

FACE-TO-FACE WITH:



John Atkins
Director
Atkins Property, Tirion Projects Ltd

John has over 30 years' experience in the property, transport and regeneration sectors. He has reported at Board level on property and development matters for MAG and delivered significant value creation to the business working directly with Government and Local Government leaders. He is a skilled negotiator in delivering property development, property management and strategic direction in complex stakeholder environments.

Director Atkins Property 2015 to present

Founder of Atkins Property a specialist strategic consultancy for large scale complex infrastructure projects where significant value can be created around the infrastructure assets. The range of assets include ports, airports, rail stations, and motorway junctions.

Non Executive Director NJL ltd 2014 to present

Acting as a non executive Director to a regional Planning Consultancy business based in Manchester and Leeds.

Managing Director, MAG Developments 2009 to 2015

Director of Airport City Manchester Ltd Joint Venture Company

John was Managing Director of MAG Developments for 6 years, MAG Developments is the property management and development business of MAG (the Manchester Airport Group of companies- a

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£3-4bn asset value business owned by the 10 districts of Greater Manchester and IFM Australian Pension Fund).

The property business includes over £600m of property assets at all four MAG Airports based in the UK. The post reported into the Chief Executive of the Group and he was a member of ExCo (the Executive Management Committee).

A separate Property Board operates and includes the £850m Airport City project at Manchester Airport- a flagship Enterprise Zone. John led this project from initiation to forming the Joint Venture delivery partnership in 2013. The project has been developed through close collaboration with a number of stakeholders including Manchester City Council's Chief Executive- Sir Howard Bernstein,

Central Government Departments, local MPs including The UK Government's Chancellor -George Osborne, and the surrounding community.

The business was created to drive value out of the MAG land bank by working with internal and external stakeholders to define core and non core assets. New hotels, offices and logistics projects have been completed over the past 10 years. Land has been acquired for development and infrastructure and planning approvals have been delivered to enhance value by land sales, JV's and direct turnkey developments.

Key note presentations on Airport City and driving value out of land assets have been delivered in Shanghai, Beijing, London, New York, Denver, Barcelona, Munich and Kuala Lumpur, Gatwick and most recently to the United Nations in Geneva

Strategy and Development Director MAG 2005 to 2009

John reported to the Chief Executive for the management of the property estate of the Group and for delivering new commercial developments and infrastructure projects totaling c£1bn – 10 year Capital Programme. The role was responsible for managing the Strategic Property and Estates Team of the Group's Airports . Functions included delivering new commercial property developments to maximise shareholder returns, providing property and commercial master planning advice to MAG, and management of Ringway Developments plc. The role had a strong focus on stakeholder management with relationships across, central government, private developers and local authorities.

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Education

Manchester Business School

Oxford Brookes University

BA Hons in Urban and Regional Planning



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Share with us the approaches that you have adopted to optimise airport city property development.

One of the main challenges in promoting Airport cities is the management of the interface between core operational needs of the Airport and the Airport City opportunity. There is a need to manage this interface by gaining clarity at Board level over the objectives of the core business. The available land is another important factor.

At MAG, I was fortunate in having a supportive Board structure alongside the public stakeholders in acquiring sufficient land for long term development rather than waiting for compulsory acquisition processes. The land for the future expansion of the Airport and for Airport City was acquired by agreement well ahead of need and provided a level of control in forming the Joint Venture Delivery Company. Two masterplans then need to be created to address the land needs of the Airport and the Airport City.

Very few businesses have the skills to do this as one exercise and therefore the activities are usually most effectively managed by agreeing the briefs in a corporate sign off by the Group Company and then for the commercial skills of the commercial (Airport City) master planners and infrastructure planning skills of the Airport master planners to create two masterplans that can then be merged and any trade- offs dealt with in an open forum.

In creating the airport City masterplan it is critical to provide a solid commercial assessment of the opportunity. Too many masterplans are architecturally led rather than commercially based. A full demand assessment is essential to ensure that the proposals are economically viable and market facing. The outputs of the commercial exercise (JLL and CBRE at Manchester) then need to be tested at planning approval level with local politicians and decision makers to ensure public sector buy-in.

What do you feel are the most likely scenarios or challenges that the airport city or aerotropolis industry will face in the next 5-10 years?

The Airport City model is now firmly established throughout the world and airport's of scale and international connectivity can now exploit the opportunity. The aerotropolis concept is a wider proposition and care needs to be taken when applying the concept in city locations that have grown over 100's and potentially 1000's of years. The concept of strong transport corridors linking city centres and major international airports provides the backbone of the aerotropolis and the linkages between the needs of the City Centre and the Airport need careful management. There are UK examples of tensions between these needs for example in London at LHR.

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future I would expect there to be more logistics space at airport Cities as the fundamentals for growth are particularly strong in this area. Also, dependent on location, I could envisage more retail uses in dense developments around public transport nodes. Offices are a more difficult proposition where structural changes in the market are affecting the demand and a strong pull to the City Centre creates policy tensions.

Future residential opportunities close to the Airport are something that may be a future component of Airport Cities as noise levels improve and locations on the edges of the airport in lower noise impact areas may become more attractive.

Manchester Airport and Birmingham Airport High Speed2 stations have the opportunity to lever new commercial and residential Airport City developments as part of the new infrastructure investment.

What do you think is the role of UBM Airport City (ACE) and how does this benefit the industry?

The Airport Cities Conference provides a platform on a global level for sharing expertise and knowledge. The concept is now well understood, the challenge is to deliver commercially successful and attractive new urban forms for the benefit of the airport business and the community served.

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