



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Airports Commission Consultation  
Via email [airports.consultation@systra.com](mailto:airports.consultation@systra.com)

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Date: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Sirs

**Airports Commission Consultation Response**  
**South Bucks Description and Background**

South Bucks District Council has considered the documents published in connection with the consultation on additional runway capacity in the South East of England. This response reflects the views of the members of the District Council and additionally endorses the response of the Richings Park Residents Association, the community within the District most affected by the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport.

South Bucks District is located to the north west of Heathrow bounded by the M4 in the south east of the District and the River Thames in the south west of the District. The District is 87% Green Belt protected by National Planning Policy and is noted for its quality of life. The main settlements are Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and Burnham. The District is well connected via the M4, M40 and M25 motorways and via rail services provided by Chiltern Railways and First Great Western services (with two future Crossrail stations at Iver and Taplow). Residents are highly qualified with 41.3% educated to degree standard compared to 27% nationally (ONS 2013). Incomes are substantially higher than the national average and unemployment is low. South Bucks is a very popular place to live but has some of the least affordable homes in the Country <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-28648704>.

The proximity to London, the easy access to the motorway network and to Heathrow Airport however brings its own problems in the form of congested roads and deterioration in local air quality. The area around Iver in particular is used by large numbers of HGV's on unsuitable local roads and is regularly used as a rat run when the M25 is more congested than usual. Iver in the south east and Dorney and Burnham in the south west of the District currently experience aircraft noise in addition to motorway noise from the M4 and M25. These communities have all been included in your noise assessment.

In addition to proposals for Heathrow expansion the District is the subject to numerous other infrastructure proposals including HS2, the HS2 Spur proposal, Western Rail Access to Heathrow (branching off the main line in to tunnel just to the west of Richings Park), M4 widening and new sidings proposed to accommodate the relocated Heathrow Express from Old Oak Commons. Residents in Iver in particular feel they are currently under siege from a number of these major development proposals. The potential cumulative impact should also be a consideration.

South Bucks District Council is against any expansion of Heathrow Airport due to the direct and indirect environmental impact on its communities and businesses. Of the three proposals under consideration, Gatwick stands out as the least environmentally damaging, easiest to deliver as well as being the cheapest and obviously the least disruptive without any major new surface access



required.

In contrast the two Heathrow runway proposals involve huge disruption during construction, not least re-routing the M25 into tunnel; demolition of hundreds of homes and businesses, including the energy from waste plant at Lakeside. Post construction the additional runway capacity will increase the number of flights leading to additional traffic on the local roads, additional aircraft noise and a potential further reduction in air quality. Current proposals are not convincing that these impacts will be adequately mitigated. In addition the cost to the public purse would be substantially greater than if Gatwick were selected.

It is not considered that there are any obvious benefits to the District from Heathrow Airport expansion but there are significant impacts which will greatly affect the current high quality of life experienced by South Bucks' residents.

### **Heathrow Hub**

Heathrow Hub also proposes a giant 10,000 capacity car park together with additional facilities such as hotels, alongside the Great Western Mainline and M25 in Iver wholly within this District. A golf club and a waste water treatment plant will be lost to the development. The impact on the Rivers Colne and Colne Brook and the Colne Valley Park in general together with the loss of biodiversity and recreational opportunities has not been quantified. The Council is however gratified to note that the assessment of this scheme by Jacobs concludes that there are serious environmental and economic concerns not least the impact on the Green Belt; the additional traffic on local roads; the effect of increased noise and air quality on the quality of life of the local residents in Richings Park and Iver; the potential closure of Iver station; the addition of 4 minutes to average Intercity journey times and the colossal cost compared to WRAtH which can be delivered for a fraction of the cost.

### **Extended Northern Runway**

This proposal is the furthest from the District's southern boundary. It proposes 724 Ha of landtake, the loss of 242 homes together with businesses on the Poyle industrial estate. Additional landtake is also required for surface access proposals and flood storage. The government attaches great importance to the Green Belt and recent ministerial statements have emphasised the need to keep it permanently open. The South East of England is currently experiencing a significant housing shortage and locations for additional housing let alone replacement housing, are not easy to find when taking account of Green Belt policy. In addition in this area, the problems of flooding illustrated by last winter's heavier than usual rainfall (but only a 1 in 20 event) have been underplayed. Without the Environment Agency's proposed Lower Thames flood relief channel (for which funding has not yet been secured) a more severe flood event could be significantly worsened by this proposal.

In terms of surface access it is considered that there will be additional traffic (including construction traffic and traffic avoiding the M25) on the local roads in the Iver area. Iver station, currently experiencing the lowest passenger numbers across the whole Crossrail network and which has not been provided with a station car park, could experience a considerable increase in passengers using the station to access Heathrow adding to local congestion. Noise and air quality impacts will worsen.

The cost of £13.5 billion is considerably more than Gatwick's £9.3 billion.

## **North West Runway**

This new runway has greater land take, more homes (783) demolished and more extensive surface access works. It is also the most expensive option at £18.6 billion. There appears to be no obvious advantages to this proposal over the Extended Northern Runway option. It is also considered that the impact on the District will be more severe due to its proximity to our southern boundary. In this option not only does the M25 have to be tunnelled, the M4 has to be widened and the A4 diverted. The severe disruption caused by all these road and construction works, will cause significant harm to the south east of the District. This is particularly acute for the local residents when taking account of the cumulative impacts of this and the other infrastructure projects proposed for this area. Whole communities will be either displaced or disrupted for a considerable period of time. There will also be increased pressure on the District to accommodate additional housing and commercial development to the detriment of the Green Belt. The desire by Heathrow Airport Ltd to increase freight traffic will increase the number of HGV's on local roads as the existing freight railway line will be destroyed by the runway proposal. The impact on the District as a whole, will be transformational and not in a positive way.

Noise and air quality for the local residents will worsen. The residents are unlikely to get any benefits. A number of existing residents in Iver and Richings Park are currently employed at Heathrow and drive to work as there are no convenient public transport options. Heathrow's plan to halve staff parking will adversely impact these residents. Again additional use of Iver station is anticipated which may cause local parking problems.

There will also be a significant impact on the landscape and biodiversity of the Colne Valley Park which is part funded by this District and is well used by the local communities and provides a valuable resource for West London.

## **Heathrow Spur**

South Bucks is significantly affected by plans to route HS2 through the northern Colne Valley Park on a viaduct. Between the viaduct and the Chiltern tunnel portal significant earthworks are proposed to accommodate the Heathrow Spur rail line which will then travel south in tunnel under Denham and then resurface along the east side of the M25 before it reaches Heathrow Airport. The potential landscape impact, disruption and damage to property connected to this project will be enormous. It is apparent however that neither of the promoters sees a need for this project. It would therefore be extremely helpful for the Commission to endorse the recommendation of Jacobs and conclude that there is no need to construct this spur and that a connection between HS2 at Old Oak Common would deliver all the connectivity needed for high speed rail passengers to access Heathrow.

## **Conclusions**

Gatwick provides a cheaper solution to additional runway capacity and with less disruption to existing communities, environment and businesses. Conversely Heathrow expansion will devastate local communities, expose more communities to noise and worsen existing air quality problems. There are no obvious benefits in expanding the airport to this District. Instead construction and demolition impacts from the new runway and new on airport facilities, additional infrastructure for roads and the replacement energy from waste plant will cause huge local disruption to the detriment of South Bucks communities.

In addition it would apply considerable pressure on our Green Belt for housing and commercial

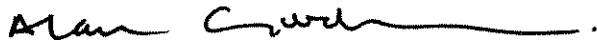
development. We note that South Bucks is one of the 14 local authorities identified by the Commission to accommodate up to 70,000 new homes however there appears to have been no consideration or discussions as to whether this is deliverable while it is likely that these local authorities could already be struggling to meet their own housing needs.

The Heathrow hub proposal at Iver should not go ahead as there are sufficient negative economic and environmental impacts to halt the development.

Existing and additional freight traffic connected with an increase in air cargo should be routed by rail and not road to reduce the impact on the local communities.

Should the decision be made to expand Heathrow then the Extended Northern Runway is cheaper and involves less demolition of homes and businesses and has no obvious commercial disadvantages over the North West runway proposal. However if ENR option is selected then it should only take place once the Lower Thames flood relief scheme is in place.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Goodrum', followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Alan Goodrum  
Chief Executive  
Chiltern & South Bucks District Councils