

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7th February 2008

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WARD(S): All

**PART I
FOR DECISION**

EXPANSION OF HEATHROW AIRPORT

1.0 Purpose of Report

To seek the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's comments on the proposed response to the DfT Consultation entitled "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport". This report will also be presented to Cabinet on 11th February 2008. The report also seeks comments on the motion referred from Council.

2.0 Recommendation

- (a) The Committee is requested to consider the responses to the DfT's specific questions **Appendix 1** (to follow).
- (b) The Committee is invited to consider the motion referred from Council (**Appendix 2**) and pass any comments and recommendations back to the Council.

3.0 Key Priorities – Taking Pride in Slough and Making a Difference to Communities and our Environment

Priority 1: Creating safe, environmentally friendly and sustainable neighbourhoods.

- (a) Adopt a green and sustainable approach to managing and developing the environment:

Expansion of the airport on the scale proposed in the consultation and making the proposed changes to airport operations will have serious impacts in term of noise pollution, congestion, air pollution and pressure on Council services.

- (b) Protect and enhance public health and well being:

Added environmental burdens in an area that is facing increased stress may have a deleterious effect on physical and mental well being of communities in Slough.

- (c) Improve transport:

Expansion of the airport will increase the need for local surface transportation and increase demand placed on the local road network. The consultation proposals do not address surface access issues nor do they consider properly the need for improved rail links. A surface access strategy will apparently be submitted by British Airports Authority when the planning application is made for the expansion project.

4.0 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications arising from the proposed action.

(b) Human Rights Act and other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from the proposed action.

5.0 Supporting Information

5.1 Background

5.2 In 2003, the Government published a White Paper "The future of Air Transport". Amongst other things, this included proposals for Heathrow and its expansion. The proposals were justified on the basis of economic benefits for the south east region and the country as a whole. The White Paper made clear that, given the strong economic benefits, 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.

5.3 This support was conditional on there being no increase in the size of the area significantly affected by aircraft noise, European air quality limits being met around the airport and improvements being made to public transport access to the airport.

5.4 The Project for the Sustainable Development of Heathrow (PSDH) was a large piece of work undertaken by the Government to examine these and other issues, following the 2003 White Paper. The Government has now opened a consultation process in which it seeks views on how Heathrow could be developed over the next 20 years or more, in the light of the PSDH work and what it has found.

5.5 There is widespread concern amongst the London Boroughs and in areas close to Heathrow that the proposals have not properly taken into account the likely environmental impacts in terms of noise, congestion and air pollution, and that the economic arguments in favour of the increased activity at Heathrow do not take into account environmental costs as well as the benefits. There is unease that the new jobs created will be filled by people from outside the region, adding to existing pressures on local authority services.

5.6 On 22nd January, the London Assembly Environment Committee held an "evidentiary session" to review the plans for Heathrow. Representatives from the

airline industry, British Airports Authority, local government and HACAN were present. Affected local authorities submitted position papers to the committee on the proposals, and Slough Borough Council's outline position, previously endorsed by Cabinet on 21st January, was part of this process.

5.7 The position paper made clear the Council's serious concerns about the environmental impacts of the expansion proposals and its doubts about the assumptions and projections in respect of air quality and noise. The economic arguments were also questioned, as was the apparent lack of any detail concerning future surface access arrangements.

5.8 Previous Policy In Respect of Heathrow

5.9 The Council has not been "anti Heathrow" in the past, and has been generally positive about expansion, and the attendant economic benefits for Slough, provided that environmental impacts have been mitigated satisfactorily. In the 1990s, Slough Borough Council took part in various legal challenges aimed at stopping changes to the Night Flights regime.

6.0 Policy In respect of the Current Proposals

6.1 Following the London Assembly Position Paper on this issue, the Council has formed the basic position that the current expansion proposals are of great concern and that alternatives should be examined, including the development of other UK airports and high-speed train links. The Council also believes that the economic arguments have not been properly justified and that the rights of residents in the area should carry more weight than they appear to have been given under the current expansion proposals.

6.2 Responses to the Consultation.

6.3 Specific responses are to be found in **Appendix 1** (to follow). The general views below will also be included with these specific responses to DfT's eleven questions.

6.4 Noise and Air Quality

6.5 Any expansion at Heathrow must take into account environmental issues such as noise and air quality fully, as well as improving public transport services to the airport. The Council does not feel that the information in support of the proposals in the consultation documentation addresses these concerns properly, some predictions may be based upon potentially flawed or optimistic assumptions and that key evidence is being ignored, in particular, the ANASE study.

6.6 The Council does not agree that expansion on the scale proposed and changes to airport operations will be without unacceptable additional noise and annoyance impacts in the community especially in areas under new flight paths. In respect of impacts to the West, Slough Borough Council shares the core concerns of Windsor & Maidenhead, South Buckinghamshire District Council and others, as well as the concerns of the already heavily burdened London Boroughs.

6.7 The Consultation Process

6.8 The consultation process is quite technical in nature and residents will not be in a position to answer the questions posed in an informed way, despite the exhibitions, because of the sheer volume and complexity of information presented. There is concern that a significant part of the consultation was run over Christmas and New Year making debate and formulation of responses more difficult, and may have also distracted members of the public from attending exhibitions.

6.9 Surface Access, Transport and Planning Policy

7.0 Surface access is a key issue for consideration at this stage, and no real attempt has been made to address public transport links to Slough and the West. There is no reference to a Western Region rail link, and the Council believes that a direct link between Heathrow, Slough and Staines is essential. Part of the local road network in the East of the Borough is already subject to an air quality management area (AQMA) and further declarations are possible in other parts of Slough, within the next few months. Additional congestion arising directly and indirectly from airport expansion will exacerbate air quality problems. The consultation document makes no link to South-East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy), and airport policy is seemingly being looked at in isolation. There is no reference to impact on Green Belt and / or Strategic Gaps.

7.1 Employment, Skills, Housing and population

7.2 The Council is concerned that jobs mooted as a result of the expansion will be filled by people from outside the area, bringing people travelling into the area to work, adding to congestion, or coming to Slough to live, when there is already pressure on housing capacity. There is no mention of skills issues and the capacity of Slough or the region to provide sufficient workforce skilled in the correct way to benefit from the new jobs that are predicted.

7.3 Slough is already suffering from under funding, as the Government has failed to recognise the true size of its population, in the process of calculating the size of grant allocations. Service provision has suffered as a result. The population of Slough, has, by many measures, increased dramatically in the last three years. A large influx of jobs bringing new people to the area will only serve to aggravate this problem and services to Slough's communities may well suffer to an even greater degree.

7.4 Construction and Infrastructure Works

7.5 Handling the nuisance, disruption and environmental impacts during the construction of T5 was a significant concern and burden for Hillingdon Borough Council, the local planning authority at the time. The current proposals seem to be far wider reaching than those for T5, yet no mention of the scope or severity of construction impacts is made, nor does an approach to mitigation appear to be outlined in the consultation document.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 **Appendix 1** (to follow) shows the proposed response to DfT for consideration by Cabinet on 11th February. The response needs to be submitted, along with the suggested general comments in paragraphs 6.4 – 7.5.

8.0 Motion Referred from Council

8.1 The Council on 11th December, 2007 referred the motion attached as **Appendix 2** to this Committee for consideration and report back. Members' comments are requested.

9.0 Background Papers

9.1 DfT: "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport" November, 2007

Question 1

ADDING A THIRD RUNWAY AND PASSENGER TERMINAL FACILITIES

The Government acknowledges the case made by BAA in 2003 that a three runway airport should be supported by additional passenger terminal facilities, with road and rail connections. A new terminal would better serve the mix of airlines at Heathrow; without it, the use of a third runway would be significantly limited by the need for aircraft to taxi across the existing northern runway. Adding a third runway and associated passenger terminal facilities would require additional land, increasing to around 700 the number of properties required, including the community of Sipson. The details would be subject to planning permission, but the Government accepts that there should be an opportunity to comment at this stage on the proposal in principle.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal that a third runway at Heathrow, if built, should be supported by associated passenger terminal facilities? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council does not feel that a third runway and 6th terminal should be built, on the basis of the information provided on environmental impacts, and the assumptions made in coming to the conclusions drawn by Dft.

The Council does not support the compulsory purchase of 700 properties in Harmondsworth and Sipson and the destruction of these communities.

Question 2

The Government acknowledges the rationale for a slightly longer runway (2,200m operational length) than was proposed in 2002, both for operational reasons and to facilitate a balanced use of the airport, along with associated passenger terminal facilities. The Government believes that the environmental pre-conditions for policy support – as set out in the White Paper remain valid and are appropriate for this revised proposal. (3.42)

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on the continuing validity of the environmental conditions? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council does not support this view and it believes that the assumptions made in respect of the likely introduction of quieter or less polluting aircraft are in doubt and the probable levels of annoyance that will be experienced by residents have been underestimated. The ANASE study illustrates that people's sensitivity to aircraft noise has increased significantly since the last investigation - the ANIS study, 22 years previously. The concept of a "quiet" aircraft is at best difficult to accept and it is likely that environmental impacts will increase following expansion owing to the vastly increased number of air traffic movements.

Question 3

The Government believes that, on the basis of improved modelling following the air quality technical panel work reported in July 2006, and with the benefit of substantial reductions in emissions expected over the next decade or so, a short third runway as described could be added at Heathrow by around 2020 and enable EU air quality limits for PM10 and NO2 to be met without the need for further mitigation measures. The ability to meet air quality limits in future years largely results from substantial improvements in road vehicle emissions due to further developments in European emission standards. It also reflects trends in cleaner aircraft engines and moves towards a higher proportion of twin-engined, as opposed to four-engined, aircraft with lower emissions.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on adding a third runway and being able to meet air quality limits without further measures? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council does not agree.

Too greater reliance is being put by the Government on the emergence and application of new vehicle technology, both in road vehicles and in aircraft, to bring about substantial reductions in emissions and hence air pollution levels.

There appears to be no detailed analysis of the various fleet scenarios that may occur. Experience to date indicates that the predicted improvements in emissions from road vehicles have not been achieved.

Question 4

The Government believes that a third runway could be added at Heathrow and operate at maximum capacity in 2030 with around 702,000 ATMs whilst complying with the noise test in the White Paper. The 57dBA Leq noise contour would be 112.9 sq km, against a limit of 127 sq km. In 2020, the airport would need to operate at less than full capacity, but could probably sustain at least 605,000 ATMs and remain within the noise contour limit. The size of the contour in 2020 at that level of activity would be around 126.7 sq km. It would be for the airport operator to carry out further work on this and satisfy the planning authorities that the airport with a third runway would be managed in the 2020-2030 period so as to ensure that the noise limit is adhered to.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view that adding a third runway is achievable within the noise contour limit of 127 sq km, at the indicated levels of air traffic? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council disagrees, and holds the view that noise predictions so far in the future are unreliable. Predicted future fleet mixes may not materialise and uncertain external forces will determine if new aircraft are built and bought into use. The unpredictable nature of the factors determining the future noise climate if the proposed expansion is permitted does not give the Council any confidence in the Government's conclusions.

Significantly, in the unlikely event that the noise contour limits were met, a third runway would still have very serious adverse noise impacts in areas newly overflowed by aircraft arriving at, and departing from, a third runway. These communities would be Langley, and areas to the north of the A4 in Slough as areas outside the Slough, in neighbouring Boroughs.

It was the Council's understanding that the Government's policy was "to take all practicable steps to prevent any deterioration in the noise climate at Heathrow, and to continue to do everything practicable to improve it over time" (Aviation White Paper, 2003). In simple terms, the Council cannot understand how the expansion proposals will support this policy, which in itself seems to recognise that existing noise impacts from Heathrow are unacceptable.

Questions 5 and 6

INTRODUCING MIXED MODE ON THE EXISTING RUNWAYS

The Government's view is that mixed mode operations are feasible at Heathrow and could be introduced to provide worthwhile additional capacity on the existing runways as an interim measure before any new runway could be available. Full mixed mode, building up from the current movements limit over time, could bring total movements to around 540,000 by 2015, providing up to 60,000 extra movements a year, subject to further detailed work and formal regulatory approval by the CAA. Planning permission would also be needed to relax the current movements limit of 480,000 a year. Full mixed mode is predicted to meet the noise contour limit in the White Paper, with a 57dBA Leq noise contour at around 125.5 sq km.

Runway alternation would have to cease during any period of mixed mode operations. Noise would be distributed differently around the airport, with some people experiencing less noise, and some more, although if full mixed mode was introduced by 2015 there would be fewer people experiencing noise at 63dBA Leq or above compared with the numbers under segregated mode in 2002.

There would be an option to limit mixed mode to certain hours of the day, allowing some form of runway alternation to remain in place outside the hours of mixed mode operation

There would also be an option to introduce mixed mode operations without increasing air traffic overall. It could be done from around 2010/11. It would give the airport more flexibility to cater for peak demand and to recover from delays caused by, for example, adverse weather conditions.

An important aim of this consultation is to get a better understanding of the importance attached by local communities to the benefits of runway alternation, and the time of day it is of most value, so that this can be taken into account in the decision-making process.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view that mixed mode operations could be introduced within the noise limits set out in the White Paper? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe

need to be taken into account? If so, what are they? To what extent would you support the introduction of mixed mode operations: throughout the day? a) limited to specific hours (if so, b) would you support mixed mode between 0600 and 1200 hours? Some other period? (please specify) within the current planning c) cap (i.e. with no extra capacity overall)? If you support additional movements, in what periods of the day do you think they should be provided? What are your reasons for these answers? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they? Please provide evidence where you can (e.g. environmental impacts, business benefits).

The Council disagrees.

As already stated, the Council feels that over reliance on future improvements to aircraft fleets and engine technologies is a questionable approach when trying to make predictions as to the future noise climate created by the additional ATMs predicted as a result of expansion.

The predicted noise contour area for 2015 with full mixed mode is 125.5 sq. km, which is less than the contour limit area of 126.6 sq. km for 2002. The lack of any margin for error and the unreliability of the predictions means that the Council does not feel that the noise contour limit can be met with full mixed mode operation at 540,000 ATMs.

Question 7

The Government's view is that the use of full mixed mode on the existing two runways at Heathrow would allow for up to around 540,000 ATMs a year by 2015 and would be compatible with compliance with EU air quality limits for PM10 and NO2 in the vicinity of the airport without the need for further mitigation measures. There would be some limited NO2 exceedences north of the M4. These are not mainly due to the airport but would need to be addressed by a variety of traffic management or other measures.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view that full mixed mode operations could be introduced by 2015 and be compatible with compliance with the air quality limits in the vicinity of the airport? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council disagrees. The EU limit for NO2 exceedences must be met in 2010, any permission or derogation for a 5-year extension to this is still to be agreed. The requirements as to where the derogation might be properly applied are not yet known.

WESTERLY PREFERENCE

Question 8

The Government's provisional view is that there are no strong grounds for disturbing the current practice of westerly preference in any future scenario at Heathrow. Ending westerly preference would have some benefit in terms of reducing NO2 concentrations in the area to the north east of the airport, but the issue is not critical to achieving compliance with air quality limits. In general, an increase in easterly operations would result in a smaller area, but with more

people, affected at 57dBA Leq noise levels, because of the higher population density to the east. Noise would be redistributed around the airport, with some communities experiencing less noise, and others more.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on retaining westerly preference? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council agrees.

The Council is not in favour of changing the status quo at the existing airport. Slough Borough Council does not feel it has the right to use this consultation as way of securing small advantages at the expense of others.

The Council notes that westerly departures from a new third runway will have major noise impacts for populations in Slough. A westerly preference to departures will make the impacts of third runway even more noticeable in these newly affected communities.

Question 9

THE CRANFORD AGREEMENT

The Cranford agreement – which avoids easterly departures off the northern runway over the heavily populated area of Cranford – would need to be suspended during any period of mixed mode operations. We believe that ending the Cranford agreement would redistribute noise more fairly around the airport when it is operating on easterlies. Our provisional view therefore is that there would be merit in ending the Cranford agreement, regardless of any other decisions that are taken. However, the main issue that arises from ending the Cranford agreement is whether it is preferable to benefit large numbers of people by removing them from the 57dBA Leq contour, at the expense of exposing smaller numbers of people to increased noise at higher levels.

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's proposal to end the Cranford agreement? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they? Night time rotation of westerly and easterly preference

The Council disagrees

Ending the Cranford Agreement might redistribute some arrivals noise more fairly. However, Cranford residents' suffering would probably outweigh any advantages felt elsewhere, and Slough is supportive of local authorities that may seek to retain the agreement so as to protect affected communities from unacceptable deterioration in the noise climate.

Slough Borough Council does not feel it has the right to use this consultation as way of securing small advantages at the expense of others.

Question 10

The practice of rotating westerly and easterly preference at night since 1999 has been monitored. The Government believes that it has been beneficial in distributing arrivals noise more fairly around the airport, and should be maintained. (3.149) Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on continuing night time rotation? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they? Runway alternation for arrivals in the early morning (0600 to 0700 hours)

The Council agrees.

The Council accepts that the practice of weekly night time rotation between westerly and easterly preference benefits densely populated areas to the east. Slough Borough Council does not feel it has the right to use this consultation as way of securing small advantages at the expense of others.

The Council fears that the proposal assumes continued flights in the night period. The Council has opposed changes to the night flights regime in the past and in common with other local authorities believes that night flights cause unacceptable noise nuisance to residents.

Question 11

Runway alternation for arrivals was extended to the early morning period in 1999 on a trial basis. Following a monitoring exercise, the Government believes that, on the basis of the evidence, it has been beneficial in sharing the noise burden around the airport. The Government therefore believes that this should be continued on a permanent basis, in so far as it is not precluded by any decisions to introduce mixed mode or by the need for air traffic controllers to authorise the use of both runways for arrivals in the 0600 to 0700 period, to reduce delays to arriving aircraft

Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on continuing runway alternation in the 0600 to 0700 period? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations you believe need to be taken into account? If so, what are they?

The Council agrees.

Alternation helps by bringing days of relief to communities affected by early morning arrivals noise. Slough Borough Council does not feel it has the right to use this consultation as way of securing small advantages at the expense of others.

The Council fears that the proposal assumes continued flights in the night period. The Council has opposed changes to the night flights regime in the past and in common with other local authorities believes that night flights cause unacceptable noise nuisance to residents.

MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL (11.12.07)

(Moved by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Coad)

“This Council notes:

1. That London Heathrow Airport has been, and continues to be, a major employer in and around Slough.
2. That it has been a massive contributor to Slough’s economic success.
3. That Heathrow is beginning to struggle to cope with the number of passengers using it, and needs significant investment and redevelopment to return it to the status of a world class airport. Its runways are operating at 98.5% capacity and use is expected to grow from 65m in 2006 to 120m in 2020.
4. That the Department for Transport (DfT) intends to launch a public consultation on expansion, which includes converting the runway operations to ‘mixed mode’ and building a third runway of 2,200 metres. According to the DfT, this would double the capacity for landings and take offs, despite the fact that the new runway would be shorter than the current runways which are already at full capacity. The DfT proposes that this would render a net benefit of £5bn for the British economy.
5. That this Council was assured by the British Airports Authority (BAA) and the DfT at the Terminal 5 Inquiry that there would be no increase in noise and air quality at Heathrow, with Stansted being the preferred site for development. This promise now appears to have been abandoned, with the Secretary of State proposing an extra 230,000 flights per year.
6. That there has been considerable concern from other local authorities in London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Surrey (the ‘2M Group’) that this process is being significantly influenced by BAA, the owners of Heathrow Airport. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act show that all data on pollution, noise and consultation has been supplied to the DfT by BAA. This has no independent scrutiny before reaching senior ministers.

This Council resolves to:

1. Work with the DfT and BAA to achieve the best possible outcome for Slough and Heathrow.
2. Co-operate with neighbouring local authorities and the ‘2M Group’ to ensure that the consultation process is a fair one.
3. Express our concern to the Secretary of State for Transport, The Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly MP, that BAA is having an undue influence on the consultation process and consequently the DfT’s data.

4. Express our concern that BAA has an unfair opportunity to influence the outcome of the Inquiry by passing off its own data and agenda as impartial and objective.
5. Request that the data provided by BAA is made public and independently scrutinised.”

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