



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

31 October 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

London Infrastructure Plan 2050 – Response to Consultation

West London Business (WLB), the Chamber of Commerce of West London, welcomes the Mayor's London Infrastructure Plan 2050 and we are pleased to submit our comments here.

London's infrastructure is clearly fundamental to the city's economic success, yet we have suffered from a history of underinvestment, planning over-complexity and political short-termism. We welcome the Plan and its attempt to provide a longer term, integrated vision for developing London's infrastructure, including transport, utilities, communications and the green sector. We support the Plan in promoting the case for cross agency planning and overcoming the deficiencies of the fragmented, ad hoc approach prevalent in our current practices. In addition, we suggest that infrastructure planning must be fully woven into land use planning. Whether for residential, commercial or industrial projects, transport must be as much a part of planning as social infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals.

Road congestion

WLB finds road congestion to be the main challenge most cited by our West London businesses. Congestion is getting steadily worse and the possibilities of extending road system are unrealistic because of lack of space. Therefore the only sensible option is to modernize our rail networks and encourage mode shift as much as possible. Consequently, we support the transport infrastructure plans to modernize and expand the Tube, Crossrail and other overground lines. Plans to extend the rail and tube network capacity by 70%, by improving tube frequency, Crossrail 2, Bakerloo Line extension etc are welcome.

We would also propose that the idea of an orbital road tunnel (where else can new roads go?) be complemented by an orbital tube line, situated further out

concentrically from the London Overground. This would be a radical but relatively affordable solution linking up London's many radial underground lines and routes, thereby encouraging more public transport – and less car – usage.

Broadband

WLB strongly supports the case for enhanced broadband networks – however, the 20% increase aimed for by 2050 sounds too modest. West London's major manufacturing epicentre – the Park Royal Estate, with some 2000 businesses – is poorly served and is hampered in its performance, which could contribute so much more to the UK's economic revival. Political pressure needs to be put on the providers of broadband to ensure industrial and commercial needs are met, as well as residential. We also agree with the Plan's vision for water and waste.

Aviation

Our major difficulty with this Infrastructure Plan concerns the plans for a hub airport in the Thames Estuary. We find it unrealistic to persist with the Thames Estuary option, when the Davies Commission, after additional analysis, has ruled it out as a feasible option. The Thames Estuary plan, involving massive new road, rail and housing projects, would be a huge burden on the public purse and private sector financing schemes to fund it remain unconvincing.

As the representative body of the West London business community, we have been, and remain, consistent in our support of expansion at Heathrow. This appears to us to be the most realistic, affordable and strategically sensible answer to the UK's and London's urgent airport capacity needs. Heathrow is best placed to serve the UK's current industrial and commercial make-up, which is predominantly active in the western, north-western and west midlands areas of the UK. It is served well by existing motorway, rail and tube connections, many of which are being upgraded (Crossrail, HS2, Western Rail Access).

Building an alternative hub airport would mean the closure of Heathrow, as recognised by the Mayor, and the loss of over 200,000 jobs in West London and the Thames Valley. It would seriously undermine the economic viability of West London and the Thames Valley, which accounts for some £70 billion GVA, or ten per cent of the national GVA. Why would the Mayor of London risk damaging one of the city's most economically active and internationally linked areas?

WLB fully supports the regeneration of East London, the need for which is self-evident. We strongly backed the Olympic bid from its earliest days. However, a national hub airport's siting should be decided on grounds of economic and transport viability, not local regeneration needs. An expanded Heathrow, with transport connections to Central and East London further improved, can itself be a catalyst in meeting the requirements of the growing London as outlined in this Plan. Persisting with the concept of a Thames Estuary hub airport, in face of widespread scepticism and the Commission's decision to omit it as an option, weakens the credibility of the Plan.

Fiscal devolution to London

As for the question of paying for the ambitious projects proposed in this consultation, WLB is very supportive of the idea of more fiscal responsibility being devolved to London, to raise the revenues required. We also agree that more innovative ways of raising finance from the private sector be explored.

However, our caveat is that additional direct taxes on business should be avoided, as they will only serve to weaken London's competitiveness. We think schemes to leverage funding from the increase in value of assets resulting from infrastructure upgrades, should be better explored. Also, for private car usage, road pricing can be considered.

We will be happy to discuss any of these points further.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Wingate', with a stylized, cursive script.

Frank Wingate
Chief Executive
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