

22 JANUARY 2019

SOUTHERN ACCESS TO HEATHROW (SAtH) PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Southern Access to Heathrow (SAtH) programme and the potential implications for Rushmoor and the wider M3 corridor. A potential formal response to the Transport Secretary setting out the Council's concerns with anticipated delivery time and setting out the key elements that the Council would wish to see in any proposal is attached as Appendix 1 for the Board's recommendation to the Leader.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. The SatH programme was first launched in August 2017 under the name Strategic Rail Link to London (STLth) to deliver a proposed new railway to link Heathrow Airport to railway lines south of London.
- 2.2. In 2018 the Department for Transport (DfT) undertook a 'market sounding' exercise to determine whether there was market appetite for delivering a new rail link in a different and innovative way (specifically whether a scheme could progress without government support).
- 2.3. A number of different approaches were proposed. This led to a number of different approaches being put forward to deliver SatH, all of which would require some form of government support, whether that be direct subsidy or indirect support such as infrastructure usage guarantees.
- 2.4. On the 22 May 2019 a series of parliamentary questions were raised in relation to improved southern access to Heathrow where it was confirmed that 30 market-led proposals were received during the market sounding exercise. The DfT has continued to engage with 10 proposals which have the potential to be financially credible without government support.
- 2.5. On the 4th November 2019 the government published [Guidance on the Southern Access to Heathrow: strategic objectives](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/southern-access-to-heathrow-strategic-objectives/southern-access-to-heathrow-strategic-objectives)¹ which sets out that the purpose of the programme is to make getting to Heathrow Airport quicker and easier for millions of

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/southern-access-to-heathrow-strategic-objectives/southern-access-to-heathrow-strategic-objectives>

travellers across the south of England, with proposed links between Central London, Surrey, Hampshire and the airport.

- 2.6. The Guidance makes clear that the DfT will consider an approach based on a programme of interventions which could be across different modes. These are likely to include heavy rail but could also include light rail, bus rapid transit, guided busways, autonomous vehicles or a combination of the aforementioned.
- 2.7. The revised objectives are as follows:
 1. Encourage modal shift and reduce road congestion
 2. Reduce environmental impacts
 3. Connect communities
 4. Boost economic growth and encourage regeneration
 5. Enhance our global competitiveness by making Britain a more attractive place to invest
 6. Minimise the impact on current and future passenger and freight journeys and services
 7. Be deliverable
 8. Be affordable and value for money
- 2.8. The Guidance identifies that it expects interventions to be delivered in phases over a period of time, increasing capacity to meet the required demand, and that the government does not expect interventions to be completed prior to 2030.

3. Options in the public domain

- 3.1. There are four options being promoted as part of the STLtH that are in the public domain, and these are summarised below:

Heathrow Southern Rail

- 3.2. One of the proposals being promoted as part of the STLtH is a new rail link being promoted by [Heathrow Southern Railway Limited](https://heathrowrail.com/service-opportunities/)² (HRSL), which is privately funded and was established in 2016 with the aim of bidding to improve rail access to Heathrow Airport
- 3.3. The Heathrow Southern Railway proposal will provide the opportunity for train services operating on a 30-minute frequency between Farnborough and Heathrow Airport with the trains continuing to Old Oak Common and Paddington, thereby providing new connections to HS2 and the Elizabeth Line.

Hounslow to Heathrow new rail link

² <https://heathrowrail.com/service-opportunities/>

- 3.4. This option is supported by the [London Borough of Hounslow](#)³ and aims to provide a new rail line to Heathrow Airport that includes a new station serving Bedfont, connecting to Feltham and London Waterloo.

Staines Light Rail

- 3.5. This option is being promoted by Spelthorne Borough Council and aims to create a new transport link from Staines-upon-Thames to Heathrow. The proposal is a stand-alone light rail (similar to the Docklands Light Railway), running between Staines Station, Staines Town Centre, and Heathrow.

Windsor Link Railway

- 3.6. This option is split into multiple phases. Phase 1 of the [Windsor Link Railway](#)⁴ will link Slough to London Waterloo via Windsor. Phase 2 is of greater interest to the Council as it aims to provide a spur from the Windsor to Staines line that would run to the west of the Wrybury reservoir. If both phases are delivered it is envisaged that the proposals would deliver wider benefits to the regions, with the potential for direct rail services between Farnborough and Aldershot. No information is provided on potential service frequency or journey times.

Summary of Options

- 3.7. Of the four options that are in the public domain, only two refer to the potential to provide direct connectivity between Farnborough and Heathrow Airport, notably Heathrow Southern Rail and Windsor Link Railway. Officers consider these options have the potential to alleviate capacity issues on radial routes (such as the M25 and M3) thus reducing congestion and air pollution. In addition, it is envisaged that direct services from the Borough will assist in the sustainable growth of the economy particularly the aerospace sector and delivering the Council's regeneration aspirations for its town centres.
- 3.8. As officers are not aware of the detail of the full range of options being considered by the DfT it is difficult to be specific about a preferred option at this time. However, as it stands the Heathrow Southern Rail Link will provide links to Heathrow and to London Paddington, and Heathrow Southern Rail Limited consider that the new railway could be operational by 2026. The early delivery of any scheme providing direct rail connections from the Borough (and other mainline stations in Hampshire and Surrey) to Heathrow Airport and other transport hubs would be supported.
- 3.9. The proposal provides significant benefits to Rushmoor and the wider M3 corridor as if selected as the preferred option (following a future procurement exercise) it will provide fast and frequent rail services from Farnborough to destinations that are not currently directly accessible using the rail network.

³ https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20053/transport/1976/proposed_rail_services_for_hounslow/3

⁴ <https://windsorlink.co.uk/>

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1. The Policy and Projects Advisory Board is asked to note the contents of this paper and endorse that the letter attached as Appendix A be sent to the Transport Secretary highlighting the Council's support for the STLtH programme; that the Council considers that it would be a missed opportunity if at least one of the Borough's mainline stations (Farnborough and Aldershot) were not served by direct rail links to Heathrow following the selection of the preferred STLtH option; and that the Council is concerned that the government does not envisage any interventions being implemented by 2030.

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List of appendices:

1. Letter to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps