

Sir Howard Davies
Airports Commission
6th Floor
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

31st October 2013

Dear Sir Howard

I am writing to you on behalf of Marketing Birmingham, the city's strategic marketing partnership and the driving force behind its growing reputation as a place to visit, meet and invest. We work closely with Birmingham Airport, assisting it to market itself to airlines, with support from key partners such as Visit England and Visit Britain.

Birmingham is a city with momentum. Rates of GVA and private sector job growth are outstripping those of competitor cities and the Birmingham area has been one of those leading the UK out of recession. Between 2010 and 2011 (latest available data) GVA expanded by some £823 million (nearly 2%) – the highest figure of all core cities outside London.

As a result, Birmingham has a strong competitive advantage when seeking to attract FDI – with capital investment attracted and new jobs created the highest of any UK city outside London. Between 2010 and 2012 private sector firms in Greater Birmingham and Solihull created nearly 40,000 jobs – 10% of the national total and more than any other LEP area outside London.

This is forecast to continue over the next decade, underpinned by the renaissance of the area's world class advanced engineering sector and the growing importance of a range of other fast growth, high value sectors.

Indeed, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) recently published a report that benchmarked the future competitiveness of cities and recognised the potential that Birmingham has on the world stage. The report predicted those cities that will be 'hotspots' by 2025 and, in a list of 120, London and Birmingham were the only two UK cities to feature in the index at number two and number 43 respectively.

Significant investment in infrastructure – notably the Birmingham Airport runway extension, a revamped Birmingham New Street station and extension to the Midland Metro – should help maintain the city's growth trajectory in the short-term. With the completion of the runway extension and only minor infrastructure upgrades, Birmingham Airport is able to serve up to 27 million passengers a year by 2023.

However, if the economy of the city and its surrounding region is going to continue to thrive over the next few decades it needs to have an international gateway that meets its ambitions in the longer-term.

I was reassured to see the mention of marketing campaigns in your "Emerging Thinking" as a potential tool to help shift airline traffic into airports such as ours. A well-coordinated campaign with the weight of central Government behind it would certainly make an impact and I would be very happy to share with you some of the work we have done with Birmingham Airport thus far.

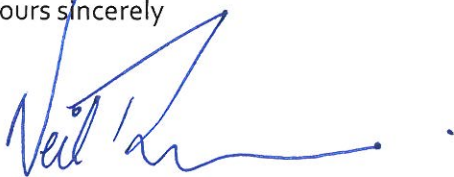
However, I am concerned that the production of a "short-list" of long-term options could have unintended consequences on the airline market as it is a solid indication of where the Government wants to see airport investment in the long-term.

By way of example, the inclusion of a potential second runway in the Government's White Paper (whilst no more than reserving the land) was crucial in our ability to market Birmingham Airport to airlines as it was a sign of Government commitment to the growth of the Airport in the long-term. I fear that failure to appear on a short-list in December will hamper our ability to market the Airport to airlines and, consequently, our ability to fill the runway in the short-medium term.

In November, we are due to visit China with Sir Albert Bore, the Leader of Birmingham City Council, and the Airport in order to promote the city among Chinese businesses – including airlines. You may also be aware that the Airport are currently in late-stage negotiations with a major Chinese airline that will provide a critical connection to the Chinese market for businesses in our region.

We are clearly at a critical point for the Airport and I wanted to stress to you the significance of your announcement in December and its direct implications on the hard work that is currently going on in the background. I would be very happy to come and speak with your colleagues if they require further detail, and thank you for giving us the opportunity to feed into your Commission.

Yours sincerely



Neil Rami
Chief Executive
Marketing Birmingham