



## **Bristol Airport Planning Application to North Somerset Council. Application Number 18/P/5118/OUT**

### **Comments in Support by Business West**

#### **Introduction**

1. Businesses West Chambers of Commerce & Initiative is the main business representation and leadership organisation for the West of England and the accredited Chamber of Commerce for North Somerset. We have been working on behalf of businesses in the region for nearly 200 years and now represent nearly 22,000 businesses, from new start-up companies through to the major private and public employers. We are also members of the board of the West of England's Local Enterprise Partnership.
2. As a Chamber of Commerce we are not representing any specific business interests or sector, but are submitting evidence based on our independent view of the long term economic interests of the region and the whole spectrum of businesses who operate here.
3. We fundamentally recognise the importance of Bristol Airport as one of the West of England's critical pieces of transport and economic infrastructure, which adds real value to the region and is a crucial element in the city region's international connectivity. The role of the airport, and its growth and ambition over the past two decades, have been very important for the wider growth and attractiveness of the region and we very much welcome the application to expand the airport's capacity and improve its overall visitor experience. We recognise the region's transport connectivity and economic health and the need for a long-term plan to increase Bristol Airport's capacity.
4. We are strongly supportive of Bristol Airport's ambitions set out by the second stage of the Master Plan Consultation and the corresponding application for plans to increase the limit of annual flights to 12 million passengers per annum and the additional investments and changes required to achieve this.

#### **Moving Towards 12 MPPA**

5. As outlined below, we believe that this move would be supportive of overall business connectivity in the region, help particular business sectors and help underpin continued economic growth and greater international investment and trade in the region.
6. We recognise that this growth in passenger numbers will require the managed growth and expansion of the airport buildings and facilities – and that these measures are critical in the successful management of the airport's overall growth plans. We recognise also the critical

importance of delivering surface infrastructure that will support their growth with investment and delivery, enabling them to keep pace.

7. We have further comments around connectivity and transport, sustainability and employment growth below.

### **The importance of a successful airport to the regional economy**

8. Bristol and the West of England have very strong international trading and business connections – with key sectors that are reliant upon excellent European and global connectivity for their labour, customer base and to supplier, investor and intra-firm relationships.
9. One of the West of England's strengths is its diversity and international relationships. The city region is the largest exporter to Europe amongst all other non-London cities, 91 languages are spoken in the city, whilst our key growth sectors all have strong international components: including aerospace, high tech, digital and creative, advanced manufacturing and low carbon.
10. The role of Bristol Airport matches the summary of the economic benefits of greater connectivity outlined in the Airports Commission report in 2014, Connectivity and economic growth are interlinked:
  - Through attracting FDI
  - Through increasing trade and international contacts.
  - Through helping our labour market become dynamic and draw on a deeper pool of skilled international talent
11. Our aerospace sector has over 800 companies in the region imbedded in international supply chains, with key markets in the US, EU and Far East. Our high tech sector has the biggest cluster of silicon designers outside of Silicon Valley, with key markets in the US and EU. Our Universities are increasingly linked to Europe, US and Asia – both for staff, students and in research and spin off activity.
12. Airports also underpin our labour market. The West of England economy depends on highly skilled EU and global migrants, often using what used to be predominately outbound tourist routes to Spain, France, Italy and Eastern Europe.
13. Bristol's airport is valued by regional businesses to remain internationally connected – and there is strong support for the airport to grow as a regional hub. Business value's its European connectivity, and the role of connections into hubs (notably Amsterdam) to reach wider global destinations and markets in Asia, African and the Americas. This ranges from large businesses, but is also very important to a wide range of smaller companies providing goods and services internationally.
14. But the region could definitely improve from enhanced international connectivity beyond Europe – particularly for direct flights to key business destinations, notably the US, the Middle East and Asia.

15. Wider international connectivity is important to attract future inward investment. For example, the major US workspace investor WeWork recently chose a location outside London to invest, and chose Manchester, citing the direct air connections to the United States as a reason for the location.<sup>1</sup>
16. The Airports plans for increased capacity, services and passenger numbers will also help the deepening of existing routes, allowing greater frequency and making business travel a more viable option for short haul and long haul business routes.
17. Increasing the range and frequency of services is unlikely to occur without addressing the current cap on passenger numbers.
18. International connectivity will also be vitally important to underpin plans for 'Global Britain' as the UK seeks to make up increased market share from non-European markets. We welcome the plan to increase flights and connectivity, recognising that it responsibility the airport has to deliver surface infrastructure that will support their growth with investment and delivery. This will ensure that patronage growth continues and that airport – and by extension the region – do not trail behind.

#### **Views of our members:**

- “Distance from London hubs makes a regional airport essential. Growth of routes and options would benefit most businesses.” Packaging manufacturer, 50-100 employees, Bristol
- “My business comes from adults and young people who come to stay with me to improve their English, mainly from Europe. Bristol Airport is essential for my business therefore.” Language school, 1-5 employees, Bristol
- “Developing regional airports is key to maintaining a nationwide strength rather than being London/Greater London centric. Expansion of regional airports increases regional employment and business opportunities and ensures inclusiveness from the country as a whole.” Marketing consultancy, 1-5 employees, Wiltshire
- “Improved availability of flights from Bristol to the US and to Africa via hubs would substantially benefit our business and our ability to continue to grow our exports.” Business consultancy, 5-10 employees, Bristol
- “BRS for us is a vital link to Europe and further via AMS. We need the return of United to BRS flying a minimum of three days /week to a US gateway (Newark) and a flight from BRS to the Middle East.” Aviation consultancy, 10-50 employees, Weston-super-Mare
- “I think Bristol, with its close motorway links, should be expanded allowing more direct flights to long haul destinations.” Manufacturer, 10-50 employees, Clevedon

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Demand for co-working spaces expands outside London’ Financial Times 12 Jan 2018  
<https://www.ft.com/content/3e4c651e-f61c-11e7-88f7-5465a6ce1a00>

### Surface Access

19. In order to back up connectivity in the air, you have to have connectivity on the ground. We therefore strongly welcome the continued details of the plan to deliver much better surface access to the airport, for both private and public transport.
20. Existing road connectivity into the airport will need to be enhanced in line with the Airport's growth plans. We therefore support the measures to improve access from the A38 and will welcome further measures to increase the capacity of both existing and future road and public transport infrastructure in line with the transport requirements of greater passenger numbers.
21. We have previously welcomed the ambition for the airport to become a major transport interchange provided a package of supportive measures are realised in the city region's transport and infrastructure plans.

<b>Table 1: Surface airport access by UK airports Airport</b>	<b>Passengers per annum (m)</b>	<b>Rail link / Tram</b>	<b>Motorway Connectivity / Proximity</b>	<b>Dual Carriageway (minimum)</b>	<b>Bus Connection</b>	<b>Public Transport use (%)</b>
Heathrow	76	✓	✓	✓	✓	41%
Gatwick	43	✓	✓	✓	✓	41%
Manchester	26	✓	✓	✓	✓	16%
Stansted	24	✓	✓	✓	✓	50%
Edinburgh	12	✓	✓	✓	✓	30%
Luton	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	29%
Birmingham	12	✓	✓	✓	✓	23%
Glasgow	9	X	✓	✓	✓	14%

22. We welcome the planning application as a necessary step in implementing the proposals set out in Stage II of the Master Planning documentation. This plan sets out the short term steps around preparing for a 12 MPPA ceiling but also the longer term thinking needed over the coming decades up to the 2030s and beyond. We look forward to North Somerset and Bristol Airport collaborating closely to ensure that the necessary additional investment and transport improvements are able to cope with traffic and movement requirements to and from the airport.

### Application Improvements to the Airport Terminal, Parking and Internal Road System

23. The Airport has taken many steps to improve the facilities, capacity and operation of its terminal – greater enhancing the customer experience over the past two decades. This investment has been highly welcome and enhancing the attractiveness of the airport. The speed of check in and arrivals through Bristol Airport and the quality of services provided within and outside the terminal remains a critical factor in attracting visitors and in competing with other airports – notably the currently worse customer experience of Heathrow and Gatwick.

24. We therefore recognise that the airport's growth plans require continued investment in the airport terminal and warmly welcome the outlined application for extensions to the terminal building, new canopies for walkways by the main terminal building, the new east walkway and a new multi-story car park.

### **Sustainability**

25. We support the ambition for the airport in playing a leadership role in higher environmental standards for airports, businesses and the region. These ambitions strongly align with the broader strengths of the region, both as an environmental leader and a city region with a strong cluster of environmental and sustainability driven businesses.
26. We strongly support the airport's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030, and commend the proposals to do this.
27. We warmly welcome the detail outlined in the proposed Section 106 agreement for greater public transport improvements, including support for regional major scheme transport studies and a flexible public transport fund.

### **Employment Land**

28. Business West believe it is important that there is an increase in allocations of employment land for high value activity in well-connected places. This will be vital for the future growth ambitions of the region, where we have significant employment and business growth potential.
29. We believe Bristol Airport's location and connectivity offers a real opportunity to grow higher value jobs across a broader range of technology, advance manufacturing and professional services related to design, logistics and trade. This is particularly the case given that Bristol Airport has been named as a Strategic Employment Location in the JSP.
30. Greater provision of employment land at the airport would also benefit the other industries trading in international markets and could complement sustainable growth of the airport. We see the application as a step in the right direction towards facilitating the stated ambition of the Master Plan II to provide for a possible "concentration or agglomeration" of these "advanced sectors within a specialist cluster".<sup>2</sup>

### **Green Belt**

31. Bristol Airport is located within the Green Belt, on a limited site, within boundaries that were defined in the 1950s.
32. We fully recognise that the continued growth of Bristol Airport and its passenger capacity - as laid out in the proposal - requires releasing some land from Green Belt designation.
33. Although it is important that the airport uses land efficiently and in a well-planned manner, we strongly support the airport's belief that a review of the Green Belt around the airport is necessary. We believe that this, alongside the aligned green infrastructure measures (including

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<sup>2</sup> Bristol airport Master Plan II, page 16

enhanced wildlife and habitat measures), would better reflect the Government's aspirations for the Green Belt, and fit better with the future needs of the airport and the region.