

## REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **HEATHROW AIRTRACK CONSULTATION**

Date: 27 August 2009

Member Reporting: Councillor Rayner, Lead Member for Highways and Streetcare

Contact Officer(s): Gail Kenyon – Planning Infrastructure and Transport Policy Manager

Wards Affected: All

### 1. SUMMARY

#### 1.1 What is Heathrow Airtrack?

Heathrow Airtrack is the proposed new rail link being promoted by BAA to connect Heathrow with the national rail network (Appendix 1).

It is proposed that services would operate to Reading, Guildford and London Waterloo and would be in addition to those already operating on these lines. Heathrow Express services would also be extended through Heathrow Terminal 5 to Staines.

The full consultation documentation can be viewed at the following link: [www.heathrowairport.com/airtrack](http://www.heathrowairport.com/airtrack)

#### 1.2 What is the proposal?

Connecting Heathrow Terminal 5 to the national rail network will involve BAA progressing with the following actions:

- Tunnelling from Heathrow T5 to Stanwell Moor
- Constructing a new rail line across Stanwell Moor and Staines Moor
- Building a new section of track in Staines Town Centre (called “the chord”)
- Remodelling Staines Railway Station
- Building a train depot at Feltham
- The intention not to electrify the line into Staines, which avoids the major visual impact this would have caused (it is not known if this has an effect on the recent announcement by Government for electrification of the line at this stage)

### **1.3 What are BAA consulting on?**

BAA have submitted an application to the Secretary of State for Transport for an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 for the outline design and scheme proposals.

The application seeks to authorise the works required and the acquisition of any land that is needed.

The closing date for the consultation on this application is **18<sup>th</sup> September 2009**.

### **1.4 The Borough's response to the consultation**

The Borough would like to reiterate its concerns raised previously as outlined in paragraph 3.4 as the Borough is not satisfied that Airtrack have addressed our concerns, along with the following:

- The Borough reiterates its desired to have the service stop at Ascot
- The Borough has deep concerns regarding local traffic using an alternative route through Dry Arch Road.
- The Borough is very concerned that the timetable for the additional Airtrack trains does not have a detrimental effect on existing services on the national rail network, which are already put under considerable strain at busy times, such as Royal Ascot week.
- Alternative transport depot sites to the one proposed at Feltham were explored by BAA one being Site 7 situated off Coppermill Road, Wraysbury. The Borough supports the views of BAA that this location is far from optimal.
- The Borough is very concerned about the possible loss of the half hour train services from Windsor Riverside and it becoming a branch line with no direct service to Waterloo.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- a) **The Lead Member for Transport and Streetcare writes to BAA Heathrow Airtrack, the Chief Executive and Chair of BAA and the Director General at the Department for Transport, expressing and reiterating the Boroughs strong concerns as outlined in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5 in this report.**
- b) **The Lead Member for Transport and Streetcare to write to Adam Afriyie MP to ask him to lobby the appropriate Minister with respect to the views outlined in this report.**
- c) **The Borough make representation through the Lead Member for Transport and Streetcare supported by Officers, at a public inquiry as appropriate, and work with Runneymead Borough Council in expressing the views of this report.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?

Ensure that residents, businesses and visitors to the borough can take full advantage of the new railway service and that it is not to the detriment of existing road and rail users.

### **3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **Background**

#### **3.1 What has the Borough said before about Airtrack?**

The Borough responded to previous consultations held in the latter part of 2008 and the points raised are briefly as follows:

##### **3.1.1 Summary of Minutes from Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008:**

- Observations showed that traffic backed up to the M3 on the south side of the A30, to Virginia Water on the north side of the A30, and to the bridge on Chobham Road.
- The impact on local residents, as drivers used rat runs through residential areas to avoid the congestion caused by the closure of the level crossing.
- Numerous complaints from residents, in particular parents trying to get their children to school on time and elderly residents waiting for buses had been received.
- Residents of Sunningdale would find it difficult to appreciate the long-term implications unless something was seen to be done to listen to their complaints.
- The proposals would have an indirect impact on the residents of Horton & Wraysbury, as traffic backed up along the A30.
- The A30 was a trunk road prior to the building of the M3, when it was downgraded. If the M3 was closed, which happened approximately once every ten days, drivers used the A30 instead, which exacerbated the situation.
- Narrow roads in the area were already used as rat runs, including those going past schools in the area.
- The Borough would get no benefit from Airtrack as trains from Waterloo would stop at Staines and Bracknell only.

##### **3.1.2 Summary of response sent to Airtrack 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008:**

- The Borough welcomes in principle the concept of Airtrack, in that it will greatly improve public transport access to Heathrow and that it supports the regional initiative and the Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum's objectives to improve the Western Access to Heathrow.

- Airtrack will not only support access to Heathrow but will improve services for non-airport travellers and therefore contribute to increasing the use of public transport away from the reliance on the car in the Borough.
- Unfortunately Airtrack does not benefit the Borough's residents to a great extent as it does not stop at Ascot, Sunningdale, Wraysbury, Sunnymeads, Datchet or Windsor, all passenger needing to access T5 will need to change at Staines to use the new service, which would be a great inconvenience to passengers with baggage. Consideration should be given to the service stopping at one of these stations, such as Ascot due to it being the most accessible station in the Borough along the route and its links to other stations in the South East.
- Increased usage of London Road, Sunningdale Level Crossing: The impact on this crossing is of great concern to the council. The consultation document does not recognise Sunningdale Level Crossing as having a significant impact.
- Sunningdale have received a lot of complaints about the Level Crossing.
- You have advised that there will not be a disruption of services from Windsor Riverside Station to Waterloo due to additional number of trains running on the line from Staines to T5, the Borough is pleased that this is the case.
- Environmental Impact - Impact on SSSI and Staines Moor etc., possibly used by local Borough residents appears to have been minimised and the Borough welcomes this along with the intention not to electrify the line into Staines, which avoids the major visual impact this would have caused.
- The Borough will require that any mitigating traffic management measure/road improvements necessary to overcome issues with the Level Crossing, to be funded by other means such as Airtrack itself, Regional Transport Funding and LTP Grant Funding and not a direct Local Highway Authority burden.
- The route from T5 to Windsor and Eton Riverside line is in the proximity of the "South West London Water Bodies SPS and Ramsar" and that future Environmental Impact Assessments and Assessments under the Habitat Regulations must take into account potential impacts on the important bird species and/or their associated feeding areas.

### **3.2 The Borough's response to the current consultation**

The Borough would like to reiterate its concerns raised previously as the Borough is not satisfied that Airtrack have addressed our concerns, along with the following:

- The Borough reiterates its desired to have the service stop at Ascot

The Borough has some of the most visited attractions in the Country, Windsor Castle, Legoland and Ascot Race Course being 3 of them. Royal Ascot alone attracts some 300,000 visitors, many of whom travel by train and from abroad. Visitors need good access with new hotels being planned at Legoland and Ascot Racecourse. A train stop straight from the Airport would have a huge positive impact on trade in the Borough, creating employment and increased tourism. There are also a large number of businesses together schools where students regularly travel from abroad in Ascot who would make use of the service. There is also a large number of Airport staff who live in the Ascot area that would benefit from using the service if it stopped at Ascot. This

would assist in achieving Heathrow Airports challenging staff travel targets by providing train services to replace the need for travelling by car.

- The Borough has deep concerns regarding local traffic using an alternative route through Dry Arch Road, increasing traffic on this narrow road which passes by a busy school. The road also passes under a narrow railway bridge with no footways; this causes concern regarding pedestrian safety and the potential increased traffic.
- The Borough is very concerned that the timetable for the additional Airtrack trains does not have a detrimental effect on existing services on the national rail network, which are already put under considerable strain at busy times, such as Royal Ascot week.
- Alternative transport depot sites to the one proposed at Feltham were explored by BAA one being Site 7 situated off Coppermill Road, Wraysbury. The Borough supports the views of BAA that this location is far from optimal. *“The site is far from optimal from an operational point of view because it would be accessible only from the southern end, would require Heathrow trains to reverse at Staines and would entail additional costs for building access track over the flood plain and for the reversing siding. The site is within walking distance of Wraysbury station, but the bus service is minimal. It would extend sprawl, encroach on the countryside and would have no positive effect on urban regeneration.”*
- The Borough is very concerned about the possible loss of the half hour train services from Windsor Riverside and it becoming a branch line with no direct service to Waterloo.
- We are also very concerned that there is no direct connection of trains from T5 to Windsor, one of major tourist attractions in the south east. This would be possible by having an extra loop line on the Staines Moor and has the potential for removing thousands of cars off the road network in the region.

#### 4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

##### 4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Accept the recommendations in this report	This is the <b>recommended</b> course of action	Revenue – none  Capital - none
2.	Do not accept the recommendations of this report and do not respond to the consultation	The Borough may miss out on opportunities in the future with the Airtrack services. Together with this we need to ensure that the Sunningdale Crossing is protected for both road and rail users.	Revenue - none  Capital - none

## 4.2 Risk assessment

- 4.2.1 Airtrack BAA not taking notice of problems identified at Sunningdale Crossing – Mitigating Measure - Ensure views of the Borough are voiced vociferously and effective communication and liaison with BAA Heathrow Airtrack.
- 4.2.2 Airtrack not stopping at Ascot Railway Station therefore not serving residents of the Borough – Mitigating Measure - Ensure views of the Borough are voiced vociferously and effective communication and liaison with BAA Heathrow Airtrack.
- 4.2.3 A consideration should be given to the possible effect on traffic and parking in Ascot if the request for Airtrack to stop at Ascot Station is successful.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1 The views of local members in Sunningdale and South Ascot, Ascot Racecourse and South West Trains have been taken into consideration in response to this consultation.
- 5.2 At a meeting of Sunninghill and South Ascot Parish Council held on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Airtrack was discussed and the following is an extract from the Minutes of that meeting:

### “3471 AIRTRACK AND BAA PROPOSAL

*An email dated 28 July from Councillor Mrs Lynda Yong was discussed. It was noted that the proposed Reading to Heathrow Terminal 5 rail service included a stop at Bracknell and not at Ascot. It was agreed that, because Ascot was a "change" station, and also because Ascot was a much bigger tourist attraction than Bracknell, it would be sensible for Ascot to be a stop for the new service. Further, it was pointed out that there was now no direct bus service from the Ascot area to Heathrow and it was considered that the Parish Council should ask if such a service could be reintroduced. The Clerk would write to Gail Kenyon on both these matters.”*

## 6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 6.1 No Comments were received from Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel following email circulation of this report.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	✓	✓

### Background Papers:

Heathrow Airtrack Transport and Works Act 1992 – The Heathrow Airtrack Order

Heathrow Airtrack – Improving public transport access to Heathrow Airport – Update 1, Response to Consultation – Summer 2009

Heathrow Airtrack Transport and Works Act 1992 The Heathrow Airtrack Order – Environmental Statement Volume 2  
Effects of Level Crossings 2009  
Heathrow Airtrack Transport and Works Act 1992 The Heathrow Airtrack Order – Environmental Statement Volume 6  
Transport Assessment 2009  
Heathrow Airtrack Transport and Works Act 1992 The Heathrow Airtrack Order Environmental Statement Volume 5  
General Appendices 2009  
Heathrow Airtrack Review of Alternative Depot Sites – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009  
Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel minutes 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Letter to Heathrow Airtrack – Consultation Brochure 2 – October 2008 – Dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008

