

**SUPERLINK**

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### **Submission to London Airports Inquiry**

Thank you for inviting us to make a submission to the Inquiry.

London is one of the few where competition is possible between international hub airports within a single city region. Currently only Heathrow can be described as a major international hub, in serving long haul, interlining and premium passengers as well as short distance and low fare travel. Gatwick, Luton and City are likely to remain constrained to specific markets by runway and terminal capacity. London is the leading world city and continued growth in wealth and population will be impeded if additional airport gateway capacity is not available.

We think that with targeted rail investment to complement the construction of additional runway and terminal capacity, it would be possible to develop Stansted to compete head-to-head with Heathrow. This will benefit air passengers and the wider London and UK economies. However, we think that BAA will not pursue this opportunity, and that Stansted will not be developed to its full potential, as long as it remains in common ownership with Heathrow.

Heathrow operates very close to capacity and the quality of the travel experience is often degraded due to congestion. While Terminal 5 and Heathrow East will improve the terminal experience, without a third runway flight delays are likely to persist and even worsen. While the economic case for a third runway at Heathrow may be strong, there are environmental and planning obstacles that seem likely to delay construction, perhaps forever.

Stansted offers the most realistic opportunity to develop additional runways, which would have the capacity to be served, like Heathrow, with a full range of local and long haul flights. However, if Stansted is to develop into a major hub airport, it also needs improved surface access.

Since the 1980s, Government policy (sometimes stated, at other times implicit or *de facto*) has been to give private developers a major role in determining and funding transport infrastructure and especially airport and international gateway transport. Over the years, BAA has provided capital funding for Heathrow Express, Stansted Express, and extensions to the Piccadilly Line. The Canary Wharf developers contributed to the DLR and Jubilee Line Extension, and local developers have funded stations at North Greenwich, Cutty Sark, Chelsea Harbour, White City, and elsewhere. Private sector beneficiaries have also funded improvements to rail and road access to Felixstowe and Southampton ports.

BAA has contributed to the cost of some rail improvements to Stansted, however it has usually avoided making proactive proposals. Presumably BAA has a strategy of waiting for DfT to pay for improvements, such as West Anglia Route Modernisation, that are required also to serve non-



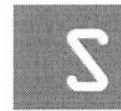
airport traffic, thereby paying only the incremental costs for example of lengthening a few stations for 12 car trains. BAA also seems fairly equivocal about development of Stansted, because it prefers instead to develop a third runway at Heathrow. In this respect it has behaved as a classic monopolist, restricting investment and output against the wider public interest. Before making any major investment improving Stansted, BAA seems to look first at whether it will weaken the case for a third runway at Heathrow. If major transport improvements are to be provided to Stansted, the owner of Stansted will need to take a leading role in promoting and paying for them.

We believe that an independent owner of Stansted would behave very differently than BAA, seeking to develop a second or even third runway in the near future and establish it as an international hub airport. To do this, it would also be necessary to develop improved transport links to Stansted. In particular, Stansted requires a fast high quality rail link to the West End, comparable to Heathrow Express, if it is to compete with Heathrow for global business and leisure passengers.

Crossrail is a scheme being sponsored by DfT and TfL to build a new railway across London, linking Heathrow, the West End, City and Canary Wharf. Currently, a Hybrid Bill is before Parliament for the scheme, including branches extending to Maidenhead, Shenfield, and Abbey Wood. Superlink is a group of senior rail executives who have played key roles in developing Heathrow and Stansted Express, CTRL, DLR and the Jubilee Extension, and who have been responsible for operating Network Southeast and Intercity as well as several private rail companies. We believe that the current Crossrail scheme is out of date and ill-conceived. The scheme actually pre-dates the existing Stansted Airport terminal and has only been “adapted” to serve Heathrow and Canary Wharf after intervention of the Mayor. If built as currently designed, it will not deliver many of the promised benefits. DfT is claiming that Crossrail will provide improved access to Stansted, based on flawed assumptions about how the West Anglia rail line can operate. Although the current Crossrail Bill includes proposals to run trains into Heathrow, BAA is notably unenthusiastic about the scheme. Indeed it petitioned against the Bill and has resisted plans to integrate Heathrow Express with Crossrail services. While “final” plans have not been disclosed, it seems that BAA would require Crossrail trains to run to Terminal 4 but not Terminal 5. BAA is instead providing support for the “Airtrack” scheme which will allow local trains from the Waterloo-Windsor line to enter Heathrow. This link would be useful for employees and some local residents, but would serve only a tiny proportion of air passengers.

Superlink has shown how the Crossrail scheme, including the Hybrid Bill, can be adapted to become part of a London “S-Bahn” system which can provide major improvement to access both to Stansted and Heathrow. Superlink could use the same tunnel alignment under central London, but with fast frequent rail services between Stansted, Canary Wharf, the City, West End, and Heathrow. Trains would run through to many other major centres across Southeast England, including Cambridge, Ipswich, Southend, Woking, Basingstoke, Reading, and Milton Keynes. Superlink would provide the kind of regional rail links, with same-train or same platform connections, that the ICE and S-Bahn services provide between Frankfurt, Cologne and Düsseldorf airports.

Superlink would require some additional infrastructure. Although the capital costs are not trivial, they would be mostly or entirely offset by additional fare revenue. In the context of BAA’s announced £14 billion investment programme, the costs of the rail proposals are actually rather modest.



**SUPERlink**

To serve Stansted, Superlink would extend the Crossrail lines from Canary Wharf, in tunnel to Fairlop Waters, then mostly on the surface to Sawbridgeworth where it would connect onto the existing West Anglia Line. A surface alignment has been identified that has minimal impacts on built up areas and which avoids sensitive areas. This would allow a fast 4 train per hour service from Stansted via Canary Wharf and the City to the West End and on to Heathrow. The same tracks would be used by additional fast services from Cambridge, and from Ipswich and Southend Victoria via a connection near Shenfield. The capital cost of this infrastructure, about £2 billion, would be almost entirely offset by net additional passenger fares. With journey times of 30 minutes from Stansted to Canary Wharf, 45 minutes to Paddington, and one hour to Heathrow, Stansted would have the sort of fast connections it needs to be able to attract long haul full service airlines. The existing, "Stansted Express" to Liverpool Street would become a local service, making additional stops serving residents and workers in northeast London.

The link between Heathrow and Stansted would be useful for some interlining passengers, further enhancing the attraction and efficiency of Stansted.

We have made proposals for other branches of the Crossrail (or Superlink) system, offering through trains to Woking, Basingstoke, Watford, Milton Keynes and Northampton. Passengers from more than 200 stations across southeast England would be able to travel to Heathrow or Stansted with, at most, a single same-platform interchange. For example passengers from Milton Keynes would travel to Paddington, then cross the platform for a train to Heathrow. We attach a map of the Superlink concept. Further details including detailed economic and financial analysis are available at [www.Superlink.org.uk](http://www.Superlink.org.uk).

We have explained our proposals to some members of BAA's development team. BAA managers as individuals have indicated that the proposals are attractive and have the potential to attract substantial numbers of airport travellers and workers onto rail. However there is little appetite from BAA for making proposals that might require additional contributions of their funds in "risky" capital projects. There is also no appetite for any strategy to develop Stansted as a true rival to Heathrow.

Just as Canary Wharf promoted the JLE so that it could compete with the City of London, we think that an independent owner of Stansted airport would seek to develop Superlink to compete with Heathrow. The benefits to air travellers to London would be enormous, as could be the rewards to an independent Stansted Airport developer.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to meet with the Inquiry.

Sincerely

Michael Schabas



## Crossing the Capital - Connecting the UK

### The Superlink Network

