

BOLD STEPS FOR AVIATION - KCC DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Environment Select Committee – 4 September 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Community and Planning Services Director

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: KCC has released a discussion document called 'Bold Steps for Aviation' (Appendix A). Included in the numerous proposals is that a Thames Estuary hub airport is not progressed and that airport capacity is increased by a second runway at Gatwick after 2019, supported by a high speed rail link to Heathrow. SDC has commented on the document to suggest that KCC should not identify capacity expansion at Gatwick as its preferred option prior to the social, environmental and economic impacts of all options being considered fully. KCC have said that they will take these comments into account in drafting its final Bold Steps for Aviation document.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Mrs Davison

Head of Service Planning Group Manager – Alan Dyer

Introduction

- 1 KCC has released a document called 'Bold Steps for Aviation' (Appendix A). It is described by KCC as their first ever Aviation policy for discussion (11 May 2012). KCC did not arrange a formal consultation on the document but SDC sent comments to KCC (Appendix B), as a Portfolio Holder response, in order to ensure that its views are taken into account when KCC issue their final policy position. KCC's response to SDC's comments is included at Appendix C.
- 2 It is understood that the Government is planning to publish a consultation document in the Autumn on options for expanding airport capacity. The Government is currently consulting on a Draft Aviation Framework document. KCC's discussion paper has been published in advance of the consultation on airport options and appears to have been drafted primarily to counter proposals from the Mayor of London that a Thames Estuary airport should be considered as a realistic option. The key issue for Sevenoaks District Council is the proposal from KCC that a second runway at Gatwick should be developed after 2019.

Bold Steps for Aviation

- 3 The document proposes a number of ways to meet increasing capacity demands and recommends to Government:
 - the construction of a high speed rail link connecting Gatwick and Heathrow;

- improved rail connectivity of other regional airports with London, Gatwick and Heathrow;
 - further development of Manston Airport and other existing regional airports
 - capacity growth at Gatwick through the addition of a second runway after 2019; and
 - any proposals for a Thames Estuary airport are not progressed any further.
- 4 In summary, the focus is on improving existing airport infrastructure and linking Gatwick and Heathrow to create one airport. The report is also very critical of the Thames Estuary airport proposals, which it states will take years to investigate and that it is better to use existing hub and regional airports now.
- 5 In relation to Gatwick, the document states (paragraph 4.3) that the potential for Heathrow and Gatwick to operate as connected airports can only be realised if a second runway is built at Gatwick when the present moratorium on planning expires in 2019. It suggests that capacity growth at Gatwick is a more acceptable long-term solution than expansion at Heathrow, due to the lower number of people that would be overflowed, the good rail and road access, and the economic benefits that this would bring to deprived communities in Kent, Sussex and South London.

Gatwick Master Plan

- 6 The operator of Gatwick Airport published a draft master plan for consultation earlier this year. The plan proposes that passenger throughput at the airport will increase to 40 million passengers per annum by 2020 without the need for a second runway. The SDC response to the consultation noted that the airport plays a key role in the South East economy but raised concerns about access to the airport and the noise impacts of any increases in the number of flights. The Council's primary concerns are the impact that growth of passenger throughput to 40 million passengers per annum will have on noise levels and annoyance in the southern part of Sevenoaks District, near Cowden, Hever and Edenbridge, and the impact of more passengers travelling by car to the airport from Kent. The SDC response also suggested that the need for increased capacity for international travel in the South East should be assessed by Government and that any proposals for a second runway at Gatwick prior to this would be unwelcome.
- 7 In addition, SDC has recently endorsed 'The Future of Rail in the South East: A Joint Vision Statement', produced by the Gatwick Airport Operator, which highlights the need for improved rail access to Gatwick. This statement focuses on the reinstatement of rail links between Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Gatwick. This would reduce the need to travel along the M25 through the District, which is an Air Quality Management Area, and increase the attractiveness of business and tourist locations in the District.

SDC Response to Bold Steps for Aviation

- 8 The SDC Portfolio Holder response to Bold Steps for Aviation is set out in Appendix B. It was sent to KCC in July 2012. The response argued that it is premature for Kent County Council to identify the development of a second runway at Gatwick as

part of its preferred option, prior to a detailed assessment of the impacts of all of the reasonable options. It questioned why KCC has chosen to express its support for expansion of Gatwick over a further runway at Heathrow. Notwithstanding the potential social and environmental issues associated with any second runway at Gatwick, it is questioned whether there would be sufficient interest from major carriers to operate their major long haul routes out of Gatwick rather than Heathrow.

- 9 The SDC response restated the Council's support for improved rail connections between Tonbridge and Gatwick (via Edenbridge). Therefore, the KCC proposal for improved connections between Ashford and Gatwick using existing lines, as set out in section 4.2.1 and figure 1 of the Bold Steps for Aviation document (which shows the connection continuing to Manston), was supported, subject to stops at Tonbridge and Edenbridge being included in the proposals. Given this desire to see rail access to Gatwick improved, the existing and forecast overcrowding on trains operating on the Brighton Mainline (identified in the Sussex RUS) and the congestion that is regularly experienced on the M25 (including between junctions 5 and 7), SDC questioned KCC's assertion that road and rail access to Gatwick is good (p17 of Bold Steps for Aviation).

KCC Response to SDC comments

- 10 KCC's response to SDC's comments was set out in a letter from the Leader of KCC on 9 July 2012 (Appendix C). The letter states that KCC will take the comments of other organisations into account in formulating its final position on Bold Steps for Aviation. It restated KCC's view that:

'capacity growth at Gatwick (post 2019) represents a more acceptable long-term solution than expansion at Heathrow, due to the significantly lower number of people that would need to be over-flown by arriving and departing aircraft, the relatively good rail access enjoyed by Gatwick, and the huge economic benefits that this solution would bring to deprived communities in Kent, Sussex and South London'.

- 11 KCC's response also suggests that Gatwick is a highly desirable airport for airlines and that a Heathrow-Gatwick high speed rail link will make it increasingly attractive. KCC note that there would be a need to improve road and rail connections to Gatwick but consider that this would be more achievable than the improvements that would be necessary to support the development of an estuary hub airport.

Draft Aviation Policy Framework

- 12 The Government consulted on 'Developing a sustainable framework for UK aviation: Scoping Document' between March and October 2011. SDC supported the following points raised in a response by Edenbridge Town Council:
- Minimum height restrictions for aircraft approaching Gatwick should be set to reduce noise;
 - It is not equitable to allow more night landings at Gatwick than other airports in the South East, as is currently the case;

- Surface access to airports should be improved, for example by improving the train service between Tonbridge and Gatwick Airport; and
- A fair and equitable regulatory framework for aviation matters that equally recognises the needs of rural areas is required.

13 The Government has now published a ‘Draft Aviation Policy Framework’, which proposes the approach that it will take to issues such as increasing airport capacity in the short term, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing and mitigating the impact of noise, improving air quality and improving engagement between airport operators and local residents. The Government decided against consulting on options for how additional airport capacity will be developed in the longer term through the development of new runways and associated infrastructure. Instead, this issue will be the subject of consultation at a later date. Other issues that may be of interest to Sevenoaks District Council, such as on use of airspace, respite from noise and night flights will also be the subject of separate consultations.

Key Implications

Financial

14 There are no financial implications for the Council as a result of this report

Community Impact and Outcomes

15 There are no community impacts expected as a result of this report. However, any development of a second runway at Gatwick would have an impact on communities in Sevenoaks District.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

16 There are no legal or human rights issues associated with this report.

Conclusions

17 SDC has commented on KCC’s Bold Steps for Aviation document to suggest that KCC should not identify capacity expansion at Gatwick as its preferred option prior to the social, environmental and economic impacts of all options being considered fully. KCC have said that they will take these comments into account in drafting its final Bold Steps for Aviation document.

Risk Assessment Statement

18 No risks associated with this report have been identified.

Appendices

Appendix A – Bold Steps for Aviation (KCC)

Appendix B – SDC letter to KCC of 2 July 2012

Appendix C – KCC letter to SDC of 9 July 2012

Contact Officer(s):

Steve Craddock (7315)

Hannah Gooden (7178)

Kristen Paterson

Deputy Chief Executive and Community and Planning Services Director