

Committee: Council

Date: 26 January 2004

Agenda Item No: 2

Title: White Paper: Future Development of Air Transport and Stansted Airport

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Summary

1. This report advises Members formally of the Government's White Paper and provides information for Members to review the Council's current position.

Background

2. In response to two consultations the Council resolved to urge Government to rule out unequivocally further runway development at Stansted once and for all. It put forward powerful arguments that were supported by many organisations and the local community. It ran a high profile campaign and supported SSE.

White Paper – significant points

3. The Government's conclusions include the following general points:
 - It has rejected extreme strategies – failing to provide additional capacity and encouraging growth without regard for aviation's wider impacts and has opted for "a balanced and measured approach".
 - Air travel is important to national and regional economic prosperity.
 - Its policy approach should reflect people's desire to travel more often by air and to take advantage of the affordability of air travel.
 - Impacts of airports should be reduced and minimised on those who live nearby airports and on the natural environment
 - The price of air travel should reflect its environmental and social impacts.
4. Its policy for the South East includes the following points:
 - Its first priority is to make the best possible use of the existing runways at the major south east airports.
 - Making best use of existing capacity would fall a long way short of providing a lasting solution. Facilitating the growth of airports in other regions will also reduce the pressure on the major south east airports, but this will not substantially reduce the long term pressure on London airports.

- It supports the provision of two new runways in the South East in the 30 year period to 2030.
- There is no strong case for attempting to create a second hub airport in the South East.
- It supports development as soon as possible (it expects around 2011/12) of a wide spaced runway at Stansted with stringent environmental controls.
- It supports development of Heathrow provided that stringent environmental limits can be met, including a new runway as soon as possible after the new runway at Stansted (its assessment is that it could be in the 2015-20 period).
- It proposes an urgent programme of work and consultation to find solutions to the key environmental issues at Heathrow.
- It believes there is a strong case on its merits for a wide spaced second runway at Gatwick after 2019 in case it becomes clear in due course that the conditions attached to a third runway at Heathrow cannot be met
- It does not support two or three additional runways at Stansted or two additional runways at Gatwick.
- It does not support a new airport at Cliffe or any of the alternative proposals put forward during the consultation.
- It supports, in principle, the development of smaller airports in the South East to meet local demand.

Comment

4. The Government's policy announcement is extremely disappointing. It is very much a continuation of existing policy. It has accepted that each of the potential locations for additional runways identified has significant environmental, practical and other constraints and that noise, air quality, traffic generation and urbanisation issues naturally concern those who live near airports. It has chosen, however, to attach greater weight to the benefits to national and regional economic prosperity it perceives and provide for the significant increases in capacity two new runways would deliver (46 mppa at Stansted and an unspecified increment at Heathrow). The total provision of capacity supported in the White Paper, including new runways at Stansted and Heathrow, would permit around 470 mppa, compared to the mid point in the DfT forecast range of 500 mppa. Planning for approximately the mid point of the range of demand forecasts hardly represents significant demand management.
5. Its choice of Stansted for an additional runway fails to reflect the strength of local residents' views, 89% of who are opposed to any new runway at Stansted. Its view that there will be strong demand for the additional 46 mppa capacity, and the need for a new runway by 2011/12, seems to run counter to the views of the air transport industry and underestimate how long it would take to resolve difficulties with delivering capacity at Stansted, particularly surface access constraints. Although the additional environmental impacts, pressure on road and rail networks and need for substantial further

investment especially in rail are mentioned, it seems that the potential early availability of a new runway at Stansted was a material factor.

6. In the context of its policy on the second runway, the Government's conclusion that it should not attempt to create a second hub airport in the South East and that it could not support a third or fourth runway at Stansted is little consolation. Similarly, the measures offering households subject to high levels of noise assistance with relocating, and acoustic insulation for other sensitive buildings besides homes such as schools and hospitals, although sought by the Council in its representations, do not adequately compensate for the effects of another runway at Stansted.
7. It is important to note that the White Paper is a statement of Government policy, providing a framework for action and future consideration of proposals. It does not permit any development. The Government is not promoting Stansted; it will not pay for its development. It invites airport operators to bring forward proposals for increased capacity in the light of the Government's policies and conclusions, for critical examination through the proper statutory processes, notably the planning process and within that environmental assessment.
8. The explanation given in the White Paper for the Government's policies and conclusions does not advance its case significantly, and is not persuasive. The Council will doubtless wish to reaffirm its opposition to a new runway at Stansted.

What happens next?

9. The White Paper says that it expects BAA Stansted to move quickly to develop the detailed design for a new runway at Stansted and associated new development working closely with local communities, airport users and all relevant agencies. Airport operators will need to prepare proposals for necessary environmental controls and mitigation plans, improved surface access and measures to address blight. The Government for its part will now institute a programme of work on how to make the most of Heathrow's existing runways and add a new runway as soon as practical after a new runway at Stansted, while complying with conditions on air quality, noise and improving public transport access. It will consult on a new night noise regime for the three BAA London airports and commence preparations for inclusion of aviation in a European emissions trading scheme. It will also legislate, as time permits, for further powers in relation to noise control at airports and to permit an emissions related element in airport charges.
10. The Council can probably expect to receive a planning application for development to support maximum use of the existing runway from BAA later this year. It is anticipated that a planning application for the second runway, associated terminal facilities, aircraft aprons, taxiways, surface access, car parking and other infrastructure will be submitted subsequently. Applications will be preceded by the preparation of Environmental Assessments, the scope of which will need to be determined. These applications will be critically

scrutinised through the planning process. The Government also expects airport operators to prepare health impact assessments. The likely timescale for submission and determination of these applications is such that the planning framework within which they will be considered will include approved Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England (RPG14) that provides for maximum use of the existing runway, but not a second runway. The Government says that planning for a second runway at Stansted will need more detailed consideration of airport development and transport issues than is possible in RPG14, which may require “a limited review of RPG”.

11. Members may wish to consider whether any other action should be taken in response to the White Paper. This may fall into three broad strands:
 - Exploring further the possibility of a direct challenge of the legality of the Government’s policy (to be discussed in Part Two of the Agenda);
 - Pursuing critical issues with other local authorities with a mutual interest, relevant organisations including the Civil Aviation Authority, the Department for Transport, the Highways Agency, the Regional Assembly, the Strategic Rail Authority and the aviation industry;
 - Communicating with the community and others.

Background Papers: The Future Development of Air Transport White Paper
The Council’s responses to the above