

Submission to EmergingThinking@airports.gsi.gov.uk on behalf of

Old Windsor Parish Council

The Aviation Commission Secretariat,
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30th October 2013

Response to Sir Howard Davies' Speech
"Emerging Thinking: Aviation Capacity in the UK"
and
Publication of reports on Heathrow Operational Freedoms Trial

Dear Sirs,

Old Windsor Parish Council represents around 5,000 residents in an almost 100% residential community bordered by Thameside bungalows and Runnymede, stretching across Windsor Great Park to Virginia Water. The separate town Windsor is a further 2 miles from Heathrow.

My Parish Council colleagues have asked me to respond on behalf of the Council to a number of items related to Sir Howard's speech on the 7th October and the Reports on the Operational Freedoms Trials which were referred to the Airports Commission by the Aviation Minister on 18th October.

Old Windsor village would be a quiet community but for the fact that it is aligned within 6 miles of the Western end of the Southern runway and therefore both arrival and departure aircraft to or from both runways overfly it at relatively low altitude.

There is some divergence of opinion in this community because a low percentage of residents or their neighbours are employed at all levels in jobs closely related to Heathrow, but that is not considered an obstacle to this submission as it does not seek to reduce the activity or anyone's current employment opportunities .

My colleagues are very appreciative of the wide scope of the speech and the direction of the Commission's approach to the complicated issues relating to airport runways, hub airports and associated matters, but feel that some issues were not addressed in depth.

1. While noise and potential escalation of it if either of Heathrow's new runway proposals is approved is an overriding concern, this has been addressed in other submissions on behalf of this Council. However, recent articles in the British Medical Journal on research into the very serious health impacts of noise upon people living close to airports now need consideration where there are proposals to increase flight activity over populated areas. The study relating to 90 American airports is on www.BMJ.com/content/347/bmj.f5561 and one on a smaller UK study is on a similar web address [ending f5432](#).

Infrastructure Problems.

2. An even more tangible issue is the whole raft of off airport infrastructure problems which were not mentioned at length in the speech. In the case of Heathrow the current inadequacies would be very seriously exacerbated by either of the runway proposals.

3. Heathrow has already reached its movement capacity established under close scrutiny by Roy Vandemeer during the lengthy T5 Inquiry, but we have yet to see what will happen to transport and other aspects of the infrastructure when the planned growth in passenger numbers from the current 70 million p.a. to the Inquiry's forecast of 90 million occurs.

The proposed 54% increase above that in flights of mostly larger aircraft from a further runway could double the 90 million passengers already planned. Heathrow totally fails to address how this huge increase in numbers could be transported within one of the most congested areas of Europe. The current daily gridlock on the M25 would be exacerbated by the new runway proposals and the transport improvements such as Crossrail, Western Rail Access, the reduced Airtrack scheme and HS2 which Heathrow claims would allow expansion are only being provided to meet problems which exist today. They are NOT designed to meet expanded needs as no further expansion is planned, so their claimed advantage over other locations does not exist, and it will be far more difficult and expensive to address this than where there is far more space.

5. The whole area for many miles around Heathrow is already suffering enormous stress upon housing provision (resulting in ever escalating rental and purchase prices) and a whole range of associated infrastructure services outstripped by demand. A huge increase housing to accommodate the additional Heathrow staffing needs and those of the anticipated growth in business activity very simply cannot be provided as neither the money nor the space could ever be found to meet the escalating needs – even if the runways might not be operational for 12 years or more. It should not be overlooked that any housing or business development on the rural side of Heathrow is severely restrained by Green Belt, Crown Estate, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Flood Risk designations over most undeveloped land and all sides have seen saturation development since World War 2 - which again Heathrow have totally ignored

Misleading Campaigning

6. The excessively biased "Back Heathrow" scaremongering campaign involving the publication and distribution of 400,000 newspaper style leaflets sponsored by Heathrow plays upon the public's sympathy for themselves and their neighbours by escalating a comment by extrovert London Mayor Boris Johnson that his (personal and unfunded) bid for a large Thames Estuary hub airport would force Heathrow to close and at least 114,000 jobs would be lost. That wild statement ignores the fact that many airlines would be very reluctant to abandon their huge investment and customer base at Heathrow, but a follow up of 500,000 copies of a really loaded questionnaire with postage paid return envelopes has confused many people who do not read any newspapers or have access to any other balanced information that the statements are realistic. Even if only 5% respond in the public spirited belief that they are protecting their jobs or those of others, it will amount to 25,000 responses, but it is to be hoped that they will be disregarded.

I do not have the facility to email a copy of a recent local newspaper article in "The Royal Borough Observer" of 18th October 2013 (i.e. relating to the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead) so I will type it below:

"Have a say on airport closure

A CAMPAIGN group will seek residents' views on the potential closure of Heathrow Airport through a mail-drop of 500,000 surveys.

Back Heathrow – funded by the airport – is launching a new community campaign to give a voice to residents who support Heathrow.

The campaign comes after Sir Howard Davies, chair of the Airports Commission, admitted in a speech last week that he was 'considering solutions' that would involve the closure of Heathrow. It will start distributing thousands of surveys this week, including in Slough and the Royal Borough, to better understand how residents feel about the ongoing debate.

Rob Gray, campaign co-ordinator for the Back Heathrow campaign said: "This confirms the threat of closure is real. The consequences are too – Heathrow sustains 114,000 jobs in the local area and the loss of that employment would have a terrible impact.

"That's why we have decided to mail surveys to 5000,000 homes around Heathrow to help local people understand what this issue would mean to them and to offer them a chance to voice their opinions".

The survey asks residents about the direct impact Heathrow has on their day-to-day lives and how this would change as a result of the airport's decline or closure.

Visit www.BackHeathrow.org."

I did not hear Sir Howard say that his conclusions would involve the closure of Heathrow when I attended the delivery of the speech.

7. Apart from the ridiculous statements that Heathrow would close if it were not allowed to extend and either a large new hub airport or Gatwick and / or Stansted were allowed second runways, both HAL and British Airways have such a huge investment there that BA (which operates 55% of current flights) and its huge One World Alliance partners could stay and have space to expand and function far more efficiently than at present. The other smaller Alliances would have space to prosper at other airports as one or more of them expand to two runway. The University College London study expands this highly logical theme with the well worth considering recommendation that the areas around London are segmented and the relevant clientele use their nearest airport. The bottom line must be that Heathrow has no right to continue to claim that it should always remain twice as big as any of its rivals, and the policies of the Monopolies Commission (?) to increase competition should be upheld.

Operational Freedoms Trial Recommendations

1. The introduction of TEAM (Technically Enhanced Approach Mode) by NATS under their powers to manage aircraft flights, whereby both runways could be used for landings simultaneously for periods

to reduce landing delays, grew to this being a frequent practice which is in conflict with Alternation and Respite Period policies agreed over many years.

2. The lowering of the delay trigger to start TEAM* under the Operational Freedoms Trials created far more unexpected and unacceptable noise and despite the huge amount of data collection and analysis carried out by Heathrow the results were declared to be inconclusive by both Heathrow and the CAA plus the Local Authority participants in the Noise & Track Keeping Working Group which monitored the Trial. It is therefore completely unacceptable for Heathrow to seek more extensive use of TEAM than previously as the value of even the pre trial operation is now in doubt.

3. Similar conclusions resulted from the Early Vectoring of departure flights which took a shorter route within the width of Noise Preferential Routes, and this particular trial was abandoned due to the considerable stress and complaints from people who had not been directly overflown before. It is very surprising that Heathrow are now seeking to make this a permanent practice and definitely should not be permitted, especially as this would inflict very loud low flight noise which was not present when many of the houses were bought.

4. Rather than allow permanent “out of alternation” use of the Southern Runway for Airbus A380’s destined for T4, taxiway enhancements should be sought to enable aircraft to move around the airport more efficiently once they have landed.

5. Perhaps not directly associated with Operational Freedoms is the suggestion that Westerly Preference should be abandoned and replaced by Easterly Preference, but this would dramatically change the operational character of Heathrow. Communities to the west of the airport would suffer considerably extra noise under Easterly Operations as their ambient noise level is far lower than on the London side of Heathrow and therefore Old Windsor and its neighbours strongly oppose this change. If there is a compelling need for a change, which does not appear to be the case, the Neutral Preference would be a better option provided that the principle of alternation is applied during slack wind periods.

Conclusion

Your kind consideration of these comments will be greatly appreciated.
There is no objection to this submission being put on the Commission’s website.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Beer,

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