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Dear



Kent County Council Discussion Document – Bold Steps for Aviation

I refer to your letter of 2 July 2012. To answer the first point you raise, the Council will be considering all the responses we receive to our discussion document in formulating our final position on Bold Steps for Aviation. This final position will then be used as the basis of our response to the Government's forthcoming consultation on a Sustainable Framework for Aviation expected later this month. There is therefore scope for change to the document in light of responses made. I would apologise if our covering letter did not adequately make this clear.

You specifically ask why Bold Steps for Aviation proposes expansion at Gatwick over expansion at Heathrow. Our view is 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 be over-flown by arriving and departing aircraft, the relatively good rail and road access enjoyed by Gatwick, and the huge economic benefits that this solution would bring to deprived communities in Kent, Sussex and South London. As you note however, we do not rule out expansion at Heathrow in the longer term.

In deriving our position on aviation, Kent County Council has to consider the wider picture in terms of environmental, social and economic issues for the county as a whole. With any major infrastructure investment, be it road, rail or air related, we must ensure that appropriate environmental safeguards are put in place to limit the impacts as far as possible. Kent County Council fully acknowledges that there will be negative impacts from whatever option is pursued to solve the air capacity issues of the South East, but in developing its position it must weigh up the overall benefits and disbenefits for the county as a whole.

We appreciate the point you make regarding which airport the airlines want to operate from as opposed to which ones have capacity for them to do so. As you will be fully aware, Gatwick is a highly desirable airport for a host of airlines to operate from and we feel with our proposal of an airside Heathrow-Gatwick high speed rail link, Gatwick will continue to increase its attraction for the major airlines.

I note SDC's support for improved rail connections between Ashford, Tonbridge and Gatwick. As you point out in your correspondence there are areas where both the road and rail network providing access to Gatwick need capacity improvements. Our view is that in comparison to the majority of users of a new estuary hub airport having to travel through and around London and the infrastructure needed to ensure that this is achieved in a commodious way, the relative improvements required for high quality access to Gatwick are much more achievable.

As mentioned above, I will include your letter as part of the response to *Bold Steps for Aviation* so it can help refine our position in preparation for the Government's aviation consultation this summer. This ensures we are well placed to weigh up the overall benefits or otherwise from potential options, enabling us to seek the best possible outcomes for the county as a whole.

Thank you for taking the time to inform me of your views on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Carter
Leader of Kent County Council