

AIRPORT COMMISSION CONSULTATION – LONG TERM OPTIONS

Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee – 24 September 2013

Report of Chief Planning Officer – Richard Morris

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

The Airports Commission (or Davies Commission) has been established to consider the need for additional UK airport capacity and recommend to government how this can be met in the short, medium and long term. The Commission is due to report to the Government on its recommendations after the next General Election. It has published the list of options for long term airport capacity proposed to it for public consultation. All members were consulted on the proposals in August 2013. In order to aid the Local Planning and Environment Committee's discussion, this report provides a summary of the comments from Members and the main issues for Sevenoaks District raised in the submissions, in particular those by the operators of Gatwick Airport, Kent County Council and the Mayor of London.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Bosley

Contact Officer(s) Steve Craddock (x7315)

Recommendation to Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee:

That, following discussion and consideration of other Member's views submitted in advance, the Committee recommend to the Portfolio Holder the approach that the Council should take in responding to the Airports Commission's consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

In order to ensure that the Council's response to this consultation has been prepared following consultation with all Members and discussion at the Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Airports Commission (or Davies Commission) has been established to consider the need for additional UK airport capacity and recommend to government how this can be met in the short, medium and long term. The Commission is due to report to the Government on its recommendations after the next General Election.

- 2 Interested parties were given until 19th July 2013 to submit proposals for schemes to increase long-term airport capacity. The list of proposals, as well as submitted supporting information, was published in August 2013. Those wishing to comment on the proposals have been given until 27th September to do so.

Submissions to the Airports Commission

- 3 A total of 51 separate proposals to provide increases in long-term capacity have been submitted to the Airports Commission, with a number presenting similar developments. Amongst these are:
- Gatwick Airport's proposal for improvements to the 'constellation' of airports around London, including a 2nd runway at Gatwick after 2019 (Appendix A);
 - Kent County Council's proposal for a 'dispersed hub', which would include a 2nd runway at Gatwick after 2019 (Appendix B);
 - Various proposals for a Thames Estuary airport, including onshore sites at Grain (appendix C), Cliffe, Thurrock and Foulness and man-made island locations;
 - Proposals for a 3rd runway at Heathrow; and
 - Proposals for a 2nd runway at Stansted.
- 4 Only the proposals by Gatwick Airport, Kent County Council and the Mayor of London for the new airport on the Isle of Grain have been provided in the appendices. However, all Members were sent the link to the consultation, which includes links to all proposals.

Gatwick Airport

- 5 In responding to the Draft Gatwick Airport Masterplan in 2012, SDC noted that Gatwick plays an important role in the south-east economy and that it is a significant local employer. The response stated that the Council is keen that Gatwick's economic benefits are maximised, whilst sustainable access to the airport is improved and aircraft noise levels and disturbance are reduced. A number of suggestions of how the impact of noise on residents in Sevenoaks District could be reduced were put forward, such as minimum height restrictions for aircraft approaching Gatwick and tighter restrictions on noise from night flights. The Council stated that any proposals for a second runway at Gatwick would be unwelcome prior to an assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts of all options by Government. It is understood that the Airports Commission will be fulfilling this role.
- 6 The Draft Gatwick Airport Masterplan presented forecasts of the noise impact of a 2nd runway. These showed that a wider area of Sevenoaks District would be subjected to noise levels between 54 and 57 dBA_{Leq} (see appendix F). This is the lowest contour at which the airport operator forecasts noise implications. However, the noise levels presented in the contour maps are assessed using a metric which averages the noise energy over a period of many hours. SDC's response noted that whilst this can be used as an indicator of annoyance, many

individuals will react not to an average level but to the number of flights and those individual flights that stand out as being more noisy, perhaps due to being lower than normal, an older aircraft type being used, or weather effects on sound propagation. These are factors that the operators of Gatwick Airport are unwilling or unable to control. Therefore, any increase in flight numbers arriving and departing Gatwick may lead to greater increases in disturbance of residents in Sevenoaks District, in particular the south-western parts, than suggested by the contour maps.

- 7 SDC's Environmental Health team have commented that LEQ (the Equivalent Continuous Sound Level) is a relevant noise descriptor and it is difficult to see how an alternative can be found without noise monitoring in the vicinity.
- 8 The Gatwick submission notes that the operator's noise studies demonstrate that, whilst a second runway would increase the total number of people affected by noise, the overall number of people affected would still be one twentieth of the people currently impacted on by Heathrow. It also notes that it benefits from being located in an area where there are no major towns or cities directly overflowed by aircraft on initial departure or final approach. The submission claims that because of this the number of people subject to noise levels at or above 57dBA_{Leq} would increase from 3,050 to 4,950, which equates to approx. 2% of the people impacted at Heathrow today. This would, however, include rural communities in the south-west of Sevenoaks District (as is clear from appendix F).
- 9 The proposal of the Gatwick Airport operators states the benefits of competition between airports and considers that this will be enhanced by an additional runway and additional flights at Gatwick. Depending on which of the 3 options proposed is found to be the most viable and acceptable, the Gatwick Airport operators claim that capacity could be increased to between 60 and 90 million passengers per annum in 2050, from approx. 32 million passengers in 2010/11 (as reported in the Draft Gatwick Airport Masterplan) . The submission claims that the development would have significant national and regional economic benefits:

The investment benefits alone are calculated to be some £56 billion. It would also support an additional 4.5m tourist visits annually to the UK, equivalent to an annual £3 billion of tourist spending in 2050 and act as a catalyst for the development of further aviation related and international businesses in the Gatwick Diamond economic sub-region, stretching between south London to the South Coast. A second runway would create up to nearly 19,000 new jobs and support wider economic and social regeneration priorities in East and West Sussex and parts of London, Kent, Hampshire and the Thames Gateway.

- 10 SDC has lobbied for improved rail access to Gatwick from Kent through the re-instatement of a service from Tonbridge to Gatwick, via Edenbridge and Redhill. Whilst the operators of Gatwick Airport are understood to be supportive of this proposal, it does not form part of the 'surface access' section of their submission to the Airports Commission. In addition, the 'surface access' section does not identify the need for any further improvements to the M25, with the exception of improved slips between the M25 and M23.

- 11 Kent County Council is supportive of a 2nd runway at Gatwick, a 2nd runway at Stansted when need arises, expansion of Birmingham Airport following the completion of High Speed 2 and expansion of regional airports at Lydd, Manston and Southend. It is opposed to an airport in the Thames Estuary. KCC note that the additional employment generation of an expanded Gatwick Airport, with a 2nd runway, might equate to approx. 20,000 to 60,000 (low productivity case) and provide an economic boost of up to £1.66 billion (high productivity case) in GVA (Gross Value Added) in the region. However, consultants (Alan Stratford and Associates Ltd) appointed by KCC consider that there would be reluctance from the main global alliances of airlines to move from Heathrow to Gatwick, which potentially undermines KCC's argument that a 'dispersed hub' can accommodate the growth in airport capacity that is believed to be required.

Thames Estuary Airport

- 12 The Mayor of London and a number of other respondents to the Airports Commission's consultation have proposed new airports in or alongside the Thames Estuary. Both of the Mayor of London's proposals for Thames Estuary airports would, he considers, require the widening of the northern, southern and eastern sections of the M25, including through Sevenoaks District. The Mayor of London also proposes that the proposed 3rd Thames crossing is built to the east of Gravesend. The submission in support of the Isle of Grain proposal is provided at appendix C.
- 13 Page 24 of appendix C provides an indication of the flight paths that may result from development of the Grain airport. These show flights approaching the airport over north-eastern parts of Sevenoaks District, although associated noise levels are not shown. The equivalent diagram for the man-made island airport does not show flight paths over Sevenoaks District.
- 14 The Mayor of London estimates the economic impacts of the Isle of Grain proposal as:
- *Supporting 388,000 jobs nationally by 2050, resulting in a cumulative UK GVA increase of £726 billion between 2015 and 2050.*
 - *Further adding 0.5 per cent to UK GDP by 2050 due to international connectivity improvements, which would have a value today of £6.9 billion per year.*
 - *Creating 134,000 new additional jobs locally, generating £16.6 billion in GVA per year.*
 - *Catalysing further jobs and development in a number of 'zones' in Kent, Essex and London establishing a 'corridor' of development alongside the major transport links connecting the airport.*

The Mayor of London believes that the man-made island proposal would create slightly more jobs and a slightly larger increase in GVA nationally (392,000 jobs and £742 billion by 2050, as opposed to those above). However, other economic impacts are the same for both proposals.

- 15 The key issues with both of the Major of London's proposals are likely to be the costs and the environmental impact. The Grain proposal is forecast to cost approx. £70 billion, whilst the man-made island proposal is forecast to cost approx. £85 billion. These compare with an estimated cost of £5-£10 billion for the development of an additional runway and associated infrastructure at Gatwick. The Major of London's submissions also recognise that the two proposals would result in the loss of large areas of internationally and nationally important habitats. These schemes would require major mitigation and habitat creation schemes, which the submissions claim have been reflected in the costs.

Consultation with Members

- 16 All Members were sent electronic links to the consultation homepage and the submission by the operators of Gatwick Airport on 13th August and invited to submit comments to the Planning Policy team by 9th September for inclusion in this report. All comments received are set out in appendix G and a summary is provided below:
- Utilise Northolt Airport when the RAF vacate in two years time as a Terminal 6 for Heathrow.
 - Any changes in flight paths could affect Edenbridge increasing noise pollution.
 - SDC should recommend that any flight path avoid centres of population.
 - The Thames Estuary option would need a new transport infrastructure in place and any new road network might affect SDC
- 17 The Council has also been sent comments related to the submissions in respect of Gatwick Airport by Edenbridge Town Council and the Chief Executive of Hever Castle. The comments from the Chief Executive of Hever Castle are attached at appendix H. Councillors from Edenbridge Town Council will be attending the Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee.

Response Options

- 18 In responding to the consultation, SDC could set out a clear position in support or opposition to any of the proposals included in the consultation. It could also support one or more of the options subject to further investigation or mitigation of negative impacts. Alternatively, SDC could welcome aspects of proposals and note its concern about other aspects, whilst stating that it will wait for a further stage in the process (such as after the Airports Commission has considered them) before setting out its position.

Next Steps

- 19 Following this consultation, the Airports Commission will be publishing a shortlist of the most credible long term options in December 2013. There will be further opportunities to comment and submit views on these shortlisted options in 2014.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

The Council could decide not to respond to this consultation. This was rejected because of the impacts that decisions about future airport capacity will have on Sevenoaks District.

Key Implications

Financial

This report has no financial implications for the Council.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

This report has no legal implications for the Council.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		n/a

Conclusions

It is suggested that Members of the Local Planning and Environment Committee consider the issues raised in the submissions to the Airport Commission with the most significant impacts on Sevenoaks District and the comments of non-committee Members. It is suggested that the Local Planning and Environment Committee recommends to the Portfolio Holder for Local Planning and Environment the approach that the Council should take in responding to the consultation on these proposals.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Gatwick Airport Proposals for Long Term Runway Capacity
- Appendix B – Kent County Council Dispersed Hub Proposal
- Appendix C – Major of London Isle of Grain Proposal
- Appendix D - Existing Gatwick Airport Air Noise Contours (reproduced from A.5 of the draft master plan)

Appendix E - Gatwick in 2020 Air Noise Contours
(reproduced from A.10 of the draft master plan)

Appendix F - Gatwick in 2030 (Two Runway) Air Noise
Contours (reproduced from A.14 of the draft master
plan)

Appendix G – Members’ comments on the proposals

Appendix H - Hever Castle Email re Gatwick

Mr Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer