

# HSPG Response to HAL's Nov 2018 Preferred Components Masterplan regarding Green & Blue Infrastructure

**Cover note** accompanying the HSPG '1. Comments & Ideas: North & West', '2. Comments & Ideas: South & East' and 'Movement network' maps. To be considered alongside the updated HSPG Heathrow Area Landscape Framework.

## Key Points

- The proposals for green and blue infrastructure are not yet adequately developed to enable 'fixing' of the overall masterplan in a number of areas/ respects
- This note and the accompanying maps provide an indication of the areas where there are particular concerns and ideas, highlighting a need for further work/ additional detail
- Thinking around connectivity for people (by sustainable modes of transport that interact with green infrastructure) and connectivity for wildlife are aspects that appear to need considerable more planning
- Long-term management and maintenance of G&BI is a key issue that needs to be addressed at this stage - fundamental to the sustainability of the future environment around the airport
- We look forward to engaging further with the HAL team to ensure a comprehensive and high quality of scheme for Green & Blue Infrastructure that adequately mitigates and compensates for the wide and serious impact arising from airport expansion

## Introduction

In early November 2018, Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL) presented its 'Emerging Preferred Components Assembly Masterplan' to HSPG, Statutory Agencies and conducted some community engagement connected with it. In response, the HSPG Green & Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) sub-group held a workshop and sought inputs from HSPG members and in liaison with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England. From this a series of maps has been prepared capturing comments and ideas in relation to the 'preferred components' masterplan. There are three maps: (1) Comments & Ideas: North & West; (2) Comments & Ideas: South & East; and (3) Movement Network.

This note gives context for each map, summarising key points and incorporating generic comments which support the maps. To a considerable extent the various comments and ideas represent a prompt and need for more (urgent) detailed work and studies by HAL in liaison with HSPG.

All maps are indicative, not exhaustive and are not intended to show a final HSPG view.

## HSPG's Strategic Vision for Green and Blue Infrastructure in the Heathrow expansion scheme

Alongside the comments and ideas referred to in this cover note HSPG has developed a strategic vision for G&BI. This is below, reflecting the qualities and approach we consider should be deployed by HAL in finalising the masterplan and the mitigation/ compensation that sits alongside it.

## **HSPG's Strategic Vision<sup>1</sup> for Green and Blue Infrastructure in the Heathrow expansion scheme (Dec 2018)**

### **1. Minimise Green Land Loss**

- Minimise land take from Green Belt, Colne Valley Park and other green space<sup>2</sup>
- Bring forward plans for enhancement of the local green and blue environment that fully mitigates and compensates for 'green' land loss

### **2. High quality green space with excellent connectivity for people & wildlife**

- A wide area comprehensively designed for recreation, sport, wildlife, countryside use and the enjoyment and appreciation of the local historic environment, fully mitigating for the extensive loss of Green Belt/ green areas
- Green & blue space laid out and promoted to lead to more active and healthier lifestyles for all, including hard to reach groups, those with disabilities and mental health issues.
- Creation of a world class green gateway to the UK for air passengers
- Creation of an attractive green lung, offering local communities green envelopes and outdoor respite
- Noise sources (vehicles and aircraft) mitigated to improve user experience along routes and in recreation areas, providing relative tranquillity
- Attractive routes that form part of a comprehensive 'sustainable' modes network
  - Improving/ creating connections to/ from communities, countryside destinations, heritage assets (and their settings) and places of employment with excellent, convenient, routes<sup>3</sup>
  - Providing a high quality countryside experience
  - Overcoming severance and barriers to multi-directional movement with high priority to sustainable travel at intersections and gateways
- When built development comes close to green zones...
  - Building scale limited to enhance the feeling of openness
  - Uses animating routes with natural surveillance and through layout/ design
  - Excellence in the appearance of buildings, boundary treatments and landscaping to enhance the countryside experience
- Environments for wildlife and rivers resulting in a biodiversity net gain and creating high quality multi-directional wildlife connectivity via generous corridors without barriers
- Deployment of techniques such as green bridges to achieve high quality connectivity
- Robust measures implemented, guaranteeing protection from pollution incidents and reducing flood risk
- Green Infrastructure on and off airport positively contributing to climate change adaptation

### **3. Secured comprehensive management for the long-term**

- An edge to edge, comprehensively managed landscape
- Funding in perpetuity for high quality land, water body and route management including monitoring<sup>4</sup> and regulatory enforcement within green infrastructure areas
- A quality of life fund to engage communities and improve green areas
- Certainty about the future of green infrastructure and Green Belt permanence

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<sup>1</sup> Reference should also be made to HSPG's Heathrow Area Landscape Framework and to its Environmental Position Paper (also embraces the construction phase).

<sup>2</sup> Applying the very special circumstances test, assisting the regeneration of existing urban areas/ town centres

<sup>3</sup> Forming part of the Surface Access Strategy

<sup>4</sup> Parks to Green Flag standard

## **1. Maps (1) Comments & Ideas: North & West; and (2) Comments & Ideas: South & East**

- 1.1. These maps highlight specific comments and areas of concern on the masterplan, as well as initial ideas which came forward for how to address these issues during the workshops with the HSPG G&BI sub-group.
- 1.2. Comments and ideas are grouped in two areas, map 1: North & West, and map 2: South & East. However, there is considerable overlap and they should be considered in parallel. Annotations applying to both areas are marked (\*) in the legend. These maps should also be considered alongside the HSPG Heathrow Area Landscape Framework and the 'Vision Statement', which sets out several principles for design.
- 1.3. In addition to the detail on the maps, the following points should be highlighted:
  - 1.3.1. **Need for strategic approach to G&BI:** The plan appears driven by operational requirements/restrictions, without giving due weight to the constraints and opportunities with green and blue infrastructure (e.g. river corridors).
  - 1.3.2. **Need for clarity on and challenge to the extent of 'green' land-take:**
    - The extent of land-take (for expansion) needs to be further challenged to minimise the loss of green space/ Green Belt and divert development and investment to existing urban areas, applying the very special circumstances test;
    - The plans should be more transparent on minimum amounts of G&BI to be provided and where it is to be situated, broken down by the different categories/ function. It should be clear what HAL regards as minimum provision as opposed to 'optional';
    - We need to be clear exactly what G&BI will be included in the DCO;
    - Statistics and map layers are required to show the total extent of land take;
    - It is concerning that the land take appears far greater than that shown in the masterplan appended to the 2018 ANPS and earlier assessed by the 2015 Airports Commission – at which time around 400 hectares of Green Belt were calculated as required for the airport development and related surface access improvements.
  - 1.3.3. **Missing information:** Information is incomplete and not extensive enough to inform a full response, for example relating to: wildlife and effect on species, mapping of biodiversity offsetting opportunities, precise amount of land take (for expansion and mitigation - see point 1.3.2 above), strategic solutions for how barriers to movement are dealt with (for people and wildlife), desire lines towards and around airport (see 'Movement Network' map), noise and visual impact, impact on air quality, flood storage areas, contaminated land, quality of connection between green 'islands' shown. In order to adequately assess quality of G&BI, the whole development picture must also be presented – incorporating DCO and non-DCO development arising from HAL airport expansion.
  - 1.3.4. **Representation:** Separate plans at appropriate scales are required to support consultation and a complete understanding of functionality and suitability of proposed G&BI. The current scale represented in the masterplan is too small to show/ enable an understanding of corridors of connection, or to show the full 'hinterland' of HAL's proposal in terms of the impacted area and, for example, environmental mitigation (including flood storage areas) and surface transport connections for sustainable

modes – an issue overlapping with considerations on how green infrastructure should be laid out.

- 1.3.5. **Comprehensiveness:** Provision of G&BI in the southern area appears very thin, especially when compared to the north. The Colne to Crane Green Link is not developed strongly enough as a concept, particularly in this southern area. This needs more work and detail to understand its value for people and wildlife and the masterplan should incorporate opportunities that exist for stronger links further to the south, linking richer green spaces such as Bedfont Lakes and Staines Moor and utilising lineal connections such as the River Ash.
- 1.3.6. **Function and quality, not just quantity:** There must be an equal focus on land function(s) and land quantity. At present it is not clear how many areas (including the multi-functional Colne to Crane Green Link) will function. Multiple benefits and use should be planned for (based on what's possible and what's needed), as well as a clear indication of areas which are exclusively reserved for wildlife. There must be a net biodiversity gain within the zone around the airport, with off-setting as a last resort.
- 1.3.7. **Maintenance and monitoring:** There must be a mechanism for the funding, management/ maintenance and monitoring of green and blue infrastructure in perpetuity – addressing whole zones of G&BI, not just pockets of land. This would include, for example, a bespoke Biodiversity Action Plan for the wider area, linking up the areas and connecting the Colne to the Crane. Heathrow should fund a volunteer coordinator post to bring local people together across the spaces; there will be significant benefits for there to be a managing body established to maintain the G&BI as a whole. A maintenance plan for G&BI should be sketched now, including a complete funding regime. This will need to deal with land ownership and control. Jobs created as a result of these new features should also be considered in HAL's Economic Development Strategy, in terms of skill sets required for the maintenance of the G&BI in the proposal.
- 1.3.8. **Joined up thinking for mitigation/compensation:** Joint working can bring substantial benefits to mitigation/compensation work both close to the airport and further afield e.g. bundling 20% green allocation within development to maximise usefulness. There is also the need for a community environmental improvement fund to recognise the environmental impact arising from new flight paths (newly overflown areas).
- 1.3.9. **Mitigation during construction:** The impact (and proposed mitigation) during construction needs separate and detailed consideration. This response seeks to address the 'end state' and does not attempt to address the complex construction impacts issue.
- 1.3.10. **Resilient design:** Climate change must be accounted for, with additional resilience factored in when modifying existing and designing new spaces, including watercourses.
- 1.3.11. **(Covered) river corridors:** The covered river corridors proposed are unproven without reliable precedent. We have strong concerns about the maintenance and enforcement of quality standards in to the future. More research in to case studies (globally) using this technology should be shared. The quality of the one remaining open river channel (Colne Brook) is of great concern, involving a lengthy diversion through landfill. The quality of the relocated twin rivers (Duke of Northumberland's River and Longford River) is also a concern (apparently proposed with concrete banks and channelized morphology following community consultation events). All modified river channels must offer complex riparian habitat, replicate natural hydromorphology and

geomorphology, and avoid the installation of additional control structures and bird netting wherever possible.

- 1.3.12. **Best practice design:** Seize this one-off opportunity for best practice design in new developments and re-routed roads, as well as in providing integrated, functional G&BI.

## **2. Map (3) Movement Network**

- 2.1. Review of the functioning and connectivity of GI areas soon pointed to an apparent absence of a wider spatial strategy for movement corridors by walking and cycling (and PT). Map 3 is a starter for 10 to illustrate the sort of network required in order to make a step-change in provision for walking and cycling in and around the airport. It shows routes (some may be principally recreational, other commuting) based on ideas from the HSPG G&BI sub-group and building on the HSPG Heathrow Area Landscape Framework.
- 2.2. There is an urgent need for work on this strategy (as part of the Surface Access Strategy). More information is needed on existing and proposed routes in, out and around the airport, and how these will be integrated with the proposed G&BI – whereby attractive routes away from busy traffic and intersections can be created.
- 2.3. Surface and infrastructure standards are needed for new bridleways and cycleways.

## **3. Future engagement**

- 3.1. We consider that the next few months will be key to bringing closer HAL's and HSPG's thinking on green and blue infrastructure. We suggest that a programme of workshop style meetings is arranged to discuss this.