

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED AIRPORT REDEVELOPMENT: REVIEW

Lodged au Greffe on 3rd June 2020
by Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as Shareholder Representative, to request Ports of Jersey to undertake and provide to the States Assembly a review of the scale, detail and viability of the £42 million scheme for the redevelopment of Jersey Airport in light of the changed aviation landscape caused by the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic;
- (b) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as Shareholder Representative, to seek commitments from Ports of Jersey that no demolition of the original 1937 Terminal takes place until the outcome of such a review has been considered by the States Assembly; and that consideration will be given to the retention and incorporation of the 1937 building as part of any redevelopment;
- (c) to request the Minister for the Environment to instigate a review of the grant of a permit to demolish the 1937 Terminal.

DEPUTY R. LABEY OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

This proposition is a response to two questions I have been asked by Islanders in the past few weeks: is it right to proceed with a pre-pandemic £42 million redevelopment of our airport in a post-pandemic world; and, can the original airport terminal be saved?

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought the world's airline industry to its knees. Some airlines, including one of the largest operating to Jersey, have gone out of business. Others, including British Airways and easyJet have laid off staff and closed bases. Normal commercial flying operations at Jersey Airport ceased almost three months ago.

In that time three things have happened. First, Ports of Jersey has lost revenue from landing fees and Air Passenger Duty, a situation that is likely to continue into this summer. Secondly, the loss of airlines such as Flybe has created uncertainty about which routes will be served from Jersey in the future and who will operate them. Thirdly, aviation experts have started to discuss the way in which existing airports, and those to be built in the future, will work given the constraints imposed by this pandemic and any similar events in the years ahead.

So, it is surprising that we have heard almost nothing from Ports of Jersey, a company wholly-owned by the Government of Jersey, about whether their planned £42 million redevelopment of the Airport will be fit for purpose or, indeed, given the unknown long-term effect on passenger numbers, financially viable.

It may be that the regeneration of the Airport becomes an important part of any economic stimulus but it cannot be right that the Board of Ports of Jersey should plough ahead with a scheme designed in a pre-pandemic world without taking full account of the changed aviation landscape. So, it is disappointing that the Chairman of the Board has not given any public clarity on its position or the action it is taking.

In answer to my questions on May 27th, the Minister for Economic Development announced that the re-development proposals were under review. And that is all we know.

It should be noted that the Airport redevelopment plans were not subjected to a public inquiry conducted by a Planning Inspector or consideration by the Planning Committee, both important processes for public awareness, openness and transparency.

This proposition seeks to assert the right of the shareholder to request a review of the redevelopment.



The 1937 Terminal

Members will know that the redevelopment includes the demolition of the original 1937 Terminal (a Grade 2 listed building, described by heritage experts as ‘well worthy of retention’) not because the land on which it sits is required for the redevelopment, but because it is said to be a hazard to flying which is tolerated only by the licencing authority on the promise that it would be demolished in due course. Total demolition is scheduled for 2022 but Ports of Jersey have decided to demolish the north wing of the 1937 Terminal to create a builder’s yard for the redevelopment. Work was about to start when the pandemic arrived.

It seems perverse to proceed with the part-demolition of the original building while the status of the redevelopment is unclear. A review may well conclude that a more modest scheme incorporating the original building is appropriate – and better value for money.

Therefore, part (b) of this proposition seeks to stay the demolition of the north wing of the 1937 Terminal and to *consider* (I put it no stronger than that) whether the original building could form part of any amended scheme.

New Information

Members will ask how the 1937 Terminal can be kept if it constitutes a hazard to operations.

Although the 1937 building infringes the 1:7 Transitional Surface, a new, expert ‘Aeronautical Study’ carried out for the campaign group Save Jersey’s Heritage by the

established aviation service company, ASAP, shows that it does **not** constitute a hazard to aircraft and that its retention will not affect operations – even in poor visibility. The building, therefore, complies with international standards for the licensing of airports, and does not need to be demolished.

It is unclear if Jersey Airport conducted an ‘aeronautical study’ in 2010 when applying to the Planning Minister to allow the demolition of the 1937 Terminal. If it did, no mention was made of it in the principal correspondence between the Airport management team and the case officer at the Planning Department who was dealing with the application. Nor did it feature in the paperwork which the Minister saw.

It seems that the findings of the aeronautical study could form the basis of an approach to the regulator to argue for the retention of the 1937 Terminal.

Ports of Jersey also say that retaining the building prevents the straightening of the Alpha taxiway.

Whilst the Alpha Taxiway, where it passes the 1937 Terminal, does not comply with the normal separation distance required between runway and taxiway, the disruption caused by managing this situation appears to have been overstated during the planning application process. And, other European airports operate with similar situations.

As Save Jersey’s Heritage says: ‘Taken together, these two factors mean that the Planning Minister, when considering an application to demolish the 1937 Terminal (a Grade 2 listed building), was not in possession of all the facts.’

In the light of this new information, part (c) of this proposition requests the Planning Minister to instigate a review of the grant of a permit to demolish the 1937 Terminal (a Grade 2 listed building).

Conclusion

The gateways to Jersey at the Airport and Harbour make important statements. What they currently signal is poor and we should do better. No one would argue that the Airport needs improving but is there community support for such improvement at a cost of £42 million when there are so many other demands upon the public purse?

The answer to that question will emerge in due course but it will be better informed by having all the facts and a greater insight, on behalf of the shareholder, into the current thinking of Ports of Jersey.

Financial and manpower implications

The review into the planning process and the awarding of a permit to demolish should be accommodated within existing budgets. Work on commencing the redevelopment project has already been paused to allow a review into its viability. Potentially there could be financial consequences for halting demolition, both positive and negative but this not likely to have significant cost implications and this proposition invites consideration of an appreciably more economical scheme than the £42 million project currently under review.