



## **Terms of Reference:**

Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Studies

March 2014

Airports Commission  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT  
General email [airports.enquiries@airports.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:airports.enquiries@airports.gsi.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

You may re-use this information (not including logos or third-party material) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

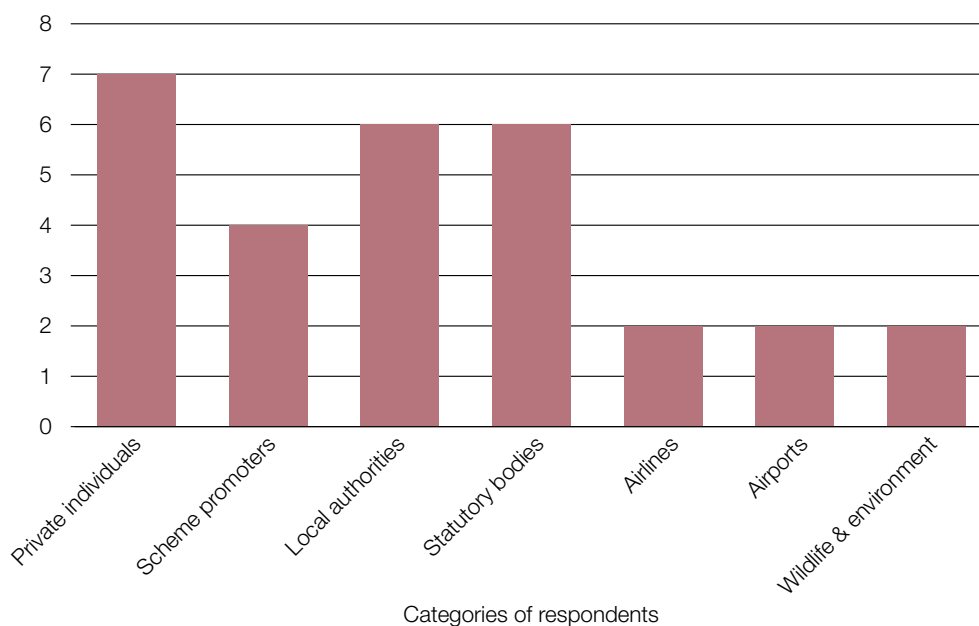
# Contents

<b>1. Responses to the consultation</b>	<b>4</b>
General comments received	4
<b>2. Terms of reference</b>	<b>6</b>
Study 1: Environmental / Natura 2000 impacts	6
Study 2: Operational feasibility and attitudes to moving to a new airport	7
Study 3: Socio-economic impacts	9
Study 4: Surface access impacts	10

# 1. Responses to the consultation

- 1.1** The Commission received 29 responses to its consultation on the proposed terms of reference for the Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Studies. The consultation closed on 14 February following the publication in January 2014 of the *Introductory Note*<sup>1</sup> setting out the proposed terms of reference. All responses have been carefully considered.
- 1.2** Detailed points made in responses, however, to the draft terms of reference consultation not directly included in the terms of reference will be considered in taking forward the studies.

**Figure 1.1: Number of responses to the draft terms of reference consultation**



## General comments received

- 1.3** The highest number of responses was from private individuals setting out opinions on whether there should be a new airport or not and the potential implications. One recurring point was the need to consider changes in the aviation industry over the long term and not focus on what were expressed as short-term needs. Another recurring point was for the Commission to define what was meant as credible and the strength of evidence needed before an Inner Estuary proposal could be considered credible. A further recurring point was that the Commission should

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/271634/airports-intro-note.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271634/airports-intro-note.pdf)

focus on what could be achieved in the time and resources available, and where a definitive conclusion could be drawn.

- 1.4** Two responses requested the Commission to carry out further studies: one additional study on the engineering feasibility of a new hub airport and a second further study on the 'financeability' of, and costs associated with, a new airport. As part of a further costs study, the Commission was specifically requested to consider how a private sector funding model could be implemented for a new airport. The Commission considered that this level of detailed work would be more appropriate if the option were short-listed in September.

## 2. Terms of reference

- 2.1** The changes to the proposed terms of reference are marked below for each of the studies. Brief commentary follows under each study's terms of reference to summarise the responses and set out the rationale for amendments.
- 2.2** The Commission is undertaking an extensive programme of work to take forward the studies, including considering evidence submitted to it as part of the call for evidence. As part of this programme, the Commission will continue to consult and engage interested parties in the form of, for example, workshops, interviews and surveys. This will continue to be in line with the principles of implementing a transparent, fair and independent process.
- 2.3** Please note that the call for evidence closes on 23 May 2014. (As set out in the *Introductory Note*, please send responses for the call for evidence to [estuary.studies@airports.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:estuary.studies@airports.gsi.gov.uk)). The Commission invites interested parties to liaise with the Commission about evidence they may be considering submitting and, where possible, encourages evidence to be submitted ahead of 23 May, to give more time for it to be considered as part of the studies. Evidence received by 23 May will, however, be fully and properly considered as a part of the studies.

### Study 1 – Environmental / Natura 2000 impacts

AssessmentReview of the impacts on the Natura 2000 sites of constructing and operating a new airport at an Inner Thames Estuary location, and the feasibility of meeting the legal tests for such development, including:

- ~~assessment and field research as appropriate~~review of the habitats and species affected, in particular identifying priority habitats and species;
- analysis of the impacts, issues and risks on identified habitats and species in the short and long term;
- consideration of any secondary, cumulative and indirect impacts or unintended consequences to the overall stability of the eco-system and wider environmental conditions;
- analysis of the legal process and ~~hurdles to developing on~~issues for development affecting Natura 2000 sites, including previous examples of successful and

unsuccessful cases (particular focus on national infrastructure and transport projects, preferably airports), in the UK and other European Member States;

- analysis of the compensatory habitats necessary and costs involved for the species and habitats identified, particularly those at risk;
- risk assessment of successful cases and outcomes being achieved and estimation of best approach and costs involved;
- identification of possible compensatory sites or locations and the potential impacts on the habitats and species as a result of moving to new sites or locations and impacts on new sites and locations; and
- ~~siting work as appropriate to assess~~review of the landscape, historical and archaeological ~~buildings and any potential prehistoric or medieval~~remainsimpacts. Risk assessment, mitigation options and cost.

## Comments on environmental impacts study

**2.4** The proposed terms of reference were well received. Some of the responses, however, requested the scope to be widened and other organisations to be consulted, such as the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). Requests to widen the scope included assessing the impacts on SSSIs and functional habitats; considering the total need for compensatory habitat within the Thames Estuary; considering the effects of urbanisation; and, modelling the cumulative potential impacts of changes to the morphology of the Estuary as a result of operating and constructing the airport. The Commission believes that these can be captured within the scope of the study, but the focus should remain on the environmental aspects covered by legislation. The consultation did not highlight any evidence gaps in respect of primary data collection for this study and, therefore, the Commission has removed this from the scope of the study.

## Study 2 – Operational feasibility and attitudes to moving to a new airport

This will evaluate certain aspects of airport operations that to date have not been possible to assess to the same extent as other short-listed options in the absence of a current operational site.

Study will assess under the following two headings:

## **i Operational feasibility**

There will be assessment of the key potential issues affecting the operational feasibility of a new airport and whether they can be reasonably be mitigated against, including:

- risk assessment of meteorological and wildlife impacts on operations such as flooding in line with predicted sea level rises, fog, wind and bird strike;
- risk assessment of the impact on the *SS Montgomery* of the location of a new airport, including assessment on the need for disposal and any costs associated with it;
- potential impacts of relocating energy facilities on the Isle of Grain and assessment of the feasibility of doing so;
- potential air space implications of operating a new hub airport, including the rationale for closures and impacts on UK and European air space; and
- plans for transitioning to a new hub airport, including phasing, delivery, risks and barriers.

## **ii Attitudes to moving to a new airport**

This will assess qualitative reactions of key industry stakeholders: views, confidence levels or reactions to any decision to develop a new hub airport in the inner Thames Estuary and the different potential airport operational scenarios at any such new site, with participants likely to include:

- operators (airlines – alliances, scheduled, charter, general and business aviation, airports and related services – baggage handling, rescue, safety and others as appropriate); and
- airport users (passengers, industries for which aviation connectivity is important, for example tourism industry, freight users and financial services, and businesses affected around the current and prospective airports, e.g. M4 corridor / north Kent / Essex / east of London).

## **Comments on operational feasibility and attitudes to moving to a new airport study**

**2.5** Several responses requested that this study be considered as two separate studies, but raised points already covered by the proposed terms of reference. The Commission agreed that the study has two separate elements, which are both important and deserve separate attention. They will, however, be considered within



the same study as they are both areas that relate to the operations of a new hub airport in the Inner Thames Estuary.

- 2.6** Some responses argued that issues such as the disposal of the SS *Montgomery* and changes to energy facilities would need to be addressed without the airport. Other responses focused on the practical and commercial challenges of transitioning to a new airport. A key concern raised was the potential for the airports to have significant implications on air space. The Commission agrees these deserve particular references in this study. Comments relating to the attitudes research requested that passengers' views were captured.

## Study 3 – Socio-economic impacts

Understanding the national, sub-national, local economic and, in some cases, social impacts of closing Heathrow and potentially other airports, ~~and seeking to a~~Assessing the regeneration potential of such an airport on east London and the south and east of England, including:

- economic benefitsimpacts of a new hub airport in the Inner Thames Estuary;
- identification of the redevelopment potential of airports (including Heathrow and London City and other airports as appropriate), for example in construction, supply chain, foreign investment, new homes;
- economic assessment of the impacts of closing airports (Heathrow, ~~and~~ London City, Southend and any other airports) and constructing a new airport at inner Thames Estuary location;
- social impacts of closing Heathrow and City airports, including regeneration impacts on London, ~~and~~ north Kent and Essex as a result of building a new airport in the Estuary (direct, indirect and catalytic);
- potential of airport developments to drive change in the economic geography of London; and
- competition impacts on aviation sector and potentially wider (where relevant, e.g. freight) in the South East of closures and redistribution of traffic.

## Comments received on socio-economic impacts study

- 2.7** This study generated the most substantive comment. There was a clear focus on the need to consider the employment, housing and social impacts in local areas and nationally. Several responses pointed to the need to include the impacts to

Southend airport and Essex, and set out that using a DfT WebTAG modelling approach for this study would not be appropriate. The Commission believes that this study should not include any detailed land-use modelling, which is not appropriate at this stage.

## Study 4 – Surface access impacts

Study will assess the following under three broad headings:

### **i Operations**

This may include:

- new infrastructure required to support inner Thames Estuary proposals and the deliverability of said infrastructure;
- implications of an inner Thames Estuary airport on the utilisation of current strategic and local road and rail infrastructure, including the availability of rail paths for commuter and intercity services, the availability of capacity on HS1 and levels of road congestion, and impacts on local transport networks;
- availability of London rail terminal capacity and the ability to relieve constraints in this area (for example via outer-London interchanges);
- implications of an inner Thames Estuary airport for travel times to a hub airport for users beginning or ending their journey outside of the London area;
- resilience of surface transport links to an inner Thames Estuary airport against forecast growth in non-airport demand on road and rail networks;
- whether these forecasts remain realistic alongside any development opportunities that might reasonably be expected to accompany an inner Thames Estuary airport; and
- the relationship between any surface transport infrastructure required for an inner Thames Estuary airport and other planned major infrastructure works such as Crossrail, HS2 and lower Thames crossing.

### **ii Costs**

This may include:

- cost of constructing new surface transport infrastructure;

- level of any potential charging required to support the ongoing operation of surface transport links to airport;
- implications of an inner Thames Estuary airport for wider Government revenues and subsidies to transport sectors, for example rail franchising, bus funding, local funding and any other;
- balance between those costs that might be privately financed and those which would require taxpayer support, with clear view as to the balance between users getting to and from the airport and to and from other locations on any new infrastructure; and
- wider benefits that might accrue from surface transport investments for example in east London and north Kent.

### iii Environment

This may include:

- likely impact of new surface transport infrastructure requirements on protected sites, habitats and landscape and whether these raise any particular legal problems; and
- any significant local environmental issues (such as air quality, carbon, noise) arising from new surface transport links to an Inner Thames Estuary airport and whether these can be overcome.

## Comments received on surface access impacts study

**2.8** The proposed terms of reference were well received. Responses focused on ensuring that the full range of potential impacts (both benefits and adverse consequences) be considered: from construction and operation through to local and national impacts. Responses urged the Commission to be clear about exactly what surface transport packages were being proposed.