

London Heathrow – IAG Cargo Empty ULD Store

Design statement

Applicant: IAG Cargo

May 2026

Proposal

IAG Cargo proposes the construction of a 2-level structure at its site at London Heathrow for the purposes of storing empty aircraft containers ('ULDs') which are used to load luggage, freight and mail into aircraft. The structure will be able to hold 160 containers in total, over two levels, with access between levels provided by two lifts/hoists. Access to the new structure will be by Airside Tug & Dolly or truck. The site is located within the overall London Heathrow campus, on land leased by IAG Cargo, within the access-controlled area of the airport, accessible only to IAG Cargo personnel with relevant security permission. The land proposed is block-paved hard standing with no existing structures and is currently used for parking airside vehicles.

Rationale

Currently IAG Cargo stores containers at an offsite location which means they are transported by road each day to Heathrow. As well as generating additional traffic on local roads, it also creates operational challenges for the cargo handler to balance the number of containers on site within its warehouses. Having a portion of these containers stored locally at Heathrow will reduce reliance on the road supply operation and increase operational efficiency.

Design considerations

The structure proposed has been designed in conjunction with a Cargo Infrastructure specialist, making use of common modular components. The design enables efficient storage of different types of aircraft Unit Load Devices on a decking structure containing castor decking and rollers. The design ensures safe access and operation by ground staff and includes features to prevent movement of ULDs once loaded. Many similar structures already exist at Heathrow.

Choice of location

The location selected by IAG Cargo is an area of hard-standing block paving in the corner of the leased plot. Given the nature of the hard standing, it is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) development requirements.

Proposed site (existing)



The absolute position of the structure has been determined not only to make better use of the corner of the plot, but to carefully align with existing and proposed road layouts in the area (airside vehicles must interface with the new structure at fixed points, and from different vehicle types). Consideration has been given to the placement of the structure and access for pedestrians and vehicles, as part of a wider design for the area which will include new line markings, pedestrian safe-walkways and barriers. The area chosen has been assessed by topological survey which also confirms the suitability of the space and existing levels, whilst also coordinating with and avoiding any underground services including drainage, power, and fire main etc.

Consideration of wider airport stakeholders

IAG Cargo has been engaged with Heathrow Airport (HAL) to agree the location and specifics of the installation and its construction. HAL Airside Safety and Assurance has undertaken a risk assessment of the proposal and confirmed the safeguarding report is clear and satisfactory.

Recognising the proximity to the adjacent radar tower, IAG Cargo has separately engaged with National Air Traffic (NATS) to seek their approval. NATS has reviewed the proposal and in principle does not have any concerns on the airport Air Traffic Infrastructure.

IAG Cargo will remain engaged with HAL and NATS throughout the detailed design and delivery.

Installation

Installation is expected to take approximately 10 weeks and will consist of:

- Site preparation and enabling works
- Offloading and internal transportation of materials
- Assembly of the steel structure and storage system
- Installation of castor decks and truck dock
- Installation of lift systems by specialists
- Installation of lighting by specialists
- Testing and handover