

AIRPORTS COMMISSION – PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION

Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee – 27 January 2015

Report of Chief Planning Officer – Richard Morris

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

The Airports Commission has been established by Government, to consider the need for additional UK aviation capacity and recommend how this can be fulfilled in the short, medium and long term. It is anticipated by the Airports Commission that it will present its recommendation in Summer 2015, after the General Election. Following its Interim Report in December 2013, the Airport Commission has published its list of Preferred Options for public consultation. This was released in early November 2014. In order to aid the Local Planning and Environment Committee's discussion, this report provides a summary of the consultation, the comments that the Council has submitted in response to aviation related consultations in the past, and the outline response that is suggested Members should consider and amend if they consider the Council should take a different line.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Piper

Contact Officer(s) Simon Taylor Ext. 7134

Recommendation to Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee:

That the Committee consider the outline response and recommend to the Portfolio Holder the approach that the Council should take in responding to the Airport Commission's consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

In order to ensure that the Council's response to this consultation has been prepared following discussion at the Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee, which all interested members are able to attend.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Airports Commission has been established by Government, to consider the need for additional UK aviation capacity and recommend how this can be fulfilled in the short, medium and long term. It is anticipated by the Airports Commission that it will present its recommendation next summer (2015), after the General Election.
- 2 Following its Interim Report in December 2013, the Airports Commission has considered the proposals made to it and published its list of Preferred Options in early November 2014. Anyone who wishes to make a representation to the Airports Commission has until Tuesday 3rd February to do so.
- 3 The Council has responded to a number of different aviation-related consultations in relation to Gatwick over the last few years, with a particular focus on noise impacts of existing flights. This remains a priority. The Council, alongside many others, has consistently responded to consultations from various bodies relevant to the issue of aviation noise to ask that, amongst other things:
 - Night time respite is introduced at Gatwick by making a substantial reduction to the number of permitted night flights, as the current level is clearly not equitable in comparison with other airports in the south east, and by introducing a meaningful period in which no night flights are permitted (for example 12AM to 6AM);
 - By setting height limits for approaching aircraft that require them to fly at the maximum safe height at all times and by introducing meaningful penalties for airlines when aircraft fly below these levels without independently-verified valid safety reasons.
 - By considering and consulting local communities on opportunities to disperse flights more widely within the areas already overflowed to prevent concentrations of flight paths over particular communities.
- 4 These appear to be reasonable and easily deliverable steps and is disappointed that the suggestions continue to be ignored. The outline response (Appendix A) highlights these points and suggests that if the Government does not take immediate action then the Davies Commission should recommend these actions, amongst others, to Government to help to 'mitigate in advance' some of the issues likely to be caused by the expansion options being considered.

The Airport Commission's Preferred Options

- 5 The Airports Commission published its Interim Report in December 2013, following its Long Term Options consultation in August 2013. The response to this earlier consultation and the Commission's own assessments have allowed the Commission to produce three Preferred Options, which could be recommended to Government (see Background Papers). The Preferred Options are:
 - The construction of a new 2nd runway at Gatwick;
 - The extension of the existing 2nd runway at Heathrow; and

- The construction of a new 3rd runway at Heathrow.
- 6 During the shortlisting process, the Commission rejected proposals including the expansion of Birmingham International, an extension of Stansted Airport, and the construction of new airports near Oxford and the Thames Estuary. The outline response suggests that under at least one of the scenarios considered by the Commission ('low cost is king') there would be a strong strategic fit between the driver of growth in demand for flights (budget airlines) and Stanstead's current business model. In this respect, Stanstead appears to be not too different to Gatwick.

Overview of the Consultation Proposals

- 7 The proposal at Gatwick is to construct a new 2nd runway, which will be parallel to the existing runway. This will include the construction of a new terminal, satellite facility and pier to serve the additional runway. The Commission estimates that the costs of construction have been underestimated by Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL). Under the Commission's costing analysis, the proposal is expected to be £9.3 billion, in respect to GAL's own estimation of £7.4 billion. Surface access improvements to the Airport would cost an additional estimated £790 million.
- 8 Heathrow proposes two schemes to increase aviation capacity. Heathrow Hub Limited (HHL) proposes to extend the existing 2nd runway to allow it to operate as two separate runways with a safety area between. The proposal also includes the development of additional car parking, hotels and an additional terminal. Under the Commission's costing analysis, the proposal is expected to be £13.5 billion, higher than HHL's own estimation of £10.5 billion. This option would involve putting part of the M25 in a tunnel.
- 9 The creation of a new 3rd runway has been proposed by Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL). The proposal includes the construction of a new, full-length runway (3,500 metres) to the north east of the existing north runway. To support the 3rd runway, a new terminal and associated satellite infrastructure. It is envisaged that the new terminal once completed would have similar capacity of Terminal 2 (around 35 million passengers per annum). Under the Commission's costing analysis, the proposal is expected to be £18.6 billion. The Commission noted that an additional £5.7 billion would need to be invested into surface access improvements. In contrast, HAL estimated a lower costing, with £14.8 billion with an additional £800 million required for surface access improvements. This option would also involve putting part of the M25 in a tunnel.
- 10 The Commission has tested all preferred options against 16 appraisal modules, including, but not limited to:
- Strategic fit and regional impact;
 - Economic impact;
 - Environmental impacts including flood risk and biodiversity;
 - Air quality and noise impacts; and

- Surface access impacts and improvements.

The assessment components can be found in the Background Papers through a series of topic papers and Business Case reports. The remainder of the report and the outline response focus on the issues that are of most importance to the Sevenoaks District, including economic, noise (and related health) and surface access issues. These factors and their impacts will be set out accordingly.

Economic Benefit

- 11 The economic merits and benefits of each scheme are varied at the national, regional and local levels. The Commission has looked at the financial viability and benefit through a number of models with varying factors. The models include greater numbers of domestic and short haul flights, an increase in low-cost airlines and increased numbers of long-haul journeys, and air freight movements. Housing and employment opportunities have also been taken into consideration as part of the analysis.
- 12 The outline response gives recognition to the importance of Gatwick as a regional economic asset to the South East as a significant local employer, and the Commission has shown that the national economic benefit would be significant. The estimated national economic benefit is between £42-127 billion. The Commission's economic impact analysis of the Gatwick proposal is wide-spread, taking into account 15 local authority areas, including those that are part of the "Gatwick Diamond". The report does not include the District, or the West Kent area. It has been noted that less than 1% of the people who are employed by Gatwick currently live within Kent (see Background Papers). On this basis the direct economic benefits and employment opportunities to the District and the West Kent region may be limited. The outline response suggests that improvements to public transport access to Gatwick, namely a reinstatement of the train service between Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Gatwick, should be part of any 2nd runway proposal, if supported by the Commission, to ensure that Sevenoaks District and West Kent can secure greater direct economic benefits. The outline response also notes that indirect economic benefits may be more significant and that access to high quality infrastructure may help the District to attract new business to sites like Fort Halstead and stimulate growth in the tourism industry (including through the development of new hotels).
- 13 The expansion of Gatwick is predicted to create an estimated 30,000 new jobs (direct and indirect employment) by 2050, at the local and regional level. It is expected that 18,400 new homes would be required to be built to accommodate the growth in jobs. Under current planning law, this would almost certainly be an issue that SDC would need to consider with its neighbours through the Duty to Cooperate.
- 14 Both Heathrow options have a greater national economic merit. The extension of the 2nd runway at Heathrow would produce an estimated £101-214 billion of national economic benefit, up to 2050. This is noted in the outline response.

Noise

15 The impact of noise from overflying aircraft is a particular concern of residents in parts of the south of the District. The Commission forecasts for Gatwick show that the proposed extension would increase capacity of the Airport by an additional 50 million passengers per annum (mppa) by 2050. Presently, the existing North and South terminals have a combined capacity of 45 mppa. This complies with GAL's own 2050 capacity predictions of 60 - 90 mppa. Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) predict that, based on the assumption of a 2nd runway being developed, the number of ATMs will double over the next 40 years, as shown:

- in 2030, there would be 377,000 ATMs (equating 60 mppa);
- in 2040, this would rise to 468,000 ATM (78 mppa); and
- in 2050, this would increase to 513,000 ATMs (87 mppa).

The Commission recognises that the expansion of Gatwick would significantly increase the number of residents that would be affected by aircraft noise, including night-time flights and increased frequencies of arrival into Gatwick. However, the Commission believes that while the number of flight paths over the District will increase, the impact of their increased presence is not as significant as the proposals for Heathrow. The Commission comments that despite the increase in flights, the levels of noise and air quality will not exceed domestic and international regulations.

16 The Commission has published noise contour maps which forecast that noise will intensify in a north-south axis around the airport but reduce over the east-west axis (i.e. noise levels will reduce in Sevenoaks District as a result of a 2nd runway). These noise contour maps currently do not include many parts of Sevenoaks District that are affected by aircraft noise. In addition, they are based on an assumed increased divergence at the east and west of the existing contours, which is inconsistent with recent consultations on changes to flight paths and, at best, must be considered to be uncertain. On this basis, the outline response suggests that limited weight is given to this noise assessment. It goes on to state that 'SDC is not satisfied that the development of a 2nd runway at Gatwick would be delivered along with a reduction in existing noise impacts and is unable to support this proposal'. Members may wish to consider whether this is the approach that they wish to take.

17 In relation to both proposals for Heathrow, the Commission highlights the environmental and noise impacts as a concern. The location of Heathrow is within a highly developed urban area. As this is not an issue that directly impacts on Sevenoaks District, it is not considered in the outline response.

Surface Access

18 All proposals that the Commission are considering forecast significant increases in passenger numbers. It is important that there is sufficient capacity for surface access for passengers. The three schemes outline transport strategies yet are heavily reliant on either already proposed, committed or delivered programmes.

- 19 Gatwick proposes to utilise the current upgrades and improvements to the Thameslink programme, which will commence in 2018 with more frequent train services running between the airport and London via the Brighton mainline (London Victoria and London Bridge). Combined with the construction of Crossrail, the effect will be greater access to Gatwick via public transport. In addition to increased rail travel, the Gatwick scheme will seek to utilise the recent upgrades to the M23 as well as the M25. Planned enhancements include the widening of slip roads to improve capacity, the realignment of access roads, increased numbers of parking spaces and the construction of new roundabouts and approaches. A final enhancement for the Gatwick proposal is to upgrade the existing Gatwick station into a “multi-modal transport hub”, which will improve greater connectivity between rail, coaches and buses departing and arriving at the Airport. It would also allow passengers to travel to other terminals.
- 20 The Commission predicts that the improvements to surface access will increase the number of passengers using public transport. The predictions indicate a 10% increase in public transport from 2012 (44%) to 54% by 2030. In the same period, the proportion of rail travel is predicted to be greater, from 36% to 43%. Employees at the airport would also use public transport to commute, with forecasts predicting a 15% rise by 2030 (25% of employees travelling via public transport in 2012).
- 21 SDC has lobbied for a long time for the reinstatement of direct services between Tonbridge and Gatwick (via Edenbridge). The outline response again makes the case for this and argues that the reinstated service should be more frequent than that previously operated and should be more effectively promoted by the train operator and Gatwick Airport. The Tonbridge-Gatwick line (via Edenbridge) provides a valuable connection to Kent, for convenience and accessibility to East Kent residents. The Council has previously noted that, under the terms of the Airport’s existing legal agreement, £1 million annually should be spent on public transport initiatives. If the expansion was submitted as its preferred option, the commitment should be increased significantly if a 2nd runway was to be permitted and that some of this should be used to support this improved rail link should it require subsidy. As previously noted, this could secure greater economic benefits for Sevenoaks District if a 2nd runway was permitted. In addition, it could reduce the number of passengers travelling to the airport via the M25, M20 and M26 through the District, all of which are Air Quality Management Areas with the current levels of usage.
- 22 Both the Heathrow extension and 3rd runway proposals are heavily reliant on existing commitments to infrastructure. As the Commission notes irrespective to further surface improvement, both proposals can capitalise on Crossrail and the High Speed 2 (HS2) connection from Old Oak Common. This will help to increase capacity on the existing Heathrow Express and London Underground services, while also improving the frequency and reliability of services. Furthermore, the strategy includes providing a Southern Rail Access link to South London destinations, including Waterloo. The Commission recognises this as sensible, as it would allow greater choice for travel to the Airport directly, while relieving congestion at London Paddington.

- 23 The expansion proposals of Heathrow also include enhancements of the M25, including a tunnel component to mitigate impacts of disruption from the Airport's expanded footprint. The outline response notes that the lack of additional improvements to the M25 is of concern to SDC not only because it will impact on the ability of residents in Sevenoaks District to access the airport but also because it is likely to increase congestion and journey times to the west and north-west of the country. It notes that the proposals are likely, in fact, to limit any opportunities for further capacity increases on a key part of this section of the M25 by placing the road in a tunnel. The implications of this over the long term need to be fully considered if the Airports Commission is to recommend that either of the Heathrow proposals go ahead.

Response Options

- 24 It is suggested that Members consider the outline response and decide whether it is consistent with the approach that they wish to take and whether any changes need to be made.

Next Steps

- 25 Following this consultation, the Airports Commission will consider all representations made on the Preferred Options and it is anticipated that the Commission will publish its Preferred Option for Government to consider. This is certain to be after the General Election next May. It is unclear whether the Government would invite further comments while considering the Option that has been submitted.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 26 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 the Sevenoaks District.

Key Implications

Financial

This report does not have any financial implications for the Council.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

This report does not have any legal implications for the Council.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

It is suggested that Members of the Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee consider the issues raised, in response to the Preferred Options consultation. The issues

raised relate to the most significant impacts to the Sevenoaks District. It is suggested that the Local Planning and Environment Committee recommends to the Portfolio Holder for Local Planning and Environment the approach that should take in response to the Airports Commission consultation.

Appendices Appendix A – Draft outline response to the consultation

Background Papers: [Airports Commission Preferred Options Consultation Main Document](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381912/AC01_tagged_amend_25_11.pdf)
(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381912/AC01_tagged_amend_25_11.pdf)

[Airports Commission Additional Airport Capacity: Consultation Supporting Documents](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/additional-airport-capacity-consultation-supporting-documents) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/additional-airport-capacity-consultation-supporting-documents>)

[Airports Commission Local Economy Impacts: Assessment](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373487/AC09-local-economy-assessment.pdf)
(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373487/AC09-local-economy-assessment.pdf)

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