AIRPORTS COMMISSION CONSULTATION:

PROPOSED SECOND RUNWAY AT GATWICK AIRPORT

RESPONSE FROM HORLEY TOWN COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The Surrey town of Horley shares its southern boundary with Gatwick Airport and has always, and will continue to be, affected positively and negatively by the airport's operations. Currently the town is undergoing a major expansion which should see the population expand from circa 23,000 to between 33,000 and 35,000. A large number of our residents commute to work outside the town with a significant percentage of those travelling to the London area.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2014 the Town Council carried out a major consultation with its residents regarding the proposed second runway at Gatwick. This included face-to-face approaches at the St George's Day Fayre last April and an Open Public Meeting in July. In addition we hand delivered 10,000 questionnaires to every household in the town and also set up an online response option, using the Town Council's website. From that we received 1,096 replies, which have helped formulate our response to the Airports Commission. We have attached a copy of the final report regarding our own consultation, which we hope you will find helpful.

Throughout this response we have restricted our comments and observations to the Gatwick option; we do not consider it appropriate, nor are we qualified, to express any views on either of the Heathrow options.

As a general observation, the Commission expresses concerns with the deliverability of parts of the Gatwick option but then dismisses them as being of no consequence or 'doable'. This is not a view that is held by us or our residents. We have serious concerns regarding a number of issues in respect of the Gatwick option, namely, surface access, flooding, noise, air quality and the local infrastructure.

SURFACE ACCESS

Most of the passengers accessing the Airport, either by road or rail, will travel through Horley, so surface access is a major issue for us.

The Airport is dependent upon one rail access [BML] and one motorway link [M25/M23] which are subject to frequent disruption. Recently the M25 was closed for twenty four hours due to a sink hole appearing in the carriageway, whilst the rail network has been closed due to a power failure at the Airport. Nowhere in the proposals do we see assurances that surface access will be made more resilient in the future.

The Brighton Main Line is currently under severe pressure. Whilst there are several options under consideration, including some already or about to be put in place (such as expansion of the Airport's Station and trains increased to twelve carriages), we are concerned to see, from the Sussex Area Route Study, that the focus is on meeting the demand from Brighton and Gatwick. With a finite capacity in respect of the number of tracks, we fear for the impact on local services for towns north of Gatwick, such as Horley, given the Airport's long term stated aim for trains to London departing from the Airport every 2.4 minutes. Has any modelling of the rail infrastructure been carried out to see if the BML would be able to support this frequency of trains and the impact on non-airport services?

The existing serious congestion problems at London Victoria Station will be mitigated in part by the current redevelopment of the underground booking hall. However we remain concerned as to whether the transport infrastructure of London Victoria, as a whole, will be able to handle the increased number of passengers from an expanded airport, though some relief may be possible with current measures to redirect a higher proportion of travellers via the improved facilities at London Bridge. In short, none of the proposals give us confidence that the railway network will be able to cope with the forecast increase in passengers and staff, given a modal shift to public transport of 60%, as well as meeting the growing demands from the local population who do not work at the Airport.

We note that the Highways Agency intends to increase capacity on the M23 section, between its junction with the M25 and the Airport, by converting the hard shoulder into another lane. However, we believe that an additional lane will not provide an increase in resilience from motorway incidents, such as accidents and overturned vehicles. The Surrey section of the M25 suffers from regular closures and increasing traffic from an expanded Gatwick will not help.

You also record that over 75% of Airport employees use a car to travel to work and live within 30 minutes of the Airport. Whilst this may change with the employment area increasing to meet the demands for new staff, we are of the opinion that many of these will still use their cars, though the greater distances could make the rail option more attractive. Costs could be the deciding factor.

Closures of the M25/M23, for whatever reason, have an immediate and catastrophic impact on our local roads, such as the A23/A217, gridlocking major town centres, such as Redhill and Reigate, and to a lesser extent, Horley. This not only impacts upon Airport generated traffic, but also upon our local residents and businesses. This is a major concern to us and our residents. It would impact on access to East Surrey Hospital, with the A23 through Horley, being a major route to the hospital for emergency vehicles.

Our local roads are currently under pressure, particularly at rush hour, and already handle Gatwick traffic from drivers avoiding the motorway system. We see no relief in the future with an expanded Airport, and tweaking the designs of junctions etc. will not resolve this issue. We welcome the recognition that some public funding may be necessary to provide the infrastructure to support a second runway at Gatwick; a matter on which central Government has been very quiet. It is our view that, as it is a Government decision on where to locate the additional runway, there should be a commitment that funding (given that the contribution from GAL is welcome but seen as insufficient), will be available to ensure the infrastructure to support the selected option will be in place, without the costs falling on local residents through their Council Tax.

In conclusion, we are looking for more comprehensive and resilient proposals that will give confidence to our residents that the rail and road networks can meet all the demands placed upon them not only from a growing airport, but also from the expanding local towns and villages. We cannot support your conclusion in section 8.24 of the Business case that the impact on the local area will be neutral.

FLOODING

Following the floods from the winter of 2013/2104, this issue is of a major concern to Horley Town Council and our residents, many of whom are convinced that the Airport contributed greatly to the situation (particularly on Christmas Eve when GAL admitted to discharging water from its balancing ponds into the river Mole). Although flooding would have occurred anyway, the view is the effects may have been somewhat lessened had this not happened.

Local fears that future flooding events will be exacerbated by major development at Gatwick, with a new runway and terminal, are supported by the conclusions in your analysis that the Airport remains at risk of flooding. To increase the risk downstream from the Airport (i.e. Horley) in the future, creates doubts on mitigation, such as the storage capacity of rainfall. We are also concerned to read that GAL is using lower values than the EA in respect of drainage networks and the modelled surface water flood extents.

We remain to be convinced that a new runway and terminal at Gatwick will not have a future impact on flooding events from the river Mole and its tributary waterways in Horley.

WATER QUALITY

The only comment we would make is that 'the quality of river water could be subject to increasing damaging effects from discharges from sewage works' (mentioned in your analysis), is of concern as to the effects on wildlife, especially as, after many years, the water quality has greatly improved with an increase in fish stocks and other water based wildlife. How this issue would be addressed is not clear to us.

NOISE

Whilst concerns regarding aircraft noise are of major concern to many of the residents of Horley who responded to our public consultation, the noise contour maps remain unchanged in respect of the town with the introduction of a second runway, no doubt due to the runway's location with respect to the existing runway.

However, what is more difficult to predict will be the annoyance from overflying aircraft from Gatwick, especially as one of the town's major residential developments (known as the North West Sector), will encroach under the current Noise Preferential Route handling aircraft departing from runway 26 and then turning eastbound on a Dover, Clacton or Lambourne Standard Instrument of Departure.

We also note the comment in the Baseline Study that an increase in ground noise under 'do minimum' is anticipated, but with potentially significant reductions under 2R due to changes in taxy patterns with the new terminal.

AIR QUALITY

There are three main concerns with the Commission's air quality assessment work for Gatwick:

i) A single air quality assessment has been undertaken that is not representative, and is likely to be a significant underestimate of the air quality impact of the majority of the carbon traded scenarios that the commission considers of greatest economic benefit.

Given the commission's desire to stress test the proposed 2nd runway schemes, in relation to several potential futures, to 'ensure the robustness of the analysis and ultimately the final recommendation to Government', the presence of a single air quality scenario (carbon capped 69 mppa, 476,000 movements in 2050) is surprising, especially as the commission has been unable to assess the 'transport economic efficiency' or 'wider economic impacts' under a carbon capped forecast.

A number of the Commission's forecast economic benefits are based on a carbon traded scenario and, under this scenario, 4 out of 5 of the Commission's 'business models', result in over 540,000 air passenger movements at Gatwick by 2050. Therefore, the Commission needs to undertake a further air quality assessment for a carbon traded 540,000 movement scenario in addition to its current carbon capped assessment, if the air quality assessment is ever to be considered robust.

ii) The lack of dispersion modelling in the report makes it impossible to assess compliance with EU limit values, to examine the changes in temporal and spatial pollution concentrations compared with the base case, and to examine the source of pollution (i.e. aircraft vs. road traffic) and how these change with time.

Aside from a lack of scenario testing in relation to air quality as discussed above, the lack of dispersion modelling in the commission's work is a further major shortcoming as:

- It is impossible for external stakeholders to assess whether or not EU limit values for nitrogen dioxide are likely to be breached by a 2nd runway.

- It is not possible to assess the improvement / deterioration in pollutant concentrations, both in magnitude, spatial extent and time, experienced by populations living in the vicinity of the airport compared to the 'do nothing' scenario.

- The Commission has no indication as to which pollution sources are contributing most to areas where there is a pollution problem, e.g. aircraft or roads and, thus, how likely any mitigation measures proposed by scheme promoters or technology improvements in general are likely to work.

- The absence of information on source contribution is particularly apparent in the report, where the Commission makes the point that the air pollution is largely the result of road traffic. Whilst this may be the case at Heathrow, aircraft at Gatwick, within the current air quality management area, are forecast to be a far bigger pollution source than road traffic by a factor of 3:1 in the longer term and, of this, road traffic pollution affecting the air quality management area the majority is airport related by a factor of 2:1.

iii) The unit 'cost' per tonne of NO_x used in the calculations of 'disbenefit' may be a significant underestimate, based on work currently underway by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution.

- The Commission's attention is drawn to work that is currently underway by the Government's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (COMEAP), which is likely to lead to a significant increase the in the health cost of NO_x and, thus, the environmental costs related to air quality associated with Airport development. Consequently, the Commission is strongly advised to seek guidance from COMEAP on an up-to-date health impact cost for NO_x / NO_2, and to revise its cost calculations accordingly.

- The above comments support the concerns of our residents regarding the impact on their lives and health from the extra pollution resulting from an increase in airport and associated road traffic sources. More work will need to be done to give them assurances that air quality in Horley will not exceed current or future EU targets.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

We note your proposal discusses the impacts on Crawley, but fails to mention those for Horley and the surrounding area, which in some cases are closer to the Airport than parts of Crawley.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Once the second of two major developments has been completed, Horley will have no large areas of undeveloped land, which are not in the flood plain, which could provide new housing, except for contributions from the ongoing redevelopment of the Town Centre and windfall sites, though the latter will only provide a few dwellings. There are mixed views as to the impact on house prices from an enlarged Gatwick. One view is that prices will be depressed due to increased noise/pollution [perceived though this might be] whilst the opposite view is that an influx of new staff looking for homes close to the Airport will maintain or even increase property prices.

It is for the above reasons that we see the major impact from an expanded Gatwick being from surface access rather than housing.

Though an expanded Gatwick will offer job opportunities, the feeling in Horley is that we will gain little in this respect as we are in an area of very low unemployment. However, our younger residents see opportunities from new jobs for their own and future generations as being a positive impact on the town, with the new jobs coming not only from the Airport, but also from support companies off Airport, as well as those companies who may relocate to the area because it is close to an International Airport.

Another factor for us will be the ability to offer local jobs to local people which would have the bonus of reducing the number of residents having to commute to say, London, thus reducing the demand on the road and rail networks. We know that our colleagues at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council are intent on increasing local employment prospects, not just in Horley, but across the Borough.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The results of our residents' survey indicate that most people are happy with Gatwick as a single runway/2 terminal airport, but have concerns [actual or perceived] about the impacts on their lives from an Airport with a second runway and an additional terminal. A few have indicated that they would consider drastic measures such as moving out of the area.

In general their concerns are:

- Increase road traffic congestion and associated pollution/noise.
- Increase in noise and pollution from aircraft.
- Significant deterioration in facilities for rail users.
- Pressure for more housing and the negative impacts on values of existing properties.
- Pressure on the local infrastructure, such as schools and health care, which are currently struggling to meet demand.
- Increased risk of flooding.
- Loss of green spaces.

However, a significant minority did see an expanded Gatwick as bringing benefits to them from the following:

- More secure financial future for them and their children from an increase in employment opportunities.
- Increase in prosperity to the local area.
- Better job security.
- Improved property prices.
- Improvements to local transport infrastructure.
- More routes/destinations available for holidays/business.

CONCLUSION

The Town Council is pleased to have had the opportunity to comment on such an important national consultation and consider the effect it could have on the rapidly expanding town of Horley. We are grateful for the technical support and assistance offered by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, which has assisted our response. We reiterate our serious concerns that the quality of life of those who choose to live and work in Horley could be adversely affected, as demonstrated by the results of the Town Council's own recent consultation.

The Town Council accepts that a second runway will bring economic prosperity for many who live and work in the South East. However, based on the results received from our extensive questionnaire, Horley Town Council endorses the majority view of its local residents who are against the proposal for a second runway. Should Central Government decide to select Gatwick as its preferred option for a second runway, then the Town Council will strive to achieve the best outcome for local residents, in particular with regard to infrastructure.

Horley Town Council

29 January 2015

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