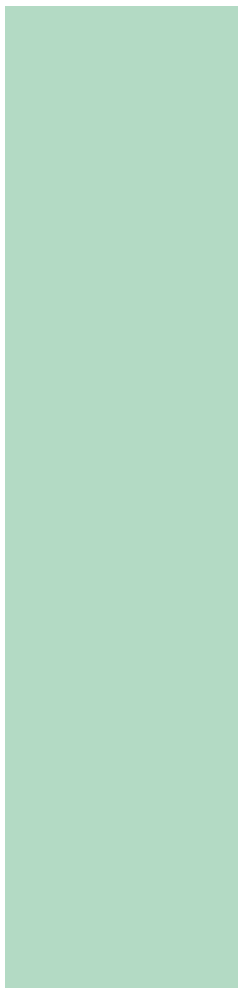




**THE MIDLANDS'
AVIATION
MASTER PLAN**



**MANAGING
MIDLANDS'
AIR
TRANSPORT
SUSTAINABLY
FOR THE
21st
CENTURY
SUMMARY REPORT**

Introduction

In this summary of our report, we set aviation in the East and West Midlands in a sustainable development context – something which the Government's Air Transport White Paper conspicuously failed to do. Our report is designed for central and local government, government agencies and airports themselves. The full report, with substantiation and referencing, is available on request.


Our General Conclusions

- Predicting future demand for air transport is a hazardous business. The Government have overestimated future UK demand and expect the Midlands to take a much larger share than it does now. Demand is elastic and does not have to be met in full. If aviation growth continues, it could take up the entire climate-change emissions budget for all sectors of the UK economy by 2037; this is one of the most crucial factors which will require that the demand for flying must be rigorously managed. The growth in air freight should proceed more slowly than in the past.
- Economic benefits of aviation – such as job and wealth creation – are difficult to quantify, often overestimated and rarely tested after the event. Crucially, economic costs – such as the huge and rapidly growing 'tourism deficit', loss of investment, traffic congestion, costs to the health service and wider environmental costs – are usually left out of the equation. The result is an incomplete and often distorted picture of aviation's economic impact.
- Aviation has serious global and local effects on the environment. The Government says it wants aviation to meet more of its external costs but has done little to achieve that. The impact of climate change is already being felt across the globe. Local environmental impact – for example on the landscape, wildlife heritage and waterways – can be severe, and controls and mitigation are very patchy.
- Before proceeding with expansion on this scale, more research is needed to establish the effects of air pollution and noise on health. Aircraft noise is a major problem for communities living near airports and under flight paths and the increasing frequency of flights means that they do not feel the benefit of quieter aircraft. The way aircraft noise is measured needs to be reviewed to reflect actual experience. The young, elderly and those suffering from respiratory or cardiac disease are most at risk from air pollution.
- Contrary to popular belief, the growth in air travel has mainly benefited the rich. People in the top three social classes fly four times as often as those in the lowest three. It is often poorer people who suffer most from the negative impact of aviation on the ground.
- Development associated – directly or indirectly – with an airport adds greatly to its urbanising effect, often taking up twice as much land as the airport itself. Master plans and planning proposals often take little notice of this issue, with development (which often goes against planning policy) being treated as unavoidable at a later date.
- Access to airports can be a major problem and may constrain the growth of Midlands airports. Schemes to improve the transport network should be paid for by the airport operator, but not all of them will be justified on cost or environmental grounds. It is essential that consistently high targets are set and enforced to promote greater use of public transport to reach Midlands' airports.
- Some relatively small district councils are poorly resourced to deal with major airport expansion proposals with regional or national significance. In such cases, there is a strong argument for call-in of the proposal by the First Secretary of State for his own decision. If this happens, it is important that the decision is taken independently and not unduly influenced by the overtly pro-aviation stance of the Department for Transport.


Our Views on Particular Airports

- **Birmingham** – Substantial growth can be accommodated on the existing runway. The cases for a second runway and for an extension to the existing runway are not proven. Serious access problems, noise and green belt implications all argue for the growth of the airport to be carefully controlled.
- **Nottingham East Midlands** – There is no case at all for a second runway. The assumed economic benefits brought to the region by air freight logistics companies must be rigorously and independently assessed and the negative economic impacts investigated. The airport should be designated so that night flying and noise can be brought under control.
- **Coventry** – The case for expanding the airport and changing its role towards low-cost passenger flights has not been made. Public transport access is difficult, the airport is cramped and there are significant environmental constraints.
- **Wolverhampton Business Airport** - Commercial passenger flights at this small airport should be strongly resisted. They would have totally unacceptable environmental, transport and development consequences, ruining the character of this deeply rural area.
- **Robin Hood, Doncaster (Finningley)** – Commercial flights have now been introduced but should be pegged at the level in the existing permission. Public transport access needs considerable improvement.

Our Recommendations

- A study by the two regional development agencies of the demand for rapid freight delivery and the way the air freight industry meets that demand. Goods which must go by air should be separated from those for which other, less environmentally damaging transport is available.
 - Independent economic audits of any proposals for airport expansion, covering economic costs as well as benefits.
 - Government action to ensure that aviation meets a much greater proportion of the environmental costs it imposes on society.
 - Effective application of the new Strategic Environmental Assessment process to airport proposals.
 - Further research into the health effects of aviation particulate matter.
 - Further research into noise related health effects, leading to refinement of noise measures to provide a more accurate picture of the nuisance caused to those affected.
 - All Midlands airports to be brought up to the standards of noise protection of the best UK airports. In particular, night flying should be brought firmly under control at those airports where this is not currently the case.
 - Airport master plans and other expansion proposals to include assessments of the scale and type of development likely to be stimulated by airport expansion.
 - A new green belt to be designated to protect the area surrounding Nottingham East Midlands Airport from development.
 - More radical proposals for airport access, such as remote check-in, to be fully considered.
 - Clear, stretching targets for the proportion of passenger and staff access to an airport by public transport to be set and implemented. There should be a 'level playing field' between different airports.
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What Local Authorities and Others Can Do

- Frame clear policies which meet sustainable development principles and balance the case for expansion against environmental and other factors;
 - Take a close interest in airport master plans, which often reflect commercial, not planning, objectives;
 - Give more weight to the views of those affected by air transport;
 - Critically examine consultancy work commissioned by airports to support their case;
 - Take a close interest in compensation schemes on behalf of their electors;
 - Ensure that planning conditions and agreements are used to secure the highest environmental standards attainable;
 - Monitor airport activities closely to make sure operators keep their promises and meet their obligations.
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In Conclusion

The Air Transport White Paper gave the aviation industry most of what it wanted. The Government's pro-aviation stance prevented them from taking an impartial and balanced look at the issues. But the White Paper is nowhere near the last word on the subject. Regional planning bodies and local authorities are now in the driving seat, with the opportunity to take a fresh look at the issues as they develop policies and react to specific proposals. This report gives them much of the ammunition they will need to do that, and suggests a way forward for Midlands' aviation which balances all the key issues in a sustainable way.

The full report can be downloaded from:

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/mids_masterplan_brief.pdf

To order printed copies of the report please contact:

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