

## **SASIG Workshop: Surface Access to Airports**

Wednesday: 11th July 2018 - 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Room 3-4, LGA, Smith Square, London.

### **Attendees:**

Cllr Keith Artus – Uttlesford District Council (SASIG Chairman)  
Chris Cain – Head of SASIG Secretariat  
Cllr Jamie Macrae – Cheshire West (SASIG Vice Chairman)  
Cllr Nigel Shaw – Broadland District Council (SASIG Vice Chairman)  
Jackie Cheetham – SASIG Honorary President  
Anita Gackowska – Luton Borough Council  
Cllr Gary Jones – East Herts District Council  
Kay Mead – East Herts District Council  
Cllr Derek Mellor – Hampshire County Council  
Darl Sweetland – Bucks County Council  
John Coates – London Borough of Richmond  
Cllr David Sleight – Wokingham Borough Council  
Surinderpal Suri – London Borough of Hounslow  
Jeremy Pine – Uttlesford District Council  
Cllr Robert Mitchell – Essex County Council  
Anne Clitheroe – Essex County Council  
Lesley Smith – SASIG Secretariat  
Anastasia Cain – Northpoint Aviation (support admin).

### **Guests:**

Jeff Bevan – Airport Operators Association (AOA)  
Jack Carnell – MAG Airports  
Neil Pakey – Chairman, Regional & Business Airports Group (RABA)  
Robert Walters – Biggin Hill Airport  
Simon Emery – Highways England  
Shamal Ratnayaka – Transport for London (TfL)

## **Introduction:**

The Head of Secretariat outlined the purpose of the workshop which was to consider ways in which the forthcoming UK Aviation Strategy could help address some of the issues airports and local authorities are facing in relation to surface access management and improvements.

He noted that at the SASIG AGM which had taken place that morning, Sarah Bishop from DfT set out in broad terms how the Government wanted to use the Aviation Strategy to address, in relation to surface access, the very questions it was asking itself (summarised at Appendix A to these minutes). The Head of the Secretariat referenced this steer to the discussions from DfT and noted the apologies received from Toby Eccles and Ian Elston (repeated off-line by Sarah) that they were not able to attend.

People need to access airports from their homes or businesses but getting them from Point A to Point B efficiently, cost effectively and sustainably is often complicated, with enhancements to existing provision requiring thought, planning, collaboration and funding – the latter of which is often in short supply.

There is a perception, with significant supporting evidence, that bigger airports get priority in relation to any direct Government spending and also greater consideration in relation to schemes that could indirectly benefit them (e.g. motorway and trunk road enhancements, rail station and signalling upgrades). This is because of the way their contribution to the economic case for the improvement is calculated (user benefits and absolute figures rather than catalytic benefits and comparison to existing figures), resulting in smaller and medium sized airports often missing out and their needs typically being overlooked.

A fix is required to this discrepancy in policy and the Government's failure to intervene sufficiently, and equitably, to implement the broader aims of Government towards re-balancing the economy. It was the Secretariat's view that a new Aviation Strategy could (and should) make these strategic adjustments, set out some benchmarks for the kind of surface access provision expected of airports of different types and sizes and therefore what will be needed in the longer term to accommodate future growth. Government needs to set out clear pathways for approval, funding and delivery of airport surface access projects for airports, local authorities and other key stakeholders to follow.

## **Speakers:**

Simon Emery, Senior Economic Development Manager, Network Planning Division, Strategy & Planning Directorate of Highways England.

Simon gave a presentation about Highways England's (HE) role in relation to managing the Strategic Road Network (SRN), funding enhancements required to support strategic growth and the implications of this for surface access to airports. [Presentation to be supplied separately].

It was also important to look at the Major Road Network (MRN) as the SRN was not always close-by, therefore presenting access issues. With regards to funding of infrastructure initiatives, any spending on other transport networks would have some impact on HE, possibly creating benefits for HE, therefore they would and should understand how everything could dovetail into the overall objective. There was a need to show value for money when working both regionally and nationally.

He argued that Highways England, the Government, Airports and local stakeholders all need to develop a better understanding of how airports can best be integrated into the overall transport infrastructure network (i.e. rail and other Public Transport as well as trunk roads) rather than just seeing themselves as destinations alone. HE was also keen to liaise with its partner organisations and could also consider playing a supporting role with some of the sub-national transport bodies such as TfN.

It was noted by others that whilst the devolved administrations were well placed to adopt such a regional framework and prioritisation, and that theoretically this is what organisations like TfL, TfN, the Midlands Engine and the Heartlands Alliance should also be able to bring, in practice this is not yet certain and moreover it left many areas of the UK uncovered.

Simon's presentation will be circulated to all SASIG members and attendees of this workshop.

Jeff Bevan, Policy & Public Affairs Officer of the Airport Operators Association (AOA).

The main focus of Jeff's remarks were on the funding of surface access. He recognised that airports should contribute where appropriate, however, it was also important that any such investment had clear benefits to the airport before doing so and that it can afford to make the contribution required.

It was noted that it was typically easier to identify the benefits a larger airport like Gatwick would derive from structural enhancements – that is because they will often help to address bottlenecks or wider congestion; identifying benefits of a scale that would justify large scale investment was more difficult at smaller and more rural location such as Bristol Airport.

It was also a given that in the absence now of Local Transport Plan funding streams, all local councils were under pressure when it came to helping fund airport related transport investment, putting even more onus on the airports themselves. The need for co-ordination between LPA's, airports and other industry bodies nevertheless remained.

AoA also suggested prioritisation was an important consideration in relation to Government sponsored investment on the strategic road and rail network. Government tended to work through strategic bodies like TfN (Transport for the North), TfL (Transport for London), the Heartlands Initiative etc. to determine priorities, but this left regions like the South West, which do not have such an organisation, un-represented.

SASIG commented that the Aviation Strategy needed to identify a more comprehensive and coherent framework of regional organisations if responsibility for prioritisation of spending was to be delegated from the Government. If not there needed to be some clear rules as to the type of projects that might attract support and the evidence base needed to secure it.

#### Neil Pakey – Chairman of RABA.

Neil gave an overview of RABA, which has 40 member airports, each with less than 3 million passengers per annum. One third of the top 120 cities within the UK are best served by smaller airports and these airports need to improve ground access just like the larger ones. However, it is more difficult for them to be sufficiently profitable to afford major capital investments themselves and hence their contribution to UK Plc and to local and city economics needs to be seen more strategically.

Neil was supported by Robert Walters from Biggin Hill Airport who are part of RABA. Robert outlined how Biggin Hill had been turned into a profitable venture over the last 25 years but that with that success, and with substantial job creating developments in prospect, a series of small scale surface access improvements will be needed (e.g. bus links, junction upgrades), but they will mainly benefit non-

airport users. They were not looking for a major road to be built in the short term but would like to find a mechanism for strategic enhancements such as a new motorway junction to be considered.

### Chris Cain – Head of SASIG Secretariat.

Chris began by discussing the differences in terms of core principles between the 2003 White Paper and the 2013 Aviation Policy Framework – noting how the region by region airport specific surface access projects that were considered to be required to facilitate future growth and specified in the 2003 document were missing in the 2013 document. He also highlighted the designation in the 2003 White Paper (para 4.57), that airports are part of the national infrastructure, and compared that policy to the 2013 equivalent, which aligned them with housing/commercial property developments, in order to maximise financial contributions. Even accepting that the 2013 Aviation Policy Framework was drawn up during a period of austerity in which Government spending was under severe pressure, it was SASIG's view that this policy was no longer fit for purpose and a reversion to 2003 principles was needed. There was broad support for this position at the meeting.

Chris also argued the new Aviation Strategy should set out generic principles that explicitly tackle DfT's traditional bias towards larger airports in relation to surface access projects, supported by assessment processes that ensure the needs of airports of all sizes are evaluated on an equitable basis that also reflected a wider Government policy to re-balance the UK economy.

In the absence of any expectation of detailed analysis of airport specific surface access schemes by DfT, Chris set out an indicative airport surface access typology as an alternative guide to the kind of provision needed by airports of different sizes and types. He welcomed views on this after the meeting.

He also highlighted the importance of car parking provision in and around airports as an important policy issue that the DfT needed to look further at to stop rogue parking operations and ensure parking is carefully co-ordinated and planned with airport growth, primarily within airport boundaries or in partnership beyond.

Chris's presentation will be circulated to all SASIG members and attendees of this workshop.

## **Discussion**

After the presentation there followed free ranging discussion of some of the issues that had been raised:

The collective view that a fog has descended on the project development process and funding opportunities for airport related surface access schemes, with the corresponding adverse impact this had on delivery. This in turn requires the Aviation Strategy to cut through the myriad of problems constraining such projects by;

- a). signalling a strong support for projects which enhance surface access to airports and their interchanges,
- b). empowering its own agencies, airports, local authorities and other key stakeholders (e.g. DA's, regional transport authorities, LEPs) to develop focused partnerships to deliver such schemes,
- c). defining clear pathways for project development and approvals; and,
- d). highlighting extant funding options (strategic network programmes, CILs, S106 agreements), creating specific new opportunities (e.g. within a National Infrastructure Fund, City Deals and new growth funding rounds) to replace traditional sources (e.g. Local Transport Plans, ERDF, TENS, EIB, and encouraging other innovative financing solutions.

There was support for ASAS, as separate documents for bigger airports, where a smaller airport faced complex problems that needed partnership working to solve, or in airport masterplans for others. ATF's were considered useful in relation to the former, less so where surface access issues were far less high profile, in which case they could be captured under the agenda of another local grouping.

It was noted that ASAS and masterplans were 'informal/advisory' airport focused documents primarily designed to allow the airport to engage with local stakeholders about its future thinking. A clearer link was needed between Masterplans and Local Development Plans, either by encouraging LPAs to adopt airport generated masterplans/ASAS through their LDP process (i.e. bottom-up), or by creating a framework within their LDP in which a separate Airport or Airport Area Development Plan can be adopted subsequently, but with its interaction with adjacent land use, transport and environmental policy already pre-determined (i.e. top-down).

This would allow opportunities for better surface access integration between airports and their host locations and communities – for example: creating local transport interchanges/park and ride schemes, the need for betterment/CIL/S106 contributions associated with airport projects to be clear and pre-ordained, integration with other development pressures (e.g. housing and commercial development close by) and the potential for community orientated project components to be built into scheme specifications.

## Summary

Summarising the most salient points of the meeting presentations and subsequent discussion, SASIG Chairman Cllr Artus said:

1. There was a greater need for a co-ordinated strategic perspective covering airport development, associated housebuilding and commercial development and non-airport transport markets, to be adopted when examining airport surface access improvement schemes – and that needs to encompass Government as well as the airport, local authorities and wider stakeholders;
2. It was important that all of the various organisations such as those represented at today's workshop, bought into this kind of co-ordinated and directional thinking approach;
3. A detailed and clearer overview is needed of individual and shared responsibilities; and ideally this should also explicitly recognise the importance of an airport's potential role as a node in the wider local and regional transport infrastructure;
4. Innovative funding streams were required to ensure surface access issues can be addressed;
5. Greater recognition by airports themselves as part of the regional transport infrastructure, understanding they were not just transport destinations but transport interchanges as well;
6. Leadership was needed from Government to give local authorities powers to consider and improve the wider surface access requirements in co-operation with airports;
7. There was an absence of surface access development strategies with a regional dimension and associated prioritisation.

Finally, it was agreed that a note of the workshop would be produced with associated presentations; and that the Workshop would form a building block, alongside a membership survey and other research that SASIG would conduct, towards the creation of a matrix of policy asks and illustrative key projects 'encompassing the views of a cross section of member authority airports and guests attending today's workshop, in readiness for their forthcoming meeting with the Aviation Minister, Baroness Sugg.



## **Appendix A: Presentation to SASIG AGM by Sarah Bishop - DfT**

### **Airport Surface Access Issues DfT wish to Address**

#### Hypothesis we want to test:

- There is sufficient coordination and planning of surface access improvements to meet the needs of consumers and the environment
- Recognise the important role good quality choice of road and rail links to airports have in supporting regional growth
- Coordination of public and private investment is difficult
- Whilst it is right that airports should pay for infrastructure for which their consumers solely benefit, government recognises that there are a number of issues associated with this approach

#### Areas to examine:

- Consider the current funding arrangements
- Ownership of infrastructure – merits of airports, local or national government owning the road and rail link
- Consider suitability of rail service – frequencies, first and last trains
- How to promote greater incentives for staff and passengers to use sustainable modes of travel to and from the airport