental impacts including increased traffic noise and visual and transport implications in terms of the local road network and the possibility of a direct link with the proposed Mersey Multi Modal Gateway (proposed rail freight park at Ditton).

The first option (SA1) is to optimise the capacity of the existing highway network, particularly by increasing the capacity of existing junctions. However, beyond 2011 it becomes difficult to see how additional capacity can be provided, hence the proposal to evaluate new road routes to the east.

Option SA2. This route of about 1.2 miles would pass to the east of Speke Estate and join Speke Boulevard (A561) to the east of Mill Wood adjacent to the Jaguar plant. This option would have the smallest land take and have the least environmental impact of the three routes.

Option SA3. This is a significantly longer route than Option SA2, as it would provide direct access to the A5300 Knowsley Expressway and potentially provide a link road to serve the proposed Ditton rail freight interchange on the Liverpool-Manchester railway line. However it would also have greater environmental impact as it would pass closer to residential properties at Halebank and the Halebank Conservation Area. It would need a new bridge over the railway line and three existing roads, and consequently have greater construction and visual impact, and be considerably more expensive to build.

Option SA4. This would follow a longer route south and east of Option SA3 and would have similar disadvantages to Option SA3 with no material advantages. Although it would connect with the proposed Ditton rail freight interchange, its impact would be to restrict development by cutting across land allocated for a rail connected warehouse in the Halton Unitary Development Plan.

3.19 Sustainability Appraisal

A sustainability appraisal of the Masterplan proposals to assess its social, economic and environmental effects has been undertaken by independent consultants. It has been published alongside the draft Masterplan and is itself the subject of public consultation.

This appraisal identifies some of the negative effects of the Masterplan proposals, particularly on the environment although opportunities for mitigation of these effects and enhancement of natural assets will reduce these. The potential negative effects of climate change are being addressed at national level. However the Masterplan proposals achieved the majority of sustainability objectives as a result of the overriding social and economic benefits that the proposals will bring to one of the most deprived areas in the UK.

3.20 Next Steps

Following public consultation, comments made will be considered and a revised Masterplan will be prepared later in 2006. This will be submitted to the Department for Transport, the local authorities and other interested parties. The final Masterplans of the airports featured in the Government's White Paper 'The Future of Air Transport' will establish a clear, long term framework for the development of the UK's air transport systems and will be important in shaping local and regional economic, transport and planning policies.

3.21 Recommended Response

It is recommended that the following response is made by Halton Borough Council to the Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan Consultation:

1. The airport expansion proposals are supported by the Council in general, particularly because of the increased job opportunities and business development opportunities that it will bring to the wider sub region and consequently to Halton.
2. If highway capacity studies show a need for the construction of an Eastern Access Transport Corridor, and this is essential to the expansion of the airport, then such a solution is supported in principle. However, although the shortest (and cheapest) Option SA2 is supported, Option SA3 would be preferred as it has advantages for creating a direct link between the proposed Mersey Multi Modal Gateway (rail freight park at Ditton) and the strategic road networks. Option SA4, although also creating such a link to the strategic road network is opposed on the basis that the route would severely restrict development of the rail freight park by cutting across land allocated for it in the Halton Unitary Development Plan.
3. The Council is concerned about the predicted increase in noise levels shown by the 'low community annoyance' noise contour extending over parts of Runcorn, and the 'moderate levels of annoyance' contour extending over Hale Village and the Primary School, and would wish to discuss how this can be mitigated against with the Airport Company before the final Masterplan is produced.
4. The Council is also concerned about the potential for increased night-time air noise, and the airport is urged to calculate night-time noise contours and shared with this Authority so that the impact of aircraft movements at night can be measured before the final Masterplan is produced.
5. The airport is urged to do all it can to ensure that the operation of aircraft using the airport during approach, take off and landing minimises the noise levels expected and to offer noise mitigation grants to a wider number of affected properties including those affected by 'low community annoyance'.
6. The Council accepts the case for an extension to the runway on land within Halton in the direction of Hale as necessary for the expansion of the airport to encourage more routes and cargo business. It also accepts that Dungeon Lane will have to be diverted to allow for this extension. As this is currently open

countryside and protected by Green Belt policy, then the boundary treatment and landscaping will have to be carefully considered to minimise visual impact, reduce noise and ensure airport security.

7. The Council welcomes the extension of the coastal park into Halton, but wishes to ensure that the airport contributes to an enhancement of the Mersey Way and Trans-Pennine Trail onwards around the coast of Widnes, to complement the coastal park works.
8. The Council is concerned about the possible extension of the Public Safety Zone (PSZ) over Hale, as a result of the runway extension and increase in flights, as it would restrict development and thereby blight parts of the village. It is also concerned about any increase in risk to businesses that are classified as 'hazardous installations' from increased aircraft movements. The airport is therefore urged to complete the full risk assessments as soon as possible so that the impact on the PSZ extent and any increased risk to hazardous installations can be assessed, before the final Masterplan is produced.
9. The Council supports the proposals to increase public transport trips to the airport, and the parking strategy that would prevent privately operated airport car parks in order to encourage public transport use. However, the bus links to both Widnes and Runcorn must be considered for improvement, not just for passengers but for new employees as a result of the forecast expanded job opportunities.
10. The recognition in the Masterplan that rail passenger services using the Halton Curve should be re-introduced to enable direct rail connections to Chester and North Wales is also supported.
11. The Masterplan's acknowledgment of the benefits of improved road linkages which will arise as a consequence of the construction of the Mersey Gateway is supported.
12. The Airport Company should enter into a legal agreement with the Council to ensure that any adverse impacts upon the Borough's environment, is adequately mitigated against.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The elements of the Masterplan proposals that are within Halton will require planning permission, and these applications will be considered against current development plan proposals and other Council policies.

Currently the Halton Unitary Development Plan has several policies that are relevant.

Policy TP20 Liverpool Airport states that proposals arising from the Local Transport Plan's Airport Surface Access strategy that would improve surface access to and from Liverpool Airport will be permitted.

This policy would therefore lend support to the proposals for the Eastern Access Transport Corridor as it reflects the Halton Local Transport Plan's (2006-2011) support for the continued expansion of the airport through the implementation of key public transport access schemes to improve access to the airport by bus, coach and rail along with a strategy to support the EATC.

Any planning applications associated with the airport expansion proposals will also have to be judged against other specific policies concerned with Air Quality (TP18), Noise (PR8), the Airport Public Safety Zone (PR9) and the Airport Height Restriction Zone (PR10), and more general policies concerned with other planning matters.

The Mersey Gateway Crossing will have a major beneficial effect of reducing congestion for trips to the airport for passengers and staff travelling to and from Halton, North Cheshire, North Wales and other key urban centres along the M56 Corridor. The Airport Masterplan recognises its importance, and the expansion proposals help to underpin the justification for the new bridge.

Once the Masterplan has been approved by the Department for Transport, then its proposals will also have to be considered through the process of preparing development plans. In Halton, these may require land to be safeguarded for the chosen route of the Eastern Transport Corridor, and the diversion of Dungeon lane. It will also have to reserve land for the runway extension and security areas. The implications for any extended Public Safety Zone over Hale and the impact of extended noise contours for sensitive land uses will also have to be considered.

The economic and transport policy implications will also have to be considered so that Halton residents can take full advantage of increased job opportunities through training, business development and better public transport links.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The main risks associated with the Masterplan proposals concerning public safety, noise and environmental impact have been described in this report, together with the mitigation measures that are necessary.

The economic risks of limited new development at the airport are also described in the Masterplan. It considers that failing to invest to support

this growth would eventually result in the decline of the airport over the longer term, as infrastructure fails to meet the demands of the airlines and passengers, such that business moves elsewhere. The most significant consequence of this would be the loss of jobs at the airport and in related businesses in the area.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no such issues arising from the Masterplan proposals that are apparent at this stage in the process.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Liverpool John Lennon Airport – Draft	Planning & Policy Division	Andrew Pannell
Airport Masterplan to 2030, July 2006	Rutland House	Andrew Pannell
Liverpool John Lennon Airport Surface Access Strategy, May 2006	Rutland House	Andrew Pannell