

# Strategic Transport Leadership Board

24 May 2024

## Agenda Item 5: London Luton Airport Expansion Update

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Notes the update on the progress of Luton Air Development Consent Order and relevant presentation.**

### **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1. To provide background information on Luton Airport's expansion plans to complement the presentation to the EEH Board by Luton Rising's managing director Nick Platts.

### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. London Luton Airport, which is owned by Luton Council, is the fifth busiest airport in the UK and a very significant employer in the region.
- 2.2. There are plans for the airport to expand its passenger numbers using the existing runway, with the addition of a new terminal.
- 2.3. The expansion plans are being determined by the Secretary of State through the Development Consent Order process.
- 2.4. EEH's representation regarding the expansion has focused on surface access to an enlarged airport.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. Luton Airport is the EEH region's biggest airport and the fifth busiest in the UK, while it is also one of the largest private aviation hubs in Europe. It is owned by Luton Council via Luton Rising, the trading name for London Luton Airport Limited.
- 3.2. London Luton Airport Limited (LLAL) plans to increase capacity of the airport, including a new terminal. The development is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008, meaning LLAL must apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 3.3. To inform the Development Consent Order, LLAL commenced a statutory consultation on 18 October 2019. The consultation ran until 16 December 2019. EEH submitted a representation to this initial consultation. It was agreed by the then EEH Strategic Transport Forum that EEH's position was that overall, it supported the principle of expanding London Luton Airport, but that that support was conditional upon LLAL being able to demonstrate that the package of supporting measures is sufficiently robust and deliverable, as well as being consistent with the policy framework of the EEH's then draft Transport Strategy.



- 3.4. The Development Consent Order application was delayed due to the pandemic and the proposal subsequently revised. In 2023 as part of the Development Consent Order process, EEH was invited to register as an interested party in order to submit a formal representation to airport expansion proposals as part of the Examination in Public. This recently concluded on 10 February 2024.
- 3.5. EEH submitted a written representation emphasising the importance of the airport to the region and that the success of the expansion was reliant on a robust surface access strategy and the provision of sufficient mitigation to minimise its impact on the wider transport network. It should be noted that EEH's comments were related only to surface access transport: no comments were made on aircraft movements.
- 3.6. In response to this submission EEH were invited to attend the Examination in Public, in person on 28 September 2023, to further request points of clarification from the applicant on matters related to surface transport.
- 3.7. The results of the examination and DCO process will be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Transport for consideration during May 2024 to determine the outcome of the DCO of the proposed expansion.

#### **4. Expansion Proposition**

- 4.1. The airport is applying for permission to expand to 32 million passengers per annum. This is still achievable with the existing runway capacity at LLAL, meaning the expansion plans are focused on a new terminal and associated surface infrastructure.
- 4.2. The key consideration for England's Economic Heartland is the provision of sustainable surface access provision to support the expansion.
- 4.3. LLAL is making the following objectives for their provision of surface access as part of the expansion proposition:
  - a) To increase the current passengers public transport usage from 32% to 45% as a minimum
  - b) 54% of staff commuting by public transport, cycling and walking
  - c) Funding off-site highway improvements to accommodate additional trips on the highway network
  - d) Extending the DART transit service (Railway Station to Airport) from Terminal 1 to the proposed Terminal 2
  - e) Building a new coach station for the proposed Terminal 2
  - f) Promoting parking and traffic management measures e.g. car parking restriction to encourage use of public transport
  - g) Building new, and reconfiguring, short-stay and long-stay car parks
  - h) An addition 7,750 car parking spaces (48% increase in provision compared to a total 77% increase in passengers per annum)
  - i) Encouraging the use of electric vehicles by providing rapid charging points

#### **5. The regional transport strategy**

- 5.1. The EEH Transport Strategy recognises Luton Airport as a place of strategic importance, it is the only major airport in the region and a key international gateway. The strategy actively encourages investment in improved, decarbonised surface access connectivity that addresses and reduces the environmental impact of international gateways. It references Luton Airport as focus for European services and a key hub for private business aviation services in Europe.
- 5.2. Transport Strategy Policy 30, Connecting to Global Markets, states that EEH will work with infrastructure owners/operators, Network Rail, Highways England and government to improve surface access by public transport to international airports in order to reduce the environmental footprint of their operations, with priority given to:



- Luton Airport – with a focus on improving travel opportunities via services on the Midland Main Line, and ensuring the right level of service and capacity on the Direct Air Rapid Transit service (DART)
- 5.3. Delivery of the Direct Air Rapid Transit (DART) has been key to improving connectivity between Luton Airport Parkway Station and the airport. Improving travel opportunities via national rail services stopping at Luton Airport Parkway has significantly reduced the need to travel to the airport by car, especially for those arriving from the north and south.
- 5.4. EEH Strategic Transport Forum Paper dating from 2019 recommended forum members *“support the principle of expanding London Luton Airport, but that that support is conditional upon LLAL being able to demonstrate that the package of supporting measures is sufficiently robust and deliverable, as well as being consistent with the policy framework of the draft Transport Strategy”*.

## 6. EEH’s representation

- 6.1. EEH’s written representation, dated August 2023, built on a similar theme that EEH’s support for the expansion of Luton Airport should be viewed through the lens of the strategic ambition for the region, as well as within the context of national targets, including those in relation to decarbonisation of the transport system as set out in EEH’s now adopted transport strategy. It should also be consistent with and support the proposals from EEH’s connectivity studies and investment prioritisation framework.
- 6.2. Some of the key points highlighted in our representation included:
- Investment in the delivery of measures that improve local connectivity between the airport and the immediate surrounding area - especially by active travel modes.
  - Bus and Coach Provision – the proposal to establish a new coach station and a new bus station is welcomed. Investment in and delivery of public transport infrastructure and revenue funding to support coaches and bus services to provide better connections to Aylesbury, Hertfordshire and Oxford and more regular direct connections with Stanstead.
  - Ensure funding is linked to proposed modal shift targets to support alternative modes of travel to all parts of the region.
  - Work with train operators - currently East Midlands Railway and Thameslink- to ensure levels of service enable Luton Airport Parkway station to serve as a gateway to the airport and this must be reflected in the level of service provided with seamless connectivity with the DART.
  - Careful management of car parking as significant increases in car parking are proposed. Increases to on-site car parking should only be considered once local public transport infrastructure and services have been fully exploited.
  - Investment in improved highway infrastructure should prioritise improvements that support local connectivity and public transport services.
  - There is a need to address potential issues on A505 through Hitchin, Luton’s MRN and potential impacts on local villages in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.
  - There should be consideration of better links with the future East West Rail route and in particular opportunities through interchange to provide rail connectivity to Milton Keynes, Cambridge, Oxford and beyond.
  - Quantify how they will ensure the proposal is consistent with the national targets to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050. The applicant should consider how its own and airside operations can contribute to net zero, potentially through electric air side vehicles.
  - Greater clarity over funding and management of the Sustainable Transport Fund. Not all EEH local transport authority partners are currently represented on working groups so there is concern that local connectivity requirements could be overlooked in favour of north-south connectivity.



- Suggested to ensure a strategic and fair focus that EEH are part of any decision-making group to ensure that funding is focused where it is likely to have the most impact.

## **7. Next Steps**

- 7.1. The Luton Airport examination closed on 10 February 2024 and is now at the recommendation stage of the DCO process. The examining authority have written their recommendation report and submitted it to the Secretary of State for determination.

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**May 2024**

