

NATS CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO AIRSPACE

Full Council, Item 8

Committee:	Full Council	Agenda Item
Date:	22 April 2008	8
Title:	NATS CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO AIRSPACE	
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Summary

Between 21 February and 22 May, the body providing air traffic control services is consulting on its proposed changes to the current arrangements in the Terminal Control North sector, which it says comprises some of the most congested airspace in the world, covering large parts of southern and eastern England. These changes affect the Uttlesford area and the Council needs to decide how it should respond to this consultation.

The air traffic flows over Uttlesford that will be subject to some change should the proposals be implemented include Stansted and Luton arrivals, Stansted departures to the north and south west, London City departures to the North West, Heathrow departures to the north east, Luton departures to the south east, and Luton easterly departures to the east. Finalised proposals for change will be submitted to the CAA, which is the relevant regulatory body.

The Stansted Airport Advisory Panel received a presentation on the proposals from senior representatives of NATS at its meeting on 25 March and a summary of the issues arising is attached.

The proposed response identifies a number of concerns about the proposed changes.

Recommendation

That the Council approve the proposed response to NATS.

Background Papers

The consultation proposals can be viewed at www.nats.co.uk/TCNconsultation

Impact

Communication/Consultation	An interactive website is being promoted as the main means of accessing the proposals and responding to them. An on line questionnaire is provided on the website. Paper copies of the questionnaire are
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	available at libraries. Each parish council has been notified of the consultation exercise and encouraged to respond by the consultation website or to feedback through its principal council(s).
Community Safety	
Equalities	
Finance	
Human Rights	
Legal implications	
Sustainability	The design process has taken into account Government guidance on environmental performance, which highlights the government objectives of reducing the impact of aviation, in particular of green house gas emissions and ozone depleting substances, local air quality and noise.
Ward-specific impacts	Change in noise impacts (adverse and beneficial) will depend on the location of a ward.
Workforce/Workplace	Due to the current heavy workload commitments of the appropriate officers in the Development Control, Environmental Health and Planning and Housing Strategy divisions it is not possible to carry out a detailed analysis of the proposals or to provide support to Town and Parish Councils in considering the proposals.

Situation

- 1 NATS is proposing the changes because it is charged with ensuring the safe movement of aircraft and being capable of meeting any reasonable level of overall demand and addressing the issue of delays to aircraft movements. In managing airspace it must mitigate the impact of aviation on the environment wherever possible. Neither NATS nor its regulator CAA are responsible for determining whether demand should be capped at any level – that is the function of government through the Air Transport White Paper.

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- 2 The TCN proposal seeks to:
 - Spread out the departure routes from Heathrow, Stansted, Luton, London City and Northolt that currently converge over Brookman's Park in southern Hertfordshire to reduce delay and allow for safe transit;
 - Provide separate holds for Luton and Stansted to reduce delays that sometimes arise from the current shared holds arrangement and provide an additional hold for Stansted to accommodate increased demand;
 - Establish set arrivals routes for London City, Luton and Stansted. Set arrivals routes will reduce the complexity of air traffic control and enable continuous descent approaches to Luton and Stansted.
 - Provide a new hold for London City and introduce new departure routes to accommodate the aircraft type now typical on London City air transport movements.
- 3 The current Noise Preferential Routes for Stansted result in 11,824 people being overflowed. That is the population of the area between the take off point and the point at which aircraft may depart from the NPR, either when it has achieved an altitude of 3000 feet or 4000 feet, depending on the route. Aircraft are required to fly with 1.5 km of the route up to that altitude. The new proposals would result a significant reduction of the number of people being overflowed, according to NATS. For the proposed route design, the number would fall by 67.1% to 3,891. However, there would be an increase in the number of people experiencing 57dB (2009 estimate), up 8.6% from 2,550 to 2,770. The TCN proposals are broadly neutral in terms of fuel efficiency and reduction of emissions at the total package level.
- 4 The population living under the current holding areas for Stansted and Luton is 62,115. The population under the proposed separate holding areas for Stansted and Luton would be substantially less: 39,908, a reduction of 35.8%. The environmental impact under the holding areas is mainly visual intrusion although air noise would still be audible, because aircraft performing holding circuits waiting for landing slots will above 7000 feet with 1,000 feet vertical separation up to 14000 feet.
- 5 Where aircraft would be at altitudes of up to 4000 feet, greater weight has been attached to noise mitigation in the design of the proposals than to increasing fuel efficiency and reducing emissions. Where altitude would be between 4000 and 7000 feet, these requirements have been balanced. Where aircraft would be above 7000 feet, increasing fuel efficiency and reducing emissions has been accorded greater weight.
- 6 The most significant changes locally relate to Stansted departures to the south west and north. The reason for these change is to increase the distance that aircraft have available to reach an altitude of 6000 feet to the west of the A10. Failure of some aircraft to reach this altitude beyond the A10 using the current departure routes results in increased workload for air traffic controllers. There is insufficient air traffic control capacity to handle this without delays to movements.

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- 7 The Easterly Departures route which currently swings round to the west after passing Broxton over Widdington, Newport, Arkesden and Clavering would route in a northerly direction over Wimbish and Swards End before heading west immediately round the northern edge of Saffron Walden over Littlebury, Strethall, Elmdon and Chrishall. The majority of aircraft would have reached 4000 feet by Saffron Walden.
- 8 The Westerly Departures route which currently swings around the western edge of Bishop's Stortford before flying north over the Hadhams and the Pelhams would be redirected in a longer loop heading between Manuden and Berden and swinging round over Wicken Bonhunt, Littlebury Green, Elmdon and Chrishall. The majority of aircraft would have reached 4000 feet by Farnham.
- 9 Luton departures to the south west both on easterlies and westerlies would route over the Canfields and the Rodings rather than to the south of the district as at present. These aircraft would be above 5000 feet in the worst case scenario, with 5.4 movements in the typical peak hour in 2009 and 6.8 in 2014.
- 10 Luton departures to the east would route slightly more to the north along the A120 corridor, rather along the southern district boundary. These aircraft would be above 5000 feet in the worst case scenario, with 5.6 movements in the typical peak hour in 2009 and 7.2 in 2014.
- 11 Currently London City departures to the north west route over Hertfordshire. Under the proposed routes they would swing round over Uttlesford, but aircraft would be above 7000 feet. In the typical peak hour, there would be 4.6 departures on this route in 2009, 5.6 in 2014.
- 12 Northolt departures to the south east and east would route along the A120 corridor rather than the A414 corridor. These aircraft would be above 5000 feet in the worst case scenario, with up to 0.6 movements in the typical peak hour both in 2009 and in 2014.
- 13 The proposed Luton and Stansted arrivals arrangements (new holds and continuous descent approaches) would appear to bring benefits because they would mean aircraft would generally be at higher altitudes than at present other than on final approach below 2000 feet.
- 14 The proposals therefore have both advantages and disadvantages for the district. The balance will depend on the location of the particular community. At the TCN level, there would unsurprisingly appear to be net advantages.

Proposed Response

- I. The Council is concerned about the principle of making changes to airspace management arrangements in a sector that NATS acknowledges is the busiest and most complex in the world, in order, in part, to enable the handling of even more movements. The Council considers that NATS should

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advise the CAA and the government that a cap should be placed on movements and that, within that cap, the objectives should be limited to reducing intrusion from aircraft noise, minimising emissions of greenhouse gases and ozone depleting substances, and improving local air quality.

- II. In a rural area like Uttlesford, ambient noise levels are low and therefore aircraft even at 7,000 to 8,000 feet have the potential to be disturbing with adverse effects on the tranquillity of this attractive rural area rich in cultural and heritage assets. The routing of departure routes over the district, particularly those which currently do not overfly Uttlesford, is therefore viewed locally as a detrimental development. The following schools will be under or close to the departure swathes for the first time
 - Easterly departures : Wimbish Primary School, Radwinter Primary School and further out Chrishall Primary School
 - Westerly Departures: Farnham Primary School and further out Manuden Primary School, Clavering Primary School, and Chrishall Primary School.
- III. Whilst appreciating the complexities of the potential interactions between arrangements, it is regretted that the proposals are presented as a set of measures that are near to finalisation, only with limited scope for adjustment to take into account local factors where circumstances permit. It is difficult to meaningfully engage with the development of the proposals when what NATS seeks, in effect, is endorsement. Some limited examples are given of why NATS dismissed options and chose a particular alignment. Those most relevant to Uttlesford are the Options for Stansted Easterly Departures to the South West figure G51. We have no way of gauging whether safety considerations constrain choices in the way that the consultation document suggests.
- IV. Whilst acknowledging that regard should be had to minimising emissions, the Council believes that significant weight should be attached to minimising intrusion from aircraft noise, as some people are annoyed or highly annoyed where aircraft noise is below 57 dB 16 hour Leq. The government has acknowledged that the number of people experiencing that response for a given noise dose has increased over time. That point was accepted in its statement when it published the ANASE report.
- V. It is acknowledged that the new arrivals arrangements are expected to result in arriving aircraft generally being at higher altitude over the district when descending to final approach than at present, but the benefit is lost with increased movements.

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- VI. Given that a high priority for the Council is to establish conclusively the environmental effects of BAA's G2 proposals, it is also of concern to learn that further changes would need to be introduced to handle the 495,000 ATMs BAA expects at 68 mppa, and that BAA's Environmental Statement is based on a "G2 Best Estimate Airspace Design supplied by NATS". Proposed changes would actually take place independently of the G2 proposals.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The complexities and conflicting objectives of the issue mean that the final proposals will have some adverse impacts on Uttlesford	3 The location of the district in relation airports in the London system and the dense pattern of air routes limits the scope for identifying alternative proposals	2 A significant minority of people will be highly annoyed at 57 Leq dB(A) 16 hours and at lower Leq levels.	In responding to the consultation, the Council should highlight those adverse impacts that it considers to be most significant and to give its reasons.