London Stansted Airport consultation on long-term plan to unlock potential of existing single runway

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About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, supporting, shaping and standing up for safe and efficient logistics. We are the only organisation representing the entire logistics sector.

We represent a sector delivering an increasingly innovative, productive and sustainable system of essential national infrastructure. This system ensures the availability of the products that households, businesses and public services rely on every day, and is supporting the UK's transformation for the future. Our membership of over 20,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning the road, rail, sea and air industries as well as the buyers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers.

Do you agree that growth plans should be based on making the best use of the existing single runway within existing boundaries?

The growth plans for London Stansted Airport should indeed be based on making the best use of the existing single runway within current boundaries, but this approach should not come at the expense of stifling air freight growth or limiting the UK's logistics needs. While Stansted's current plans aim to increase passenger capacity to 51 million annually without expanding beyond existing boundaries or increasing flight numbers, it's crucial to consider the broader implications for air freight.

Air freight plays a vital role in the UK economy, representing 30% of exports by value despite accounting for less than 1% of trade products by tonnage[1]. As such, any growth plans should carefully balance passenger capacity with the needs of the air freight sector. Though Stansted's growth is expected to double its economic contribution to £2 billion annually and create up to 5,000 new on-site jobs, it is important to note that air freight already contributes £300 million and 70,000 jobs to the UK economy annually[2]. Any growth plans should therefore aim to enhance both passenger and freight capabilities to maximise economic benefits.

While making the best use of the existing runway within current boundaries is a sound starting point, Stansted's growth plans should remain flexible. If supporting air freight growth necessitates infrastructure development beyond existing boundaries, this should be seriously considered to ensure the airport can fully support the UK's evolving logistics needs and maintain its competitive edge in global trade.

Do you back Stansted's plan to serve up to 51 million passengers by 2040 without any more flights than are currently permitted?

London Stansted's plan to serve up to 51 million passengers by 2040 without increasing the number of permitted flights should be viewed as a starting point rather than a rigid framework, especially when considering the UK's evolving logistics needs and global trade competitiveness.

Stansted currently handles over 264,000 tonnes of air cargo annually[3]. As the UK's air freight market is dominated by London airports, with Heathrow handling the majority, Stansted's role in freight transport could become increasingly important. The airport's significant spare runway capacity has already made it an alternative for pure freighter airlines.

While the current plan prioritises passenger growth within existing boundaries, it is imperative to maintain flexibility regarding potential infrastructure expansion beyond these limits to accommodate air freight growth. This adaptability is crucial for several reasons. As global trade patterns evolve, the UK may need to enhance its air freight capacity to maintain its competitive edge in the face of changing logistics requirements. Moreover, other London airports may not be able to provide relief for air freight due to their limited long-haul networks, leaving few alternatives. The economic significance of air freight cannot be overstated, as it contributes substantially to the UK economy, representing 30% of exports by value despite accounting for less than 1% of trade products by tonnage. Therefore, remaining open to

[1] *Exporting Excellence – Boosting UK Trade, Driving Economic Growth, Heathrow, 2023*
[2] *The Rise of Air Cargo in UK Trade, Air Cargo News, 2023*
[3] *London Stansted Airport – Facts and Figures, London Stansted Airport, 2025*

infrastructure development beyond current boundaries is essential to support the growth of this vital sector and ensure the UK's continued economic prosperity in an increasingly interconnected global marketplace.

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