



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (SPELTHORNE)

HEATHROW AIRTRACK

7 November 2008

KEY ISSUE

How to respond to BAA's consultation on the Heathrow Airtrack rail scheme.

SUMMARY

Heathrow Airtrack is a proposal to provide a new rail link to Heathrow Terminal 5 from various stations across the rail network currently covered by South West Trains services, via Staines, a new 'chord' and a new rail line across Stanwell Moor. BAA, as scheme promoters, are seeking views on their latest proposals which build on an earlier consultation exercise in spring 2008. (Document circulated separately to Members)

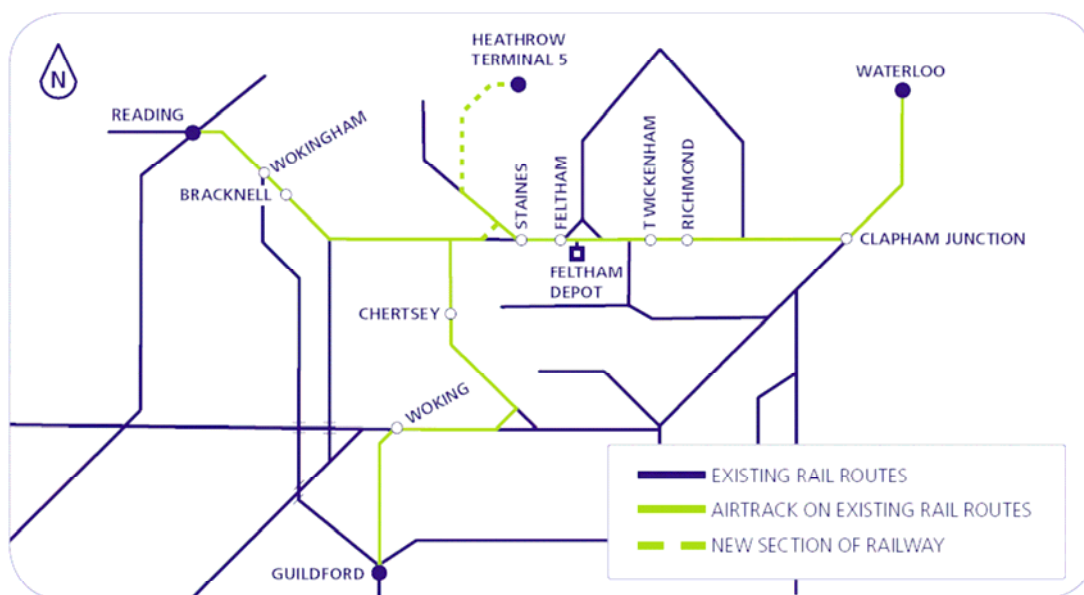
OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Spelthorne Local Committee is asked to provide its comments either to BAA or to inform the County Council's corporate response as part of the latest consultation exercise on the scheme.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The proposed Heathrow Airtrack scheme would provide a new rail link to Heathrow airport Terminal 5 via Staines. It would complement the existing Heathrow Express service from Paddington to Terminal 5 by providing direct services to and from London Waterloo, Reading and Woking/ Guildford.

PROPOSED ROUTE AND DESTINATIONS OF HEATHROW AIRTRACK



Source: BAA Heathrow Airtrack Consultation Brochure 2, October 2008

- 1.2 BAA intend to submit a Transport and Works Act application for this scheme in early 2009. If the scheme is approved by the Government, construction could start towards the end of 2010 and be operational in 2014. The scheme could not realistically be operational in time for the 2012 Olympic games.
- 1.3 In spring 2008, BAA carried out a first round of consultation. This focussed on the new rail infrastructure required by the scheme, including the line across Stanwell Moor, a new rail chord in Staines and a proposal for a new station at Staines High Street.
- 1.4 The current consultation features revised proposals for this section, as well as details of the wider scheme outside this area.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 The current proposal differs from the first round of consultation in a number of respects:
- The proposal for a new High Street station has been removed from the scheme.

- Two of the current four Heathrow Express services per hour from London Paddington will run through from Terminal 5 to the existing Staines station. Together with two Airtrack services per hour from London Waterloo, this will provide four services per hour from Staines to Heathrow.
- There will be one train per hour between Guildford/Woking and Heathrow Airport at peak times, with two per hour at off-peak times. These trains, and the services from Reading, will not stop in Staines because of the removal of the High Street station from the scheme.
- The line over the moor will not feature overhead electrification, as proposed in the first consultation. Trains will change from overhead electricity supply to “third rail” electricity supply as they come out of the tunnel from Terminal 5.
- There have been some changes to the proposed redesign of Staines (existing) station.
- The route of the line across Staines Moor has been moved closer towards the M25.
- Although outside Surrey, BAA propose a new depot for the Airtrack trains at Feltham.

2.2 **Level crossing down times.** The consultation document identifies likely effects on level crossings, caused by the increase in the number of train services. Four crossings are identified as being “significantly affected, with increased delays and congestion:

- Thorpe Road, Staines
- Vicarage Road, Pooley Green
- Station Road, Egham
- Barkham Road, Wokingham

2.3 The consultation document does not quantify the extent of the additional delays for these four level crossings. A further four level crossings will experience a decrease in the times that the barriers are open of between 10% and 25%. These are:

- Sheen Lane, Mortlake
- Manor Road, North Sheen
- Star Lane, Wokingham
- Station Road, Addlestone

2.4 A further seven level crossings are expected to have decreases in barrier open times of up to 10%. The delays at these crossings are likely to be minimal.

2.5 Officers from the County Council have opened discussions with BAA and their advisors about the extent of the congestion problems caused by the increased level crossing down-times.

- 2.6 **Staines High Street station.** The removal of this station causes a loss of amenity to Staines that would otherwise have been delivered by the Airtrack scheme, including the possibility of being able to make direct Staines – Woking/Guildford trips by train, without the requirement for a change of trains. The station would be expensive to build, and BAA does not believe that the likely usage of the station would allow a business case to be made for its inclusion. There would also have been environmental impacts from the construction of a new station.
- 2.7 **Extension of Heathrow Express services to Staines.** This will allow direct access from Staines to Heathrow Central Terminals station and London Paddington without a change of trains, rather than just Terminal 5, as would be the case with only Airtrack services from Staines to Heathrow.
- 2.8 **Overhead Electrification across Staines Moor.** Partly as a result of strong local opposition, this proposal has now been dropped. Third rail electrification will be used instead (this has a low visual impact and will assist in helping to minimise the visual impact of the Airtrack line as it skirts the SSSI). Heathrow Express trains, which at present can only collect power from overhead electricity lines, will be fitted with equipment to collect power from the electrified third rail.
- 2.9 **Redesign of Staines station.** The station will now feature a “bay”, (terminating) additional platform rather than the “through” platform originally proposed. The ticket office building will be rebuilt but very few details of the proposed facilities are included.
- 2.10 **Premium fares on services to the Airport.** BAA say that a supplement will be charged on journeys between Staines and the Airport, but not on Airtrack trains over the rest of their journeys. A similar arrangement already exists on Heathrow Connect, a local train service which runs from London Paddington to Terminal 4, but unlike Heathrow Express stops at several intermediate stations. On Heathrow Connect, fares are exactly the same as ordinary National Rail services for all trips taking place on the London Paddington-Hayes section of line, and all normal railcard discounts/travelcards etc can be used. Fares beyond Hayes to Heathrow Airport are more expensive, and travelcards cannot be used.
- 2.11 **Rights of way across Staines Moor.** Several variations to the current arrangements are proposed.
- 2.12 **The Staines Chord.** The chord will link the two existing railway lines in Staines allowing Airtrack services from the Guildford and Reading routes to access Terminal 5 without having to reverse at Staines (existing) station. Construction of the chord will result in changes to the surface car park and to the access into the multi-storey car park for the Elmsleigh Centre. These arrangements are still under investigation, but will mean the amount of surface car parking will reduce by about 70 spaces.

2.13 **Impact on existing train services.** BAA have not yet finalised a draft timetable for the Airtrack services, so it is not possible to say how they will affect existing train services (i.e. whether journey times will be extended, or train times altered). Airtrack services between Staines and London Waterloo will provide additional, much-needed, commuting capacity into London, but these services will not serve smaller stations such as Ashford, and nor will they offer extra capacity into London for any station west of Staines. Airtrack services will take up all the remaining spare track capacity which exists on the lines into London, and their addition to the network will therefore preclude any additional train services into London for stations such as Ashford, unless significant track and signalling improvements are made, for which there are currently no plans.

2.14 Overall, the consultation document is relatively short. As indicated, there is little information about the operational details, such as the pattern of services, the timetable impact on other rail services, and the fares structure. The environmental impact of the scheme is being studied as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment which has not yet been completed.

2.15 The material focuses heavily on the rail scheme and does not consider in detail how people will access the scheme, including the impact on local road movements, car parking or station interchange. There is no information yet on the construction phase of the scheme.

2.16 The benefits of the scheme are described in general terms:

- Up to 10 million passengers could use the services, with a 250,000 travelling to or from Heathrow
- Improved public transport access, including additional commuter capacity into Waterloo.
- Opportunities for economic growth in Staines and a wider area to the south and west of Heathrow
- Reduced road traffic

3 OPTIONS

3.1 On the existing track two pedestrian level crossings in Staines that provide access on to Staines Moor will be closed. Alternative access is to be provided and BAA are currently looking at two options:

- Using an existing bridge over the railway and building a new bridge over the Windsor branch line
- Using an existing bridge over the railway and building two new bridges, one over the Wraysbury River and one over the Windsor branch line.

- 3.2 There are three options to provide for the footpath, bridleway and cycleway across Staines Moor:
- To remain in their current location, which would mean being located between the new rail line and the M25,
 - To be relocated involving new construction to the east of the new rail line,
 - To build the rail link to the east of the existing bridleway so it could remain open during construction and build a new footpath, bridleway and cycleway to the east of the rail link. However, this option would increase the amount of land taken from the SSSI.
- 3.3 The Local Committee may choose to make its own response to this consultation exercise. Alternatively, individual members may wish to input their own comments directly to BAA, either in writing or in one of a number of public meetings. The Committee may also wish to make recommendations to the County Council Executive for inclusion in its formal response.
- 3.4 The County Council has previously supported the principle of the Heathrow Airtrack scheme for the benefits that it will bring to Surrey in general and Spelthorne Borough in particular. BAA are to be congratulated for accommodating a number of local concerns in their redesign of the scheme following the first round of consultation.
- 3.5 There remain several issues of detail where the County Council will want to be reassured about the impact of the scheme on residents and businesses. This includes the impact of the new services on level crossings, noise, local traffic, car parking and station access. We would also need to see a proposed rail timetable to assess whether the new services would be compatible with other rail services.
- 3.6 The Committee may therefore wish to qualify its response to this consultation exercise by indicating that it is subject to the satisfactory completion of discussions between the Borough and County officers on the details of the scheme.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 BAA have sent copies of their consultation material to a wide circulation list. They are holding a number of public events to publicise the scheme and receive comments.
- 4.2 BAA's timetable assumes that they will submit a bid for Transport and Works Act powers in early 2009. This is likely to involve a public inquiry in late 2009.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no immediate cost implications of this scheme. The funding package has not yet been established, but there are no suggestions that it would require funding by either the County Council or Borough Council. The scheme could bring economic benefits to Surrey and Spelthorne. These benefits have not yet been quantified.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In general terms, improving rail services has positive equalities and diversity implications because it improves mobility for people without access to a car. Any new trains required for this service are likely to be more accessible than existing trains.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Heathrow Airtrack scheme would bring positive benefits to Spelthorne and Surrey. It would not only improve access to Heathrow, but would also increase capacity for other rail services. This would help to reduce rail overcrowding and provide an alternative to the private car.
- 8.2 There are likely to be economic benefits. The scheme would help airport employees to travel to work. It would also help to improve Surrey's attractiveness as a location for businesses by providing direct rail access to Heathrow for overseas travel.
- 8.3 However, as with all major transport schemes, there would be disadvantages. There will inevitably be some disruption during the construction phase. Increases in the number of rail services will lead to longer/ more frequent level crossing closures.
- 8.4 The Committee may wish to recommend that the scheme be supported in principle, but that officers should continue to work with BAA to reduce these negative impacts

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To provide a response from the Local Committee to BAA and/or to inform the formal response from Surrey County Council when it is considered by the Executive on 2 December 2008.

10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 10.1 The closing date for the current consultation is 15 December 2008.
- 10.2 After this second round of consultation, BAA intend to submit a Transport and Works Act order application in early 2009. A public inquiry is expected in late 2009 and if powers are approved, construction is expected to commence at the end of 2010. Services would start in 2014.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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