

Year called 1978

Silk 1993

john.steel@39essex.com



“an incisive decision-maker who inspires confidence within clients”

Chambers & Partners

John Steel QC’s main areas of practice are planning, environmental, aviation, and compulsory purchase law. He specialises in public inquiries and judicial review. He is cited as a recommended leader by Chambers & Partners, The Legal 500 and UK Legal Experts.

His planning and environmental law practice has encompassed the full range of development and major infrastructure projects, including housing, employment and industrial land development, energy, minerals and waste, retail, highways and transportation, noise and emissions, ecology, engineering, architecture and historic buildings, economics, sports stadiums, sports complexes, racecourses and racetracks. He has represented central government departments, local authorities, regulators, major companies, landowners and developers, as well as private individuals. He is an acknowledged expert with specialist knowledge in airport development and aviation regulation.

He was joint head of the Planning, Environment and Property law group in Chambers, head of the Aviation and Aerospace law group, is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitration and a CEDR accredited mediator, a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is also a Crown and County Court Recorder, Bencher of Gray’s Inn, instrument rated pilot, honorary Fellow of Law of Durham University Law School and external board member of Durham Law School and Global Security Institute. He is also Chairman of The Air League.

[Click here](#) to view John’s full Aviation & Aerospace CV.

PRACTICE AREAS

- Planning, Environment & Property
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

SECTORS

- Aviation & Aerospace
- Sport

PRACTICE AREAS

PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & PROPERTY

PLANNING:

- Agriculture – farming and diversification
- Equestrian – racecourses (legal adviser to the Jockey Club), livery stables and equestrian complexes, eventing and show jumping courses and arenas)
- Casinos (e.g. Stanley Casinos, Earl's Court, Kensington and Chelsea)
- Education and Sport (e.g. development of new Pathfinder schools for Bromley LBC + JR, planning adviser to Harrow School including £65m development of sports and science complex).
- Employment development (e.g. Ashford extension, CB1 and CUP sites Cambridge, Leeds regeneration sites, Newcastle City Centre and River Tyne, for private developers and public authorities).
- Housing – North of England (e.g. Durham, Spennymoor, Sunderland, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, for Barratt Newcastle), Wales (e.g. Llanishen Cardiff for WPD), Southern England (Ashford for GRE, Bognor Regis for Berkeley Homes, Newbury for West Berks Council, Newbury Racecourse Ltd, Sandown Park – Jockey Club Racecourses), East Anglia and individual private clients.
- Heritage and culture (e.g. Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Ancient Monuments and World Heritage Sites).
- Major Infrastructure projects including expansion of airports, rail, nuclear power stations and IPC related matters.
- Minerals (e.g. coal, sand and gravels, rock, fullers earth and other minerals extraction and recycling).
- Regeneration (e.g. for Councils listed under CPOs above).
- Sports and leisure and tourism development (e.g. stadia and academies for Chelsea FC, Derby County FC, Sunderland FC, golf courses and holiday parks, indoor and outdoor leisure development, legal adviser to Jockey Club Racecourses, Cheltenham and Sandown Park racecourses).
- Retail (Asda, J Sainsbury, Morrisons, Waitrose and other food superstore developments, retail warehouses, and other forms of retail development).
- Transportation (e.g. Special Road and other highway orders, Public Rights of Way creation, diversion, extinguishment and stopping up orders).

ENVIRONMENTAL:

- Air Pollution (e.g. aviation emissions control, opencast coal mines, and chemical plants).
- Carbon trading (e.g. aviation offset – advice to TAG).
- Chemical plants erection, safety and risk assessments, use and demolition.
- Ecology (e.g. Llanishen SSSIs, public inquiries and High Court cases for WPD).
- Entertainment and other licensing (e.g. Reading Rock Festival, Royal Albert Hall, residents' association Islington London).
- Noise nuisance, licensing and control under EPA 1990, planning and licensing legislation (e.g. Royal Albert Hall licensing JR).
- Recycling, control and minimisation of waste (e.g. advice to Worcestershire Waste Collection and Disposal authorities).
- Storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous waste.
- Waste Incinerators and Waste Disposal (Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Liverpool Knowsley, Telford – adviser to private clients and public sector authorities).

COMPULSORY PURCHASE AND TRANSPORT & WORKS ORDERS:

- Highways, aviation, heritage, town centre and brownfield land redevelopment, public inquiries and High Court cases.
- Major Transport Infrastructure projects, including airport, road and rail development.
- Regeneration and land assembly projects.
- Private and public sport, education and housing development.
- Cases include:
 - Barnsley BC – Town Centre CPO.
 - Birmingham CC – City Centre and Road CPOs.
 - Department of Transport – Roads and Motorway CPOs.
 - Gateshead BC – Metro Centre, Housing and clearance CPOs.
 - Leeds CC – River Aire and City Centre CPOs.
 - London – Olympic CPOs.
 - Luton BC – Luton–Dunstable Guided Busway.
 - Middlesbrough BC – Land Assembly, Housing and Town Centre CPOs.
 - ONE North East – Darlington, Newcastle regeneration.
 - Newcastle CC – City Centre and River Tyne CPOs.
 - Redcar BC – Town Centre CPO.
 - Stansted Airport – development of airport.
 - Stockton BC – Town Centre CPO.

- Yorkshire Forward – Barnsley Town Centre CPO.

OTHER CASES OF NOTE INCLUDE:

- **RAF Northolt Airport (R (London Oxford and Biggin Hill Airports) v Secretary of State for Defence, Secretary of State for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority)** – 2013 Judicial Review brought on behalf of London Oxford and Biggin Hill Airports against MoD, DfT and CAA concerning Minister's decision to increase commercial movements.
- **Dunstable Park Ltd v (1) Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government (2) Waverley Borough Council** (2013) – July 2013, Planning – Aviation- Airports; Ancillary use; Certificates of Lawful Use; Planning Permission.
- **Long, R (on the application of) v Monmouthshire County Council & Anor** – Nov 2012, Planning appeals – High Court.
- **Trad Scaffolding Co Ltd (R on the application of) v London Thames Gateway Development Corporation** – Nov 2011, Judicial review.
- **The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (Bromley By Bow)(South) Compulsory Purchase Order** – Sep 2011, Planning inquiries.
- **Corporation of the Hall of Arts and Sciences v The Albert Court Residents' Association** – Apr 2011, Licensing, Planning appeals – High Court, Judicial review.
- **TAG Farnborough Airport Ltd** – Jul 2010, Planning inquiries.
- **Albert Court Residents Association & Ors, R (on the application of) v Corporation of the Hall of Arts & Sciences** – Mar 2010, Judicial review.
- **R (on the application of The Governing Body of the Langley Park School for Girls) v Bromley LBC and The Governing Body of the Langley Park School for Boys** – Feb 2009, Planning appeals – High Court, Judicial review.
- **J. Mawle and others v West Oxfordshire District Council** – May 2007, Planning appeals – High Court.
- **Western Power Distributions Investments Ltd, R (on the application of) v Countryside Council for Wales** – Jan 2007, Judicial review.
- **Regina (Bushell and Others) v Newcastle upon Tyne Licensing Justices and Another** – Feb 2006, Licensing.
- **Coventry Airport Inquiry** – Jan 2006, Planning inquiries.
- **R (Persimmon Homes (South East) Ltd and another) v Secretary of State for Transport** – Jan 2005, Judicial review, Aviation.
- **Morbaine Ltd (2) Roberts (Abigail) v (1) First Secretary of State (2) Stoke on Trent City Council (3) Lear Management Ltd** (2004)
Jul 2004, Planning appeals – High Court.
- **R (on the application of Bushell & Others) v Newcastle Licensing Justices & Others** – Jul 2004, Licensing, Environmental impact assessment.
- **R (on the application of I'm Your Man Ltd) v North Somerset Council** – Feb 2004, Planning appeals –

High Court.

- **Coppergate II retail development** – Jan 2004, Planning inquiries.
- **Stevenage West** – Jan 2004, Planning inquiries.
- **R (Jones) v Mansfield District Council** – Oct 2003, Environmental impact assessment, Judicial review.
- **R (on the application of Mount Cook Land Ltd and another) v Westminster City Council** – Oct 2003, Judicial review.
- **Sunderland Football Club Academy of Light** – Sep 2003, Planning inquiries.
- **R (on the application of Crichton and another) v Wellingborough Borough Council** – Dec 2002, Environmental impact assessment, Judicial review.
- **Sullivan v Warwick District Council** – Dec 2002, Planning inquiries, Judicial review.
- **R (on the application of Medway Council and others) v Secretary of State for Transport** – Nov 2002, Planning appeals – High Court, Judicial review, Aviation.
- **Hithermoor Waste Disposal Inquiry** – Oct 2002.
- **London International Exhibition Centre, ExCel** – Aug 2002, Planning inquiries.
- **Derby County Football Club Academy** – Feb 2001, Planning inquiries.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

John Steel QC is a qualified arbitrator and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitration. He specialises in national and international arbitration in particular concerning aviation, aerospace, planning and airport development. He is an experienced pilot (fixed wing and helicopters), chairman of the Air League and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. A recent case in which he was appointed arbitrator was in the matter of an arbitration between MHS Aviation Berhad and Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd, concerning a claim in relation to termination of a RM3.1bil offshore helicopter services contract in Malaysia. He has wide experience of aviation and aerospace matters, including in relation to major international airport development as well as regional airports. His cases in the UK High Court and Court of Appeal included representing the UK Civil Aviation Authority with respect to AAIB litigation and the responsibilities of the regulator, as well as actions against the Department for Transport and CAA with respect to airspace changes and airport safety. He was appointed to be a member of the Kirkhope Parliamentary inquiry panel into Airspace and Airspace Changes in the UK.

SECTORS

AVIATION & AEROSPACE

John is recognised as a leading practitioner in aviation, aerospace, planning, transport and environmental law.

His clients include airports, airlines, aerospace companies, major utilities and industrial companies in the UK and elsewhere, as well as banks, insurers, Government departments and agencies, local authorities, NGOs and individuals.

He has been involved in some of the leading cases in matters such as major airport development, aviation law, planning and environmental law, noise and key infrastructure projects including new roads, motorways, railways,

tramways, ports, guided busways, power stations and waste to energy plants.

In aviation and aerospace, high-profile cases have included the development of London Heathrow, London Gatwick and London Stansted airports, as well as the development and use of regional and other airports at London Luton, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Coventry, Farnborough, London Oxford, Biggin Hill, Southend, Newcastle, East Midlands, Liverpool John Lennon, Sheffield, RAF Northolt, Dunsfold, Fairoaks, Plymouth, and a number of smaller General Aviation aerodromes and proposed heliports. He is the joint author of one of the key papers submitted to the Davies Commission on UK Airport Capacity in 2014 and has been appointed legal adviser to the All Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation in the UK Parliament. He is also the Chairman of The Air League and the voice of the aviation and aerospace sectors in the UK.

John is a well-known senior practitioner probably uniquely with detailed knowledge of the design, workings and regulation of airports and aerospace both in the civil / airline as well as military / defence sectors, involving the UK CAA, Ministry of Defence, Department for Transport, NATS, Eurocontrol, EASA, ICAO, airport operators and airlines, on the use and regulation of airports and aircraft, including the three dimensional aspects of air traffic control, radar, aircraft safety and accidents, airport design and surface access.

He has represented and advised, or been involved with, major international and other airlines, both in the courts, at public inquiries and in government commissions and consultations. He has been a contributor on behalf of the airline industry to aviation policy documents, including the UK Aviation and Airport Policy published by the UK Government.

Clients have included various Airport Operators and Authorities; Airlines and Aircraft Operators; Cargo Operators; and Aviation and Aerospace Organisations and Companies, including BAA, British Airways, BMI, BAE Systems, Farnborough International, Cathay Pacific, Dragonair, Low Cost Airlines including Ryanair and EasyJet, Flybe, TAG Aviation, Gama Aviation, Hangar 8, BBGA, and AOPA. Private individuals have included the Reuben Brothers, Dial Partners and Unity Land LLPs, airport owners, investors and operators.

John has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, a member of the Aviation Club of the UK, with affiliation to the Aerospace Forum Asia, The Aero Club of Washington and The International Aviation Club, also in Washington. John was, for a number of years, the honorary legal adviser to The Air League and is now its Chairman since 2017. Within its membership and Council are a number of the UK's foremost aviation and aerospace companies and organisations. Membership of the Aviation Club and / or the Air League includes Airbus, Boeing, Rolls Royce, CFM International, British Airways, Emirates, Bombardier and CASCO, as well as a number of leading members of the UK Parliament.

His practical knowledge as an instrument rated fixed wing (aeroplane) pilot, a qualified rotary (helicopter) pilot, and his regular flying, both in the UK and abroad, is an invaluable addition to his skills when involved in aviation and aerospace matters professionally.

SPORT

John's sports law experience is over many years and covers areas of law including judicial review, public law, planning, property and environmental law including noise controls, public entertainment licensing, criminal and tort law involving nuisance and trespass, footpaths and rights of way, as well as most recently the obtaining of injunctions against ticket touts. He was also counsel in a Court of Appeal case representing the Aga Khan concerning the doping of the horse called Alysia.

His clients include a number of Premier Division Football Clubs (Arsenal, Chelsea, Derby County, Sunderland and

others), Rugby (RFU Twickenham), Jockey Club Racecourses (Cheltenham and Sandown Park Racecourses), Newbury Racecourse, Weatherby Racecourse, Government Departments (Department of Transport – projects affecting sports facilities), many local authorities (Bromley Borough Council, Middlesborough Council, Newbury District Council/ West Berks Council), Reading Borough Council, Sheffield City Council, Southampton City Council, as well as educational establishments including Durham University and Harrow School among a number of others.

Examples of recent sports law cases (October 2018) include representing Jockey Club Racecourses in successfully obtaining a ground breaking injunction to prevent touts selling tickets at Cheltenham Racecourse when as a result there were no touts selling tickets at the next meeting on Racecourse land.

He advises Jockey Club Racecourses on general legal matters in particular at Cheltenham and Sandown as well as concerning their other 15 racecourses in relation to advertising, planning, development, health and safety and crowd control, entertainment licensing and building contract matters.

He represented Harrow School in their planning application (successfully appealed to the Secretary of State) for a £65m sports and science development on land partly in the Metropolitan Open Land (applying Green Belt policies) at Harrow-on-the-Hill and successfully opposing the London Mayor’s challenge to the grant of planning permission on a call in appeal by the Secretary of State. He has successfully advised the owners and developers of the indoor Tennis Dome at Dukes Meadows Chiswick in the Metropolitan Green Belt in obtaining permanent planning permission.

He has been counsel advising on the redevelopment of Chelsea FC stadium at Chelsea and representation at public inquiry, the Arsenal Emirates Stadium, Derby County FC stadium as well as its academy in the Green Belt, Sunderland FC ‘Stadium of Light’ and its academy in the Green Belt, RFU Twickenham Stadium redevelopment of the South Stand and public entertainment licensing (music concerts and events) as well as Cheltenham Racecourse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

John is a recommended leader in Chambers & Partners, Legal 500 and Legal Experts for Aviation, Planning and Environmental Law.

He was awarded Acquisition International UK Aviation Law QC of the Year 2012/2013.

QUOTES

CHAMBERS & PARTNERS:

Recommended leader in Planning Law and Aviation Law:

“He is a highly experienced advocate and specialist in aviation and planning issues” (2018)

"He is great to get advice from, as he's very responsive and considered, but more commercial than the average silk" (2018).

"His technical nous enables him to tackle complex cases, whether they are in relation to engineering, environmental or compulsory purchase complications." (2018)

"Knowledgeable and tactically aware, particularly on CPO matters" (2017)

"Has a good grasp of the issues and provides excellent advice on tactics and procedures." (2017)

"A real expert in planning and aviation law; he is very impressive on that and on the crossover between the two areas" (2016)

"He thinks outside the box and challenges himself, clients and others to think in a different way which is refreshing" (2015)

"an impressive lateral thinker who offers innovative legal and commercial solutions" and is "great with clients." (2012).

"outstanding ... [he] is an impressive lateral thinker who offers innovative legal and commercial solutions" (2011)

"an excellent silk-particularly when it comes to cross-examining and a really superb team player" (2010)

"generates acclaim for his client-friendly attitude and nose for the best strategy... [he is a] terrier in court and really quick on his feet" (2009)

"(he) is particularly rated for his fantastic knowledge of airports and aircrafts-related work, he is a master of planning law tactics who is very good at managing clients expectations. Diplomatic and effective in style" (2008)

"an incisive decision-maker who inspires confidence within clients" (2008)

Local Government Law:

"He has great clarity of thought and displays enthusiasm for his cases." (2014)

"Reasonable in terms of both his fee and his approach, he really takes the time to try and understand what it is the client wants to achieve." (2014)

"robust yet user-friendly approach" (2010)

"his advice on planning and environmental law is particularly prized" (2009)

LEGAL 500:

Recommended leader in Aviation Law:

"Recommended for his airport development expertise" (2010 and 2011)

Environmental Law:

"a heavy hitter" (2017)

"He provides robust and strategic advice, which provides clear guidance." (2017)

"Major infrastructure projects, airport noise and pollution controls are his forte" (2016)

"An innovative and creative problem solver" (2015)

"very enthusiastic and can think his way through complex problems to provide very practical outcomes" (2011)

"a results-driven focus" (2010)

"very impressive environmental specialist" (2008)

Planning Law:

"Recommended for his expertise in the aviation sector and his wider industry knowledge" (2017)

"There is nobody stronger for issues surrounding major infrastructure projects" (2016)

"A very experienced practitioner" (2015)

"(he is) able to think outside the box and come up with approaches to tackle novel and unusual issues" (2011)

"results-driven" (2010)

"good for no-holds-barred planning appeals, especially in the retail sector" (2008)

APPOINTMENTS

Queen's Counsel 1993

Recorder (Crime and Civil Law)

Bencher Gray's Inn; Chairman of Management Committee 2012/13

Honorary legal adviser and now Chairman of The Air League

Honorary legal adviser to the British Business and General Aviation Association

Honorary Fellow and external board member Durham University School of Law

Board member Durham Global Security Institute, Durham University

Former Strategic Development Adviser to the Vice Chancellor, Durham University

MEMBERSHIPS

- PEBA
- ALBA
- UKELA

QUALIFICATIONS

University of Durham BSc (Hons Chemistry) 1976; Fellow (Law): 2010

Barrister, Gray's Inn 1978

Fellow Royal Aeronautical Society

Fellow Royal Geographical Society

Fellow Royal Society of Arts

Fellow Chartered Institute of Arbitrators

Accredited Mediator: CEDR

Diploma in International Arbitration

Instrument Rated Pilot (Fixed Wing and Rotary)

LONDON

81 Chancery Lane,
London
WC2A 1DD
Tel: +44 (0)20 7832 1111
DX: London/Chancery Lane 298
Fax: +44 (0)20 7353 3978

MANCHESTER

82 King Street,
Manchester
M2 4WQ
Tel: +44 (0)16 1870 0333
Fax: +44 (0)20 7353 3978

SINGAPORE

Maxwell Chambers,
28 Maxwell Road,
04-03 & 04-04, Maxwell Chamber
Suites
Singapore 069120
Tel: +65 6320 9272

KUALA LUMPUR

#02-9, Bangunan Sulaiman,
Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin,
50000 Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia
Tel: +60 32 271 1085
