

Appeal by BAA Ltd and Stansted Airport Ltd following the refusal by Uttlesford District Council of planning application UTT/0717/06/FUL

Revised Summary Proof of Evidence on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion

Surface Access: Rail

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personal details

- 1.1.1 My name is John Andrew Rhodes and I appear at the Public Inquiry on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE') of which I am a member.

1.2 Qualifications and experience

- 1.2.1 I have a degree in Modern History from Oxford. I am a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and of the Royal Society of Arts.
- 1.2.2 Since 1999 I have been an independent public transport consultant, specialising mainly in strategies, organisational structures and regulatory aspects of railways. From 1993-99 I was Passenger Services Director at the Office of the Rail Regulator. Prior to that, I was a senior executive at the British Railways Board, and, from 1988-92, Director General of West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive a period during which I led the PTE's successful bid for Government funding for the electrification of the local rail network.
- 1.2.3 For the earlier part of my working life I was a career civil servant, working mainly in the Departments of the Environment and Transport where my responsibilities included financial oversight of the British Railways Board. I therefore have extensive experience of the railways from the perspectives of financial sponsorship at the Department, as a purchaser of services at the PTE, as a senior executive within the industry, as a regulator of the privatised railway, as a consultant and not least as a former regular commuter on the West Anglia route.

2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 Core evidence

- 2.1.1 Since submission of my proof of evidence SSE/14/a, BAA has produced a revised addendum [CD/14.2] to the Transport Assessment [CD/14] and the Government have published a new policy statement on the railways – 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' [CD/433] – which have made it necessary to amend my evidence. This proof of evidence therefore supersedes any evidence previously submitted by me. It should be considered in conjunction with revised proofs SSE/13.1/a (Roads) and SSE/15.1/a (Demand for Surface Access) on which it to some extent relies.

3 BAA'S PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

3.1 BAA's forecasts and rail capacity constraints

- 3.1.1 BAA in CD/14.2 has modelled airport services using the most recent timetable, with a Stansted Express ('STEX') train every 15 minutes and up to one train per hour (tph) to and from Stratford and one tph to and from Cambridge and points north.

Frequencies and stopping patterns for non-airport Cambridge services are also those in the current timetable.¹

- 3.1.2 The results indicate that in 2014 some peak STEX services would have loads exceeding seating capacity on all three passenger throughputs with 8 car trains but increasing STEX capacity to 12 cars would provide a surplus of seats over passengers even at 35mppa +15%. However, non-airport Stratford slow and Cambridge services would be severely overcrowded.²
- 3.1.3 BAA argues that overcrowding on other services is not its problem because those trains do not call at the airport.³
- 3.1.4 BAA does not volunteer any funding for extending any station outside the airport and explicitly assumes that DfT will fund the additional rolling stock to run 12 car trains.⁴
- 3.1.5 The airport tunnel already operates at full capacity.⁵ The rest of the Lea Valley route is operating at full capacity in the peaks so the current timetable would not allow more frequent services to operate to other destinations.⁶ Only Liverpool Street, Tottenham Hale, Harlow Town, Bishop's Stortford, Audley End and Cambridge have platforms long enough for 12 coach trains. Since all non-airport services stop at other stations too, longer trains to those destinations would not deal with overcrowding unless they too had their platforms extended.

3.2 Shortcomings in BAA's planning assumptions

- 3.2.1 There are a number of flaws in BAA's claim that running longer STEX trains and altering the airport station to accommodate them is all that is needed:
- ~~There still appear to be some discrepancies between the train loading data used in the update [CD/14.2] and the Route Utilisation Strategy ('RUS') [CD/312]. This applies particularly to forecasts of overcrowding in relation to DfT's standards of PIXC (passengers in excess of capacity).⁷ [point deleted during evidence session 3.10.07]~~
 - While train service performance has improved recently, longer or overcrowded trains carrying more passengers will lead to increased station dwell times, creating a performance risk.
 - The relevant services (not just those serving the airport) should be resurveyed to get an accurate picture of current reliability and levels of crowding.

¹ Transport Addendum Update para 4.5.7 [CD/14.2] gives a summary.

² Ibid, Figures 4.1 to 4.8 show peak loadings on some 8 car STEX trains exceeding seating capacity, but with capacity to spare if the same loadings applied to most 12 car STEX trains on all three assumptions about passenger throughput. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show *average* loadings in the 3-hour peaks on Cambridge and Stratford services ranging between 90% and 103% of seating capacity unless 12 car Cambridge trains are used. Such high average load factors over a three hour period imply that many individual services would be grossly overcrowded.

³ CD/14 para 9.4.3 and summary on p140.

⁴ Ibid, p140.

⁵ Network Rail Business Plan, 2006, Route 5: West Anglia, p4.

⁶ Ibid p4.

⁷ ~~BAA's sensitivity tests (table 4.10) forecast that with 8 coach trains on all services, PIXC would be exceeded by between 2.4% and 5.3 % in 2014 in the AM peak three hours, depending on the level of passenger throughput at the airport. However, the RUS anticipates (Table 5.5 and supporting text) that by 2016 15% of West Anglia outer services will be in excess of PIXC on 'do minimum' investment assumptions.~~

- The GB origin and destination assumptions and those for transfer passengers for an enlarged airport are suspect.⁸
- The assumption that rail's market share will not increase is both unambitious and dependent on the suspect assumptions about origins/destinations.⁹
- The claim that overcrowding on non-airport services is nothing to do with Stansted expansion is misleading. The timetable is planned around the requirement to provide the regular interval STEX services. These limit the capacity available for other services, so that peak overcrowding could only be alleviated if STEX frequencies were reduced or more intermediate stops were added to them.
- The assumption that the response to overcrowding on airport services would be for DfT or the train operator to fund additional rolling stock to run 12 car STEX trains is contrary to past experience.¹⁰
- In addition to lack of track and train capacity, handling additional passengers may raise safety questions about the adequacy of the passenger circulation areas at Liverpool Street, Tottenham Hale and Seven Sisters.¹¹

4 DRAFT ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

- 4.1 The draft RUS lends weight to our analysis of shortcomings in BAA's strategy set out above. Although it examines options for running longer trains and/or providing additional track capacity, none of these schemes has been worked up in detail or secured funding from any source. It is unlikely that any of these proposals would be delivered by 2014. The more likely prospect for users of West Anglia services is that trips would be 'crowded off' trains which were seriously overloaded¹², unless the airport is capped at its present 25mppa limit and the timetable rearranged to provide more capacity for commuters.

5 DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE RAILWAY

- 5.1 The 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' White Paper¹³ sets out the Government's general policies and includes a Statement of Funds Available and a High Level Output Specification ('HLOS') covering the period 2009-14. The purpose of these is to inform the Office of Rail Regulation's ('ORR') decisions about Network Rail's funding requirements over that period, and to enable ORR to decide on which outputs to reduce to meet the funds available if that should be necessary.
- 5.2 Although the White Paper makes a passing reference to longer trains, it is unlikely that new trains would run on the West Anglia route by 2014. Modern trains have carriages 23m long, compared with 20m vehicles used on the West Anglia route, and a different type of traction equipment. It is unlikely that modern trains could operate on the route

⁸ See SSE/13.1/a and SSE/15.1/a.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ British Rail removed intermediate stops from STEX services as airport traffic increased in the 1990's and, unless prevented from doing so by franchise commitments, this is likely to be the operator's response again. It is also the policy BAA and National Express, the owners of train operator 'one', to operate dedicated airport services.

¹¹ Network Rail, Business Plan, p4. Although not referred to here, the passenger concourse at Liverpool Street is small and rapidly becomes congested if there is service disruption in the evening peak.

¹² See tables 5.3 and 5.5 in the RUS [CD/312].

¹³ Cm 7176 [CD/433].

without modifications to the infrastructure clearances, platform lengths, signalling equipment and berthing facilities, none of which appear to have been allowed for in the Government's HLOS.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 BAA's strategy cannot be relied upon to meet the demands of both airport and non-airport users on the West Anglia route. If precedence continues to be given to STEX trains in planning the timetable, then the capacity available to serve the non-airport market cannot be increased.
- 6.2 There are still some doubts about the train loading projections, the assumptions for airport passenger origins, destinations and transfers appear to be suspect, the strategy makes no contribution towards reducing car use by airport users and the timing and funding of any rail improvements is entirely unclear.
- 6.3 BAA could follow the strategy incorporated in the 2003 s106 agreement associated with its current planning permission for 25mppa¹⁴ and which will continue in force if its Appeal is dismissed. There is no difficulty in principle in BAA funding directly the additional facilities described in the agreement and to do so will provide greater certainty as to their delivery which would not otherwise be the case.
- 6.4 Since BAA is committed to funding these rail enhancements for a 25mppa airport, their delivery should clearly have been completed before any expansion beyond that limit is allowed. It would be entirely consistent with Government policy for BAA to now make these commitments unconditionally.¹⁵
- 6.5 However, this Appeal seeks to evade the commitments already made and anticipates that rail's contribution to meeting the surface access needs of the airport should be allowed to continue to decline as the proposed airport expansion increases the requirement. As such the strategy is wholly inadequate and will fail to contribute to BAA's own stated objectives for surface access.¹⁶ The Appeal should therefore be dismissed.

¹⁴ Annexed to the main proof of evidence SSE/14.1/b.

¹⁵ CD/433 para 8.11 emphasises that airport operators and developers will have to bear a proportion of the costs of airport specific rail improvements.

¹⁶ BAA op cit Volume 11 [CD/14] Table 2.2 describes the first key objective of the Transport Assessment as being to 'Propose measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling, to reduce travel, especially by car.'