

Whilst applications for any airport-related development at Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA), and particularly anything that opens up the south side of the airport in preparation for the 176,900 square metres (Approx.1.9 million sq. ft) of development that already has planning consent should be welcomed, the present application fails to address a number of issues and makes assumptions that are not entirely justified. I comment specifically on aspects of the Design and Access Statement, the Planning Statement and Transport Assessment as follows:

1. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) says that it is "informed" by the adopted DTVA Master Plan (para 3 page 3). The Master Plan may well have been adopted by the owners of DTVA but there is considerable public opposition to major elements of it. Most notable is the decision to concentrate on what the plan describes as "general aviation" rather than providing frequent flights to popular destinations at realistic prices. This is what the vast majority of the over 5,500 supporters of the "SAVE Teesside Airport" Facebook page want. Some months ago Councillor Chris Hobson from Middlesbrough Council also organised a petition to save the airport and oppose the Master Plan and it received over 3,000 signatures. It is also an integral part of the Master Plan to sell a large area of land on the north side for residential development of up to 400 houses. This proposal received over 3,000 "no" votes, over 95% of the total, in a recent poll carried out by the local "Now and Then" magazine and over 3,000 local residents in the Middleton St. George area also signed a petition against more residential development. The proposal for housing will need planning consent and it seems odd that the current application for the road is in pursuit of a Master Plan that is opposed by a large number of people and depends on a controversial planning consent for another part of the airport site. It would be better if the road application were rejected until the future of the north side land has been determined.
2. The existing planning consent for the south side land also includes proposals for a separate access road off the A67 Darlington to Yarm road. The DAS simply dismisses this road link as "not deliverable" (para 2 page 6) and claims that as a result of this the development of the south side "has not progressed". The Planning Statement (PS) (Section 2.11) also refers to the south side development as having stalled due to "prevailing economic conditions" and Section 6.29 says that "It is recognised that Southside, as originally conceived, is not commercially viable". There is no discussion of nor justification for this summary dismissal of the earlier proposal. Nor is there any comment on the economic circumstances that lead to the land not being developed in the past but which make it developable now. The application is defective without this information.
3. The DAS claims that "There was considerable support for the Master Plan proposals" (para 5 page 6); The PS refers to "a high degree of support for the Master Plan" (Sections 2.13 and 6.33) and "extensive consultation" (Sections

1.7 and 2.13). A cursory glance at the statistics reveals a different story. In fact only 900 people attended “Master Plan” events and a further 250 attended public exhibitions, a total of 1,150 in all. 47 Master Plan questionnaires were completed, 20 additional written comments were made, 52 business questionnaires were received and there were 13 consultation responses. In total only 132 responses were received, not all from people who attended the meetings. DTVA say that 71% “supported the “Master Plan’s vision and objectives”, which sounds good until you realise that it is just 94 people, and it is less than 10% of the people who attended the exhibitions and events. It is claimed that 90% supported the proposals to create new jobs (and who wouldn’t?) but this is still only 119 people. In addition DTVA says that the website received 1,438 “hits”. Within a month of being set up a “SAVE Teesside Airport” Facebook page received 3,000 “likes” – this has now risen to over 5,500, the vast majority of whom oppose the Master Plan. There are other means by which the public have made their feelings about the airport and the Master Plan known – see item 1 above. It is entirely false to claim “considerable support”.

4. The problem with these claims of support is that in Section 2.14 of the PS it says that “the Master Plan is an important material consideration to which weight should be attached”. In fact it is a highly controversial document, supported by very few people and opposed by many (see items 1 and 3 above). It is the objections to the Master Plan that should be given major consideration. Section 6.20 of the PS quotes Policy CS10 from Darlington Councils Core Policy document as saying:

*“DTVA is essential to the economic performance of the Tees Valley. The Council will continue to work with the airport and regional partners to promote more services, including the reinstatement of flights to London Heathrow... The first phase of the Tees Valley rail improvements also includes a new rail stop serving the airport.”*

The Master Plan seems to run counter to this as does the policy quoted in Section 6.26.

5. The DAS points out that 50 ha (approx. 124 acres) of the 70 ha (approx. 173 acres) that already has planning consent is allocated for airport related employment uses (para 2 page 14). As recently as May 2012 Robert Hough, the then chairman of DTVA, was quoted as saying that one million passengers was within the airports potential (Darlington & Stockton Times May 2012) and in fact given that nearly 8 million passengers a year from the region use Newcastle and Leeds Bradford airports, with up to a million more travelling further afield to get the flights they want, the potential for DTVA is considerably greater. This potential was recognised as far back as 2007 when planning applications were approved for the airport to accommodate 3 million passengers a year and 25,000 tonnes of freight (Planning Statement item 2.6), yet only 18 months after May 2012 the airport was producing a Master Plan that proposed passenger numbers as low as 200,000 per annum

and practically no freight traffic. The airport is struggling to meet even that target at the moment with only 142,000 passengers in 2014. If the 50 ha of airport related land could not be developed when the airport was thriving it is difficult to see where the demand will come from now it is operating under such reduced circumstances. There is the obvious suspicion that once the £5 million grant for the road is given and the road built it will be followed by planning applications seeking the change the status of this land. This issue is not addressed in the Statement.

6. The DAS says that the new link road will need to be “designed to serve phase I and II of the Southside Business Park” and it is felt to be sufficient. This is echoed in the PS (Sections 3.3, 7.24 and 7.25). No mention is made of the capacity of the existing road from the A67. The original scheme envisaged the south side being accessed with its own dedicated road from the A67, a sensible move bearing in mind the potential 1.9 million sq. ft. of development. The existing access road and A67 roundabouts will now have to cater for all this traffic plus traffic generated by the north side potential developments and the residential development of up to 400 houses. If the airport’s fortunes were to revive (however unlikely under the present Master Plan) this one single access road would be catering for domestic, industrial, business and airport traffic as well as any emergency vehicles. It is unlikely to be anywhere near sufficient if the earlier forecasts of passenger and freight traffic at the airport were to be met and it is only DTVA’s own lack of ambition now shown in the Master Plan that allows this one access road to be even considered to be adequate. These concerns are not addressed.
7. The DAS mentions that “suitable traffic control measures to prevent vehicle movement during take-off and landings” should be put in place (point 6 page 20). No indication is given as to how disruptive this would be to traffic to and from the 1.9 million sq. ft. of development nor to the risk assessment to aircraft of those traffic control measures being ignored. These issues should be addressed.
8. The DAS also claims that the potential for railway sidings has been protected whereas the plan shown on page 25 shows the area hemmed in between the railway line and the new access road and does not show any opportunity to extend a siding into the south side employment area.
9. Section 2.7 of the PS says that “delivery of the Southside will be dependent on joint working between the HCA and the airport company”. No explanation of this statement is given, and Section 2.8 links the provision of the access road to the allocation of funding from a “Local Growth Fund”. No details of this funding are given. It is understood that the funding is to be provided through Tees Valley Unlimited and will be in the form of a grant. There is no explanation of the business case given by the airport leading to a grant being offered or why it is a grant and not a loan, what the terms of repayment, profit participation or clawback are, if any, and why public funds are being

given at all to a company whose main shareholder has assets of over £6.6 billion. The road is opening up 1.9 million square feet of development, which must surely be able to support the road cost. As a minimum, the money should be borrowed not given. The road for which the application has been made is dependent on this grant and much more information about it is needed.

10. Section 1.3 of the Transport Assessment (TA) makes it clear that it is based on the 400 house development proposed in the Master Plan. As stated above, however, it fails to take account of any significant increase in the passenger numbers or freight traffic and certainly not the sort of numbers estimated by the airport only a few years ago. The housing development is not a forgone conclusion and needs planning consent, which may not be straightforward given the amount of local opposition. No consideration is given to alternative uses such as industrial or office use of this land. Section 5.4 of the TA says that these alternative uses have been dismissed, which is a very sweeping assumption and no real justification is given. Concentrating traffic on a single access road when the planning use is for a large part of the site is a potentially expensive mistake. The TA is defective in these respects.

I believe that the documentation submitted in support of the road application is incomplete, defective and in certain aspects to do with “widespread support” of the Master Plan false. The scheme is dependent on DTVA receiving a substantial grant of public funds and also on the delivery of its Master Plan which includes selling land for the development of up to 400 houses, which is highly contentious. If the sale of the land is the key to the Master Plan and the £5 million grant is essential to the road being built then the consent for the housing land should be sought first, then the grant (or preferably a loan, if public funds are to be used in this way at all) and only then should the road scheme be considered, and if it is to be considered at all then the above issues should be dealt with and resolved. I urge you to reject the proposal as it now stands.