

Appendix 4 - Joint submission from the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to the Transport Select Committee's Inquiry on the Revised Draft Airports NPS [November 2017]

Written evidence submitted by the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (NPS0028)

1 Four Borough response

1.1 This joint submission is made by the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ("the Boroughs"). This adds to our original submission on the 24th March 2017 to the postponed TSC Inquiry pre-general Election and represents the views of the Boroughs who would be most severely affected by the Government's support for expansion at Heathrow.

1.2 The Boroughs are grateful for the opportunity to submit further evidence to the TSC. This builds on our earlier submission, which we understand will also be taken into account. That submission drew the TSC's attention to the fact that it is not possible to expand at Heathrow without risking unacceptable or unlawful levels of air pollution and noise.

1.3 The Boroughs remain confident, despite (and because of) new evidence, that it is still impossible to add a further runway at Heathrow without causing unacceptable air and noise pollution. In addition, the case for expansion at Gatwick, as opposed to Heathrow, has strengthened. At the time of this submission the Boroughs' are still finalising their response to the current revised Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) consultation, this therefore represents our initial views to date. We would welcome the opportunity to present our views to the Committee.

2 Executive Summary

2.1 The new evidence and the consultation process does not change the Boroughs' position as stated in the first submission to the TSC and in its submission to the Government consultation on the draft Airports NPS in May 2017.

2.2 The Boroughs agree that there is a need for additional airport capacity in the south-east, but that the realistic solution is to expand at Gatwick. The updated and revised evidence produced alongside the revised Airports NPS demonstrates that the Government's case for Heathrow is even less robust and the one for expansion at Gatwick has strengthened. This clearly supports the Boroughs' view and the TSC is urged to scrutinise the evidence.

2.3 Our initial thoughts are listed below:

- The case for expansion at Gatwick over that at Heathrow is strengthened with the new evidence; for example, total economic benefits are now shown to be higher for the Gatwick expansion proposal than for Heathrow; Gatwick, with and without expansion, will provide more domestic connections in the UK than Heathrow expansion;
- New evidence on passenger numbers suggests that new capacity is needed in a shorter time scale. But on the Government's own evidence the shorter the time scale the more likely that illegal air pollution will be caused. Heathrow cannot be expanded quickly and lawfully. If capacity is needed soon then that is an argument for choosing Gatwick;

- The evidence shows that the Department for Transport's statements that Heathrow with a third runway would be quieter in 2030 than today are wrong. The evidence now shows that more people would be affected by more noise. As the Boroughs' experience is that people find Heathrow's current operations unacceptable, and the evidence shows tolerance to noise is decreasing, this is evidence of an insurmountable obstacle to Heathrow expansion;
- The evidence does not, and cannot, show that an expanded Heathrow can comply with European air pollution limits. The Government has promised that, post-Brexit, it will still adhere to those limits. Since public tolerance of dirty air is diminishing, and awareness of its health effects is increasing, it is inconceivable that Londoners and others affected would tolerate an increase in air pollution;
- Related to air pollution is the fact that there is no further clarity on the provision of surface access, and that although the documents have produced an argument in favour of Heathrow based on its ability to handle more freight, there appears to be no provision for that freight in the air quality re-appraisal.

3 Introductory comments

3.1 At the time of our original submission, the first consultation on the draft Airports National Policy Statement ("the NPS") was running in parallel and the views which we submitted to the TSC were preliminary. The Boroughs submitted an expanded response to the Department for Transport and we urge the Committee to read that response.

3.2 The Government has now revised the NPS, but it is not clear to what extent the revision has taken into account the consultation responses.

3.3 The full suite of documents published with the re-consultation is extremely detailed. The Boroughs have asked the Department for Transport for more time, to enable them to analyse the new evidence and submit their response through their internal democratic processes, but the request has been refused.

3.4 The refusal supports the Boroughs' belief that statements by the Secretary of State suggest that he has effectively made up his mind to support Heathrow and that this is affecting the fairness of the consultation process, including the opportunity to give detailed consideration to the new evidence.

3.5 Similarly, the Boroughs are concerned that the Department has withheld evidence which should be available to consultees and to Parliament considering the revised NPS. This includes copies of the risk register in relation to Heathrow and details of the meetings held with Heathrow Airport Ltd who have been effectively lobbying for Government support, and who we are told met up to 37 times to discuss their expansion between July 2015 and October 2016 – a time when the Government were refusing to consult with Boroughs and their residents about expansion proposals.

3.6 It may be because of this heavy involvement with the proposed developers of Heathrow that the draft NPS appears more like a development proposal for one airport than a Government policy statement on airports in the South East.

3.7 The effect of campaigning by Heathrow is also clear in the responses to the original consultation. Of the 72, 279 responses received, 58, 277 were from 'Back Heathrow' (a campaigning organisation funded by Heathrow) and 'Your Heathrow' (the proposer of the preferred scheme).

4 Additional TSC questions October 2017

Whether the revised passenger demand forecasts and air quality assessments have been satisfactorily completed and are represented accurately in the final version of the NPS and Appraisal of Sustainability;

Passenger Demand forecasts

4.1 The new information demonstrates that some of the key areas of public Government support for Heathrow expansion are not supported by evidence. For example, the documentation presented with the consultation demonstrates that Gatwick expansion brings greater economic benefits to the UK and with the provision of more domestic routes than Heathrow expansion.

4.2 We have not had sufficient time to scrutinise, or obtain independent advice, as to whether the methodology and the interpretation of the revised passenger demand forecasts are accurate and representative. However, the Boroughs' question whether the base assumption within the new demand forecasts i.e. that there is no change to future airline business models with expansion, is a rational one to make.

4.3 Wording changes made to the draft revised Airports NPS suggest that the case for Heathrow is now based on its being a hub airport. Gatwick is still described as remaining a point to point airport, even with a second runway, and is said, therefore (without evidence) to be a threat to the UK's global aviation hub status.

4.4 There is no evidence presented to support this assumption. References are made to the need for Heathrow expansion as "*we prepare to leave the EU*" yet there is no evidence presented of the impact Brexit will have in terms of future airline business models. Without such evidence there can be no support for the Government's stance that only Heathrow expansion can be the correct future option.

Air Quality Re-Appraisal, October 2017

4.5 The air quality assessment is yet another Re-Appraisal of the original Airports Commission work, as opposed to a new assessment. This means it is out of date. We are seeking further expert advice, the following indicates our preliminary concerns;

- The area highlighted for expansion is one where air pollution levels are worsening not improving. This is described in the baseline conditions which shows that emissions from both aircraft movements and from road vehicles have increased in the last two years;

- The construction phase and the operational phase will bring increased levels of pollution across thousands of people (over double the number associated with Gatwick expansion);
- There is nothing to show an expanded Heathrow can meet air quality limits, on the Government's own case, forecasts are that in an opening year of 2026 the risks of impacting on compliance are **high**,
- There is no such risk with Gatwick expansion;
- There is no quantified, costed mitigation package demonstrating an ability to reduce air pollution levels as soon as possible and then maintain or improve on this once met. In other words there is no evidence to show that Heathrow is compatible with air quality law;
- Despite the earlier opening dates suggested, and the projected rapid increase in early demand, the targets set for increased public transport mode share, purportedly described as mitigation, remain set at 2030 and 2040. On this evidence, increased air pollution from transport is inevitable;
- The draft revised Airports NPS October 2017 has added text to support Heathrow for freight and freight operators. This includes requiring freight operators to have high quality and efficient access to the expanded airport. But no freight assessment has been provided and there is no evidence that the impact of freight has been suitably incorporated into the air quality and other assessment.

4.6 The consultation document accompanying the revised draft Airports NPS gives the Government's stated view that Heathrow expansion can be delivered without impacting the UK's compliance with legal air quality limits (para 3.16). The evidence, as described above, does not support this.

The Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS)

4.7 The Non-Technical summary (para 6.4) states the AoS is informed by a series of assessments as follows:

- Constructed between 2020 and 2030;
- Opened from 2025/2026; and
- Operational from 2030.

4.8 The new demand forecasts have shifted the timescales and now describe the Heathrow Northwest Runway as open in 2026 and at capacity by 2028. If the relevant sections of the AoS have not been updated accordingly, then the AoS has failed to provide a proper presentation of the impacts of the proposed scheme.

4.9 This is a clear failure in terms of noise. There is no noise assessment provided for noise for the opening year of 2026, nor the expected capacity year of 2028. This presents a fatally flawed assessment in terms of noise.

4.10 In addition, the new evidence for noise demonstrates that with Heathrow expansion the numbers of people predicted to be exposed to levels of noise that are known to bring about an adverse effect on health will increase by 50% in 2030 compared to now. Even more people will be affected by noise at levels which the government now accepts represents the onset of significant community annoyance in 2025/6 and 2030 but the Government has not published any assessments for these years. There is no reflection in the compensation measures to acknowledge the fact that people are now annoyed at lower levels of aircraft noise than they were 30 years ago. The levels at which communities remain able to seek insulation to attempt to mitigate against the adverse noise environment, and protect their health and well-being, remains at the same level as previously set by the government historically for Heathrow expansion. The offer falls far short of that currently offered to residents affected by London City Airport.

4.11 This is unacceptable. The new evidence on noise and the lower levels at which adverse impacts are now observed should be embraced by the Government as part of its duty to protect its citizens. The Government should be requiring Heathrow to provide enhanced levels of mitigation that reflect the findings of its latest studies. It has not. Overall the mitigation package does not represent a world-class mitigation package, it is not even an adequate one.

4.12 From our initial view of the documents, we do not think the AoS provides a valid assessment basis for a number of the key environmental impacts that bring substantial harm to our surrounding communities.

Whether any other changes to the NPS based on clarity intention and/or Government policy since February 2017 are suitable

4.13 The new information demonstrates that Gatwick expansion should be preferred, for example;

- The total economic benefits of expansion at Gatwick are higher than with Heathrow expansion;
- Gatwick expansion will provide more domestic connections than Heathrow expansion;
- It can be built more quickly, opening in 2025, at a lower cost, at no cost to the taxpayer and within lawful pollution limits, unlike Heathrow expansion;
- The number of people impacted by expansion at Gatwick is a vastly smaller than those people and communities impacted by Heathrow expansion or those blighted by an Airports NPS in support of Heathrow.

4.14 Given the hurdles that would have to be overcome it is clear that the Heathrow Northwest Runway is not deliverable within the new timescales of a 2026 capacity and full use by 2028. In terms of air quality the Government is unable to demonstrate, on the basis of evidence, that an expanded Heathrow can operate lawfully. It is no answer to say that the final NPS will include a requirement that air pollution targets are met. That will simply mean backing an unworkable NPS.

4.15 Support for Heathrow does not withstand proper scrutiny of the evidence on the environmental harm and the economic case. For that reason an NPS which supports expansion at Heathrow cannot solve the need for extra airport capacity in the South East because the conditions for development consent cannot be met.

4.16 An NPS which supports Heathrow will simply result in further blight for the surrounding area. This is an outcome which particularly concerns Hillingdon and its residents, who, the TSC are reminded, were given an unequivocal promise that there would be no future expansion at Heathrow.

4.17 If there is a need for more capacity in the south-east quickly, to show that the UK can be open for business post Brexit, then the only solution is for Government to support capacity where it can be provided quickly; not at Heathrow but at Gatwick.

November 2017