

## KCC's 'Bold Steps for Aviation' policy: Portfolio Holder Report and Draft Response

### Summary

KCC has released a document called 'Bold Steps for Aviation'. It is described by KCC as their first ever Aviation policy for discussion (11 May 2012).

It is understood that central government is planning to publish a consultation document in the summer on options for expanding airport capacity. KCC's discussion paper has been published in advance of this and appears to have been drafted primarily to counter proposals that a Thames Estuary airport should be considered. The key issue for Sevenoaks District Council is the proposal that a second runway at Gatwick should be developed after 2019.

### Recommendation

That the draft response is sent to KCC.

### KCC's Bold Steps for Aviation

KCC has drafted 'Bold Steps for Aviation' a proposal to increase airport capacity in the south of England. The 17 page document can be viewed online on:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/News/Bold%20Steps%20for%20Aviation%20May%202012.pdf>

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 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
- Any proposals for a Thames Estuary airport are not progressed any further

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

#### Draft Response

Dear Paul,

#### **BOLD STEPS FOR AVIATION: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT (KCC)**

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2012 regarding 'Bold Steps for Aviation'. It is noted that the document is identified as a discussion paper. However, little detail is provided in the document or covering letter on consultation arrangements and no indication is given of whether there is any scope for the document to be amended in the light of the views of other stakeholders. Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) seeks clarification on this point. It is noted that the document sets out very clear recommendations to Government. This appears to be premature in a discussion paper on which KCC is inviting views from stakeholders and communities.

SDC recently responded to the consultation on the Gatwick Airport Masterplan. It noted that the airport plays a key role in the South East economy but identified the Council's primary concerns as being the impact that growth of passenger throughput will have on noise levels and annoyance in the southern part of Sevenoaks District, near Edenbridge, and the impact of more passengers travelling by car to the airport from Kent. The SDC response also suggested that a full assessment of all options to increase capacity for international travel in the South East should be undertaken to ensure that the most socially and environmentally acceptable option is progressed. It was suggested that this assessment needs to be undertaken by Government and should inform a National Planning Statement, following consultation.

SDC believes 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. Given that the document identifies that a further runway at Heathrow is a potential option (section 4.1), SDC would like to understand why KCC has chosen to express its support for expansion of Gatwick

over this in its recommendations. Nevertheless SDC welcomes the suggestion that options at Heathrow should not be ruled out at this stage.

Notwithstanding the social and environmental issues, in developing proposals for increasing runway capacity in the south east it will be necessary to consider the willingness of the airlines, especially long haul carriers and those which may continue to develop to serve emerging markets, to predominately operate out of any airport other than Heathrow. The assertion on p9 of the 'Bold Steps for Aviation' document that it has been 'shown that nine of the ten major airlines currently based at Heathrow do not want to move' gives an indication of what a significant issue this may prove to be. Whether operators would be willing to locate at Gatwick, even with a high speed rail connection to Heathrow, is an issue that is not addressed in the document.

SDC supports improved rail connections between Tonbridge and Gatwick (via Edenbridge) and has recently endorsed 'The Future of Rail in the South East: A Joint Vision Statement', produced by the Gatwick Airport Operator. The proposal for improved connections between Ashford and Gatwick using existing lines, as set out in section 4.2.1 and figure 1 (which shows the connection continuing to Manston), are therefore 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 questions KCC's assertion that road and rail access to Gatwick is good (p17).