

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**15 November 2016**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1     AIRPORTS UPDATE**

**Summary**

**This report provides a brief update on the Governments recent decision to support a third runway at Heathrow and looks at the process that will now follow.**

**1.1    Background**

- 1.1.1 Over the years the Borough Council has taken a keen interest in the unfolding picture surrounding decisions about future airport capacity in the south east. The latest decision by Government to support a third full length runway at Heathrow marks an important step towards addressing predicted airport capacity.
- 1.1.2 Members will recall that in the Autumn of 2012 an Airports Commission, was established, led by Sir Howard Davies, with the task of recommending options to provide for increased capacity to maintain the UK's position as a key aviation hub and provide the basis for future economic investment.
- 1.1.3 Having undertaken considerable analysis and consultation it was clear that the Commission favoured Heathrow as the preferred solution for new runway capacity. This has now been reflected in the Government's decision to support a new runway to the northeast of the current airport complex.
- 1.1.4 Government have set out why the North east runway at Heathrow has been favoured over expansion at Gatwick or alternative capacity increases at Heathrow, both of which were shortlisted options of the Commission. In short the favoured option is seen to offer the greatest economic benefit, in terms of direct employment but also the contribution to the regional and national economy. It was also selected because Heathrow is best placed to deliver new long haul flights, the expansion of existing routes and new routes to emerging markets. It was also seen as the best solution in terms of connectivity and accessibility by road and rail. However, with expansion the Government intend to impose significant environment controls, such as new restrictions on night flying and considerable compensation in respect of noise levels over a wide area.

## **1.2 The Councils position on airports capacity**

1.2.1 The Borough Council's primary concern, along with neighbouring authorities and KCC, has been to position itself against expansion at Gatwick which could have significant noise implications for residents in the southern part of the Borough. However, after some analysis we also took the positive position of actively supporting investment at Heathrow as the next overall solution. Those overall views were fed into the Commissions work during its consultation.

## **1.3 The process moving forward**

1.3.1 Now that a decision in principle has been made, the Government will bring forward a National Policy Statement (NPS) for consultation. An NPS will set out the planning policy against which detailed applications will be judged. That will include further parliamentary scrutiny, by a select committee, and a vote in the House of Commons before it becomes national policy. That process is seen as taking about a year.

1.3.2 Following the adoption of the NPS, a Development Consent Order (DCO) application can be made by the promoter of the scheme for Heathrow and theoretically by other parties who wish to advance schemes. The submission of a full DCO is in itself a massive task, involving a full Environmental assessment which in this case will be very wide ranging and detailed. The DCO will also need to deal with a significant number of related construction and mitigation, not least to do with works to the M 25 and associated road and rail works. It is a colossal project that also will include stages of detailed consultation and is estimate by Government to take 3-4 years.

1.3.3 Assuming consent is granted and the construction programme runs to the current project plan of the promoters it is estimated that the new runway could be operational after 2025.

## **1.4 Observations**

1.4.1 Although here now seems to be a clear way forward for the Northeast runway option at Heathrow, some commentators are saying that the NPS may not entirely close the door on other airports, such as Gatwick, to promote a DCO and it will be important for us to keep a close eye on the content of the NPS when it is published for consultation next year.

1.4.2 It also seems likely that at various stages there might be attempts to legally challenge decision making by way of judicial Review. Some parties have made their intention clear on that score and the opportunity for such a challenge does present itself at various stages of the process.

1.4.3 From a strategic planning viewpoint the NPS on the level of housing and employment growth is bound to have significant on the approach towards plans for London itself (and of course those areas to the west of the London). This is an

interesting time insofar as the Mayor is currently on a programme to prepare a new Plan for London, which currently pays little regard to expansion at Heathrow. Bearing in mind also the apparent reluctance to fully review the greenbelt in London to meet the current predicted development needs, the Airport implications will no doubt increase the tension with authorities outside of London.

**1.5 Legal Implications**

1.5.1 None arising from this report

**1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 None arising from this report

**1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 The risks associated with the whole airports decision making process is on the impact on residents and businesses in the Borough.

Background papers:

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Airports: The Governments View, October 2016

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