

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

NON-KEY DECISION – 18/07

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HEATHROW AIRPORT: AIRSPACE PRINCIPLES CONSULTATION
DOCUMENT, JANUARY 2018

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- The purpose of this report is to agree the Council's response to the Heathrow Airport Airspace Principles Consultation Document, January 2018.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION: That East Herts Council:

(A)	supports the modernisation of aircraft movements through Performance Based Navigation in improving flightpath accuracy and serving to help achieve the aims of the emerging Future Airspace Strategy, and
(B)	considers that options for changes to Heathrow related air traffic movements should only be supported where there would be nil detriment to the ability of other South East airports (in particular, Stansted and Luton) to likewise mitigate the environmental impact of proposed increased aircraft movements on residents through improvements via their own related future Airspace change proposals.

1.0 Background

1.1 Heathrow Airport is currently carrying out a public consultation on its Airport Airspace Principles Consultation Document, January 2018, which forms the first of three consultations that will be undertaken prior to the finalisation of proposals.

1.2 The consultation document is available to view via the link at the Background Papers section of this report. In terms of consideration of the issues raised within the consultation document, this report largely concentrates on those aspects that could have the most potential impact on East Herts residents.

1.3 The consultation closes on 28th March 2018.

2.0 Report

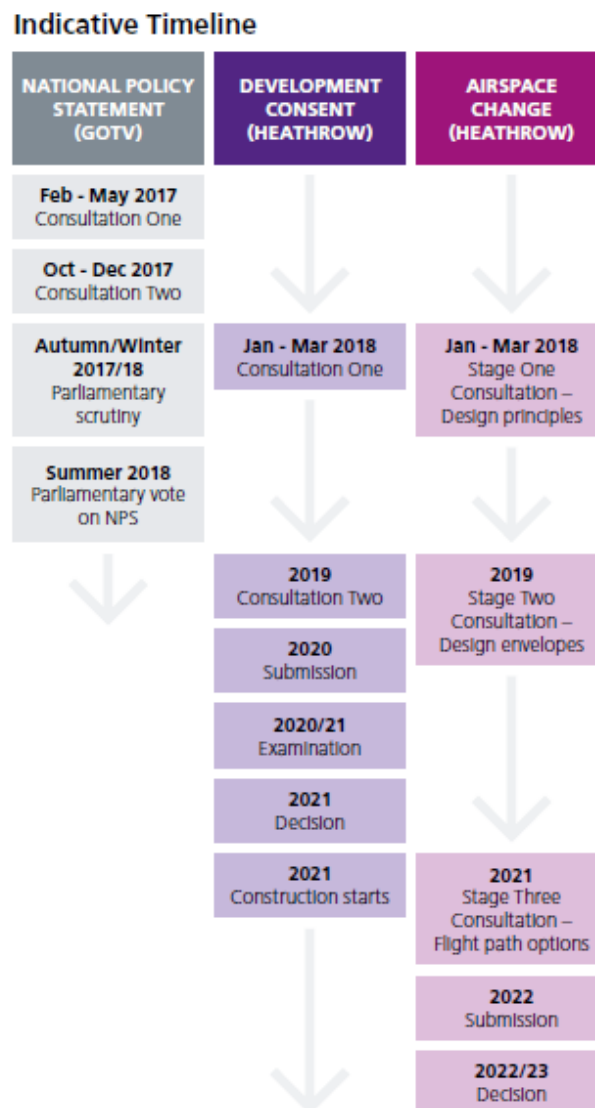
2.1 Members will no doubt be aware that Heathrow Airport is planning to expand its operations following the Government's announcement, in October 2016, that Heathrow formed its preferred option for the expansion of airport capacity in the South East. This was followed by the publication of the Revised Draft Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) in October 2017. It is expected that, subject to Parliamentary approval in 2018, the final ANPS would serve to confirm the principle of the scheme and further detail the factors against which the expansion of the airport would be decided.

2.2 In order to expand the airport, Heathrow's proposals in respect of physical changes required in relation to constructing a third runway and associated development will be subject to the Development Consent Order Process. The airport is currently consulting on the first stage of that process.

2.3 However, these physical proposals would also have a knock-on effect in terms of necessary changes to flight paths as a result

of accommodating changes to where and how planes will fly in the future. These changes are subject to a separate process, which is determined by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

- 2.4 The Airspace Change consultation provides a diagram which usefully illustrates the timeline for all three strands and their relative overlaps:



- 2.5 The current Airspace Change Consultation (Stage One) details that there will be several stages of consultation prior to final flight paths needed to operate a three runway airport at Heathrow would be decided. The purpose of this consultation is to set out some of the key design principles that could be applied in relation to airspace relevant to Heathrow and to

seek for views and preferences related to them. It is stated that this is not a referendum and that the largest number of “votes” would not necessarily influence a single design principle; rather, that postcode data will be used to identify where particular principles are important to specific geographic areas and thus this could result in an approach incorporating different design principles, as appropriate.

- 2.6 The Airspace Change for Heathrow will not, however, be considered in isolation. As the basic structure of the UK’s airspace was developed over forty years ago, and there have since been huge changes, including a hundred fold increase in demand for aviation, the Government has also commissioned work on the modernisation of airspace across the UK.
- 2.7 Coupled to this, throughout Europe there is a move to simplify and harmonise the way airspace and air traffic control is used through the Single European Sky project. In the UK and Ireland this need is being met, alongside some other issues, through the Future Airspace Strategy (FAS), that will set out a plan to modernise airspace by 2020. Work on the FAS is being led by the CAA.
- 2.8 Therefore, while the changes finally proposed for Heathrow, for which the airport is responsible for providing up to an altitude of approximately 9,000ft¹, will need to meet the needs of the airport in its operation of three runways, it will also be required to sit within the overall framework for the rest of the country. The consultation states that Heathrow is working closely with the other airports in the South East of England to develop an integrated approach to airspace modernisation.
- 2.9 Performance Based Navigation (PBN) is seen as key to achieving the aims of the FAS as, through the use of satellite navigation instead of a more traditional ground-based beacons approach, it improves the accuracy of where aircraft

¹ Above 9,000ft air traffic movements come under the auspices of NATS – the national air traffic service providers.

fly. For East Herts, Members will recall that Stansted Airport has already carried out a trial, which this Council supported, and subsequently implemented such a scheme, which has led to far more precise adherence to flightpaths than previously occurred. This concentrated approach has the benefit of reducing the spread, and number of residents affected by, the impact of aviation noise. However, the corollary is that those residents who are impacted are affected to a greater degree.

- 2.10 For Heathrow specific proposals, the airport states that it will ensure consistency with Government policy via the assessment of potential design options through an options appraisal model, which will enable comparison of the relative positive and negative effects of each option. Informed by this process, a proposed new airspace design will be finalised and submitted to the CAA, who taking into account related matters such as safety, security, and operational and environmental impacts, will then decide whether to approve the changes. The Secretary of State also has call in powers should a need to intervene be identified.
- 2.11 In terms of detailing how a future airspace for an expanded Heathrow would be designed, the consultation explains that a set of principles or 'rules' have to be developed first. It is the consideration of these principles that forms the main part of this consultation.
- 2.12 The principles will need to accord with the requirements that will be set out the ANPS, and the consultation therefore takes into account those currently included in the draft version in designing its options.
- 2.13 Principle 1: Flight paths – options:
 - a) Minimise the total number of people overflown, with routes designed to impact as few people as possible;
This option would minimise the total number of people overflown by directing flights over the areas of lowest

population. This is likely to result in some routes over areas that don't currently experience overflight from aircraft using Heathrow. In addition, aircraft will be more concentrated on a route than they are today, meaning those affected people are likely to experience more aircraft overhead than those experienced by people overflowed by aircraft today.

b) Minimise the number of people newly overflowed, keeping routes close to where they are today, where possible;
This option would minimise the number of people newly overflowed by keeping routes as close to today's flight paths as possible. This is likely to result in a concentration of aircraft over the areas overflowed by aircraft using Heathrow today, meaning that these areas are likely to experience more aircraft overhead than they do currently.

c) Share routes over a wider area, which might increase the total number of people overflowed but would reduce the total number of people most affected by the routes as the noise will be shared more equally.
This option would spread the routes over a wider area to share the impact of overflight. This would result in a larger number of people being overflowed, but each route would be flown less frequently than under option (a) or (b).

2.14 Principle 2: Urban and rural areas – options:

a) Prioritise routing aircraft over urban areas, recognising that urban areas have higher general noise levels; or

b) Prioritise routing aircraft over rural areas where fewer people live.

2.15 Principle 3: Urban areas – options:

a) Design flight paths over parks and open spaces rather than residential areas; or

b) Design flight paths over residential areas, avoiding aircraft overflight of parks and open spaces.

2.16 Principle 4: Noise and Emissions – options:

a) Design flight paths that prioritise the reduction of aircraft noise for local communities over those that reduce fuel burn and emissions; or

b) Design flight paths that prioritise a reduction in fuel burn and emissions over those that reduce noise for local communities.

2.17 Principle 5: Technology and Innovation – single proposal:

As the airspace redesign is viewed as a once in a generation opportunity to modernise the way Heathrow's airspace is used, it should be efficient for the foreseeable future.

Therefore one of the design principles is to base the airspace on the latest navigation technology, working in partnership with airlines to ensure they invest in bringing older aircraft at Heathrow up to more modern capabilities. If this design principle is accepted then routes will not need to be designed to accommodate aircraft with older navigation technologies.

2.18 Principle 6: Night flights – single proposal:

Reducing the noise impacts of Heathrow, particularly at night, is seen as a key focus both currently and in the future.

Heathrow has committed to extend the ban on scheduled night flights from the current five hours to six and a half hours (sometime between 11pm and 7am) with the exact timings to be decided through the Development Consent Order process.

2.19 The current consultation therefore seeks view on the options of approach for its six key principles, which will largely relate to those locations that would be immediately impacted by being in close proximity to the airport or its environs. However,

while these options are designed to elicit comments specifically relating to Heathrow proposals, and would appear to have very limited, if any, impact on East Herts, it would be easy to lose sight of the wider picture that the selection of some options could potentially have for the district in the future.

- 2.20 In particular, due to constrained airspace that needs to accommodate the movements of all the London airports, there is a concern that future flight path choices for a Heathrow with three runways could impede potential beneficial airspace changes for other areas. While the options may seek serve to provide the best environmental or amenity fit for residents in the West London area, they could potentially have a detrimental effect on the ability of airports close to this district (i.e. Stansted and Luton) to best mitigate the impact of their future proposed increased flight movements for East Herts' residents.
- 2.21 Therefore, in responding to the consultation, it is proposed that the modernisation of aircraft movements through Performance Based Navigation in improving flightpath accuracy and serving to help achieve the aims of the emerging Future Airspace Strategy should be supported.
- 2.22 However, while the Council may not wish to comment on specific option choices related to impacts at a local level, representation should be made that options for changes to Heathrow related air traffic movements should only be supported where there would be nil detriment to the ability of other South East airports (in particular, Stansted and Luton) to likewise mitigate the environmental impact of proposed increased aircraft movements on residents through improvements via their own related future Airspace change proposals.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- Heathrow Airport Airspace Principles Consultation Document, January 2018:
<https://www.heathrowconsultation.com/airspace-change/redesigning-airspace/>

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