

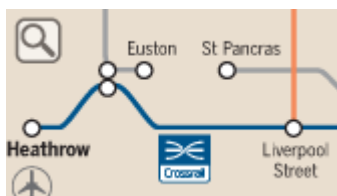
October 28, 2012 5:45 pm

# Heathrow-Stansted 'dual hub' proposed

By Andrew Parker, Rose Jacobs and Mark Odell

Plans are being drawn up to solve the UK's aviation capacity crunch by linking Heathrow and Stansted airports in a "dual hub".

Make, a firm of architects, is developing proposals under which an expanded Stansted airport could be connected with Heathrow through the £15bn Crossrail line that will run between east and west London.



Click to enlarge

The Stansted idea stems from Ken Shuttleworth, Make's founder, who previously worked with Lord Foster, the architect behind the idea of a £23bn hub airport in the Thames estuary.

Make's plans might prove politically more attractive than Lord Foster's because expanding Stansted could be cheaper than building another airport.

Boris Johnson, London's mayor, supports an estuary airport but he is also willing to back a bigger Stansted.

Make's work is likely to be contentious because the owner of capacity-constrained Heathrow says a dual hub is likely to be unworkable because transfer times between the two would be lengthy.

Make wants to explore whether Heathrow could continue to operate alongside Stansted if the Essex airport were expanded from one to as many as four runways.

"Perhaps there is a solution where both [Heathrow and Stansted] can coexist," said Stuart Blower, a partner at Make who is working on its project to expand Stansted. "It's almost a London hub... as opposed to Stansted and Heathrow being separate."

He described expanding Stansted as "perhaps the least worst of the options" for fixing the crunch in southeast England's airport capacity.

He highlighted how Stansted, unlike Heathrow, was not located in a densely populated area and had good road links because of proximity to the M11 motorway.

Mr Blower suggested it could be cheaper and quicker to expand Stansted than to build a hub in the estuary. “Our philosophy is very much an approach of ‘let’s see what can be done with the existing infrastructure’,” he said.

Mr Blower, who worked on Heathrow’s Terminal 5 and Madrid’s Barajas airport, said the Stansted project was six months old but far from complete. No costings have been done yet.

Make is considering how Stansted could improve its poor rail links to central London. It takes at least 45 minutes to travel on the existing line from Liverpool Street station.

Mr Blower is examining if Crossrail – due to open in 2018 – could be extended by building a spur line from Stratford station in east London to Stansted.

This could result in journey times of 25 minutes between Stansted and Stratford, and also provide a direct link to Heathrow – the west London airport is already planned as a spur terminus on Crossrail. However, it would take at least an hour to travel between the two airports.

Crossrail could provide Stansted with the opportunity to tap into the planned £17bn High Speed 2 rail line from London’s Euston station to Birmingham, at the Old Oak Common interchange. Finally, Make is also looking at linking Stansted to the High Speed 1 line, from London St Pancras to Paris, that includes an existing station at Stratford International.

But even if Stansted’s rail connections can be improved, entering into a dual hub arrangement with Heathrow would involve a fundamental change to the Essex airport’s business model. Since the revamped Stansted opened in 1991, it has focused on serving low-cost carriers, led by Ryanair, that fly to Europe.

Stansted has suffered during the downturn, as people have cut back on holidays. Passenger numbers have fallen from 23.8m in 2007 to 18m last year. It has a lot of spare capacity with its one runway being able to support 35m passenger flights each year. By contrast Heathrow, the UK’s only hub airport, was operating at near full capacity on its two runways last year, at 69.4m passengers.

Creating a successful dual hub of Heathrow and Stansted would almost certainly hinge on persuading one of the three global airline alliances to locate operations at the Essex airport.

British Airways, a leading member of Oneworld Alliance, one of the world’s three largest groups, is expected to remain based at Heathrow, so Stansted would need to woo either SkyTeam, including Delta, Air France and KLM, or Star Alliance, which includes Lufthansa, United and SAS.

Mr Blower stressed that Stansted's expansion could be phased and initially might involve adding one runway. But eventually, under Make's plans, Stansted could become a mega-hub with four runways, capable of handling 150m passengers each year.

*Additional reporting by James Pickford*

## BACKGROUND NEWS

The chief executive of Dubai Airports has accused the UK of "shopping in charity shops" as it seeks a solution to the south-east capacity crunch, **Rose Jacobs reports**.

Paul Griffiths, who runs the Middle East's biggest airport, argued that London needed a new hub east of the capital to ensure it did not miss out on economic growth. But given the length of the planning process, he advocated a third runway at Heathrow in the meantime.

"I watch with disdain from Dubai and see how difficult the planning environment is," he said. "The UK needs a dramatic increase in quality airport capacity and continuing to make do and mend within the existing system is just not going to cut it," he said last week.

"We've been shopping in charity shops looking for old things to sort out rather than pioneering and developing new things."

Mr Griffiths argued demand from airlines in 30 to 50 years would easily meet greater supply. London "needs the estuary airport, it needs growth at Heathrow and it needs the extra runway at Gatwick and possibly one at Stansted as well", he said.

Mr Griffiths rejected the notion that the problem of an overcrowded Heathrow could be solved by developing a second hub, because airlines would not want to spread their non-point-to-point operations over two airports.

Before joining Dubai Airports, Mr Griffiths worked for BAA – now known simply as Heathrow – running Gatwick before it was sold in 2009. There, he witnessed British Airways' failed attempt to split its hub between the two airports.

### You may be interested in

[TPG enters race for Stansted](#)

[Airlines cancel US flights](#)

[Birmingham Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells, London](#)

[Alitalia awaits shareholders' shuffle](#)

[Rail link compensation sparks criticism](#)

[AMP to take 49% stake in Newcastle Airport](#)

[OECD hits out at France on foreign bribery](#)

[Jailing the seismic seven will cause tremors beyond Italy](#)

White lights, big city

Macquarie lifts dividend as deals dwindle

Printed  
from:

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/032b5f0c-1e96-11e2-be82-00144feabdc0.html>

Print a single copy of this article for personal use. Contact us if you wish to print more to distribute to others.

© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2012 FT and 'Financial Times' are trademarks of The Financial Times Ltd.

# Heathrow and Stansted A dual hub?

