



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR SPELTHORNE

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO EXPAND HEATHROW AIRPORT

4 February 2008

KEY ISSUE

To consider a response to the Government consultation on proposals to expand Heathrow Airport and to advise the Executive accordingly.

SUMMARY

The Department for Transport published a consultation paper on 22 November 2007 entitled *Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport*. The deadline for responses is **27 February 2008**.

In the consultation document the Government sets out its support for further development at Heathrow in the context of its wider aviation policies as follows:

- making the best use of existing airport capacity
- ensuring that, over time, aviation pays the external costs its activities impose on societies at large and
- seeks to reduce and minimise the impacts of airports on those who live nearby and on the natural environment.

This report is drawn up on the basis of the County Council's previous agreed policy, namely to support the proposals for a third runway and sixth terminal at Heathrow, subject to environmental limits not being exceeded, and to appropriate transport infrastructure being in place, including funding for Airtrack and other road and public transport improvements.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee for Spelthorne is asked to agree that this report, including Annex 1 (answering the consultation questions), be accepted

as the proposed response to the consultation proposals, subject to their views being incorporated in the report to the County Council's Executive.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1 In 2002, the Government consulted on its air transport policy and set out its conclusions in the 2003 White Paper *The Future of Air Transport*. This promised further work and consultation on a number of issues relating to Heathrow Airport. In the light of that work, the Government is seeking views on how Heathrow could be developed over the next 20 years or more.
- 2 The White Paper made clear that the Government supported the further development of Heathrow, by adding a third runway and exploring the scope for making greater use of the existing two runways. The support was conditional on
 - A noise limit – no increase in the size of the area significantly affected by aircraft noise (as measured by the 57dBA Leq contour in 2002);
 - Air quality limits – being confident of meeting European air quality limits around the airport, in particular for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which is the most critical local pollutant around Heathrow; and
 - Improving public transport access to the airport.

(The County Council's response to the consultation leading up to the White Paper is summarised in **ANNEX 2**) The Department for Transport subsequently set up the Project for the Sustainable Development of Heathrow to consider whether, and how, these conditions might be met. The consultation document presents the results of this work and invites responses on a revised proposal for a third runway; a proposed review of operational procedures including "westerly preference" and the Cranford agreement; and also an assessment of the effects of night-time rotation between westerly and easterly preference and early morning alternation. The Government states that responses will be taken into account in reaching final policy decisions on Heathrow. The 14 week consultation period ends on 27 February 2008.

Current Planning Policy

- 3 The South East Regional Plan and the Surrey Structure Plan 2004 both include policy responses to the White Paper. South East Plan Policy T9 gives guidance to local authorities for their relevant plans and strategies to support the development of Gatwick and Heathrow airports within the levels of growth agreed in the White Paper. Priority is sought for a Airport Surface Access Strategy to achieve reductions in the environmental impact of surface access and a higher modal share in favour of public transport. The SE Plan Core Strategy raises

serious concerns regarding the regional implications of the Aviation White Paper. It maintains that the forecast aviation traffic growth would require levels of development and surface movement which will be very difficult to accommodate, especially in the already congested, over-heated and polluted area around Heathrow.

- 4 The South East Plan was prepared on the basis of the current level of agreed growth at Heathrow. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the possible impacts of the proposals on the plan in terms of provision made for housing and infrastructure. The plan states that Heathrow situation would be reviewed in light of any future Ministerial decision or as part of the first review of the Plan, whichever comes first. The SE Plan further states (Core Strategy Para 1.28) that it believes the Government should have given more overall emphasis to the potential of regional airports.
- 5 The Surrey Structure Plan 2004 acknowledges the contribution that the two international airports make to the prosperity of the county and also the significant environmental impacts such as traffic congestion, urbanisation, noise and pollution. Policy DN8 seeks to safeguard the role of Heathrow and Gatwick Airports provided that the impacts on Surrey are sufficiently mitigated and substantial investment in supporting public transport infrastructure needs is provided to address current and future needs. The Structure plan specifically mentions the need for airport expansion to be conditional upon substantial investment in surface access including AirTrack.

The position of other local authorities

- 6 Spelthorne Borough Council's Executive is due to consider a response on 12 February. It is understood that their Members wish to look afresh at the proposals, but are not expected to object in principle. Runnymede Borough Council are likely to support the proposals, subject to appropriate transport infrastructure, including Airtrack, being in place. Other local authorities around the airport have formed an alliance called the 2M Group to "present a common voice for the 2 million people whose quality of life is affected by Heathrow.". The membership comprises west London boroughs and the boroughs of Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead and South Bucks District Council. Most of these authorities are known to be against the proposals, primarily on environmental impact grounds. The London Assembly has yet to formally comment on the proposals. The Mayor has recently issued a statement stating firm opposition to the proposals on the grounds that it will generate increased emissions of greenhouse gases and impact on climate change and lead to increased noise and air pollution for those living under the airport's flight path.

THE PROPOSALS

- 7 The consultation proposals include adding a third runway north of the A4 (2,200m compared with the original 2,000m proposal in the White Paper), supported by additional passenger terminal facilities (a sixth terminal), together with road and rail connections. By 2030, the airport could then handle up to around 700,000 flights a year, which is nearly 50 per cent more than today. (Indicative maps are included as **ANNEXES 3 and 4 – Colour versions are being made available to Members only but copies can be obtained from the Local Partnerships Team or at the meeting**)
- 8 Other proposals are concerned with measures to increase the number of flights from the existing two runways and other operational changes. The existing runways would be used for both arrivals and departures – what is called ‘mixed mode’. This could allow up to around 540,000 flights, up 12 per cent on current levels, ahead of any new runway capacity. However, this is seen as a temporary measure, as mixed mode operations on the existing runways would cease once a third runway was operating. The new runway, however, would operate with both arrivals and departures.
- 9 Adding a third runway and a sixth terminal would require additional land, with a loss of around 700 properties, including the community of Sipson, with the details being subject to planning permission. Changes to the current ‘westerly preference’ (preferred direction of flight operation) would be maintained, but the ‘Cranford agreement’ (which generally prohibits easterly departures off the northern runway) would be abandoned. The Government believes that, on the basis of substantial reductions in road vehicle and aircraft emissions expected over the next decade or so, a short third runway could be added and EU air quality limits for particulates and nitro-dioxide could be met without the need for further mitigation measures.
- 10 Surface Access - The Government has not identified the need for special measures to limit growth in road traffic or mitigate vehicle emissions in order to comply with the air quality tests in the event of further development. However, they have looked at how road traffic conditions and demand on public transport would be expected to change over time in the Heathrow area. The Government is satisfied that there is potential to meet the likely demand for public transport access to Heathrow with a third runway. They claim some demand management may be needed in the Central Terminal Area if full mixed mode is introduced with effect from 2015. If development were taken forward, it would be for the airport operator, working with key parties, to develop a surface access strategy as part of preparing for any planning application.

RESPONSE

- 11 **Adding a third runway and passenger terminal facilities** - The County Council is mindful of the beneficial contribution that the airport makes to Surrey's economy and recognises the need to safeguard the role of Heathrow as a major international airport. There is however a risk that the potential environmental disbenefits including traffic congestion, noise and air pollution could outweigh the advantages to the people of Surrey, unless adequate infrastructure is in place.
- 12 **Introducing mixed mode on the existing runways** - Optimum use of the two existing runways should be supported, provided the environmental impacts are acceptable, particularly if the increased capacity leads to a reduction in early morning and night flights. However, mixed mode should be restricted to peak hours to ensure residents benefit from the respite of alternation.
- 13 **Westerly Preference** - Continuation of the 'westerly preference' should be supported.
- 14 **The Cranford agreement** - On balance it seems reasonable to suspend the 'Cranford Agreement' so as to spread the noise burden and also allow some respite through alternation for people living under the flight path of the southern runway.
- 15 **Night time rotation of westerly and easterly preference** - The government's view is that the practice of rotating westerly and easterly preference at night should be maintained. This is supported.
- 16 **Runway alternation for arrivals in the early morning (0600 to 0700 hours)** - The government's view is that the current trial of alternating runways for arrivals in the 0600 – 0700 should be continued on a permanent basis subject to the operational provisos set out. This is supported.
- 17 **Surface Access** - According to the DfT projections the numbers of people taking public transport to the airport will double to around 38 million per annum by 2030. Numbers travelling by road will also double to 53 million per annum. It is uncertain what additional transport schemes will be in place by 2030 to cope with the extra demand, as it has been left for a surface access strategy to determine. However, it is essential that adequate transport access be provided to mitigate the potential traffic congestion generated by the proposals.
- 18 This consultation includes no new transport proposals other than the realignment of the M4 motorway spur further to the east to accommodate the third runway and sixth terminal. (See ANNEXES 3 and 4). The A4 will need to be routed below the taxiways linking the new runway to the existing airport. The Government have said that it

would be for the operator, as part of a comprehensive transport assessment, to develop a surface access strategy as part of preparing for a planning application. This would include working with the Highways Agency and local authorities (including the County Council) to identify any demand management measures needed to address road traffic congestion around the airport. Some form of congestion charging is one idea that would need to be considered alongside other measures.

- 19 The proposals for Terminal 5 assumed that the Airtrack proposal would be in place. This would provide a direct rail link into the airport from Waterloo, Guildford and the southwest. BAA has commenced a Transport and Works Act programme to secure powers for its construction. The capital costs are estimated at £350-400 million and subject to funding could be completed by 2013. It is essential this scheme is implemented in terms of these expansion proposals and that funding is assured. Crossrail services will also serve the airport. Construction of Crossrail is due to begin in 2010 with services starting from 2017.
- 20 Other than existing commitments outlined above, there are also no proposals for the M4 or M25 and only mention of capacity improvements to the existing rail network, including the underground. Although it is recognised that supporting transport infrastructure proposals will be part of the operator's surface access strategy yet to be developed, serious concerns on whether the appropriate scale of improvements will be in place by the overall completion date of 2030 should continue to be expressed.
- 21 **Climate Change** - Since publication of the White Paper, the debate on climate change has shifted from whether we need to act to how much we need to do by when, and the economic implications of doing so. The Climate Change Bill, which is scheduled to receive Royal Assent later this year, introduces a legal framework to cut carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. The Bill will seek to reduce carbon emissions by at least 60% and the Government is committed to considering stronger reductions and the implications of including other greenhouse gases and emissions from international aviation and shipping. The Bill has been widely criticized for its omission of targets relating to the UK's share emissions of international aviation and shipping. Aviation is a growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK. The Department for Transport's projections suggest that aviation will emit 17.4 million tonnes of carbon in 2050. This is equivalent to 26% of the UK total carbon allowance under a 60% reduction target. Given the Department of Transport's projections for increased aviation emissions, the County Council advocates the inclusion of aviation emissions in the climate change Bill's targets for a 60 percent reduction in carbon emissions.

- 22 **Air Quality and Noise** – The air quality projections are considered optimistic as they depend on technological progress and to a large extent on how the aircraft fleet will evolve and the possibility that the airlines may react to capacity constraints by deploying larger more polluting aircraft. The validity of the assumption that noise only becomes a problem at Leq values over 57 decibels should be questioned in the light of the Government commissioned study into *Attitudes to Noise from Aviation Sources in England* (ANASE) which found that sensitivity to noise increases significantly at Leq levels above 43 decibels.

CONSULTATION

- 23 Consultation has been carried out with the Spelthorne and Runnymede Borough Councils, and will be carried out with the Runnymede Local Committee and also the Environment & Economy and Transportation Select Committees.
- 24 Spelthorne Borough Council's Executive is due to consider a response on 12 February. It is understood that their Members wish to look afresh at the proposals, but will not be objecting in principle. Runnymede Borough Council are likely to support the proposals, subject to appropriate transport infrastructure, including Airtrack, being in place.

VALUE FOR MONEY AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 25 These are consultation proposals only.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 26 The proposals seek to maintain the competitiveness of Heathrow Airport, which will maintain the economic and social opportunities generated by the aviation, and related industries that in turn will benefit individuals from a diverse range of multi cultural backgrounds and socio economic groups.

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 27 None.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report together with Annex 1 (answering the consultation questions) is forwarded to the Department for Transport as the formal response of the County Council. It has been drawn up on the basis that the consultation proposals are supported, provided that:

- i) **Further growth at Heathrow is conditional upon substantial investment in local and regional access and the provision of**

- ii) major rail investment, including Airtrack, linking the airport with the Midlands, the West and the South, in addition to London, and Environmental constraints, particularly concerning the previously agreed limits on noise and air quality, are not breached.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To influence the Government's thinking on the future expansion of Heathrow Airport and to

- restate the County Council's concern to safeguard the role of Heathrow as a major international airport given its economic and social importance to Surrey and the South East generally, and
- restate the County Council's stance that further growth at Heathrow should be conditional on substantial transport infrastructure being provided and environmental limits not being exceeded.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Final policy decisions by the Government will be taken following consultation.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: