

Heathrow Airport Limited

Airspace and Future Operations Consultation - September 2019

Bracknell Forest Council Formal Response

Overarching statement

The HAL consultation document relates to the future expansion of Heathrow Airport. The two main topics for consideration within Bracknell Forest Borough are

- (i) Future runway operations, including airspace changes relating to expansion of Heathrow and the construction of a third runway; and
- (ii) Surface access improvements to the airport.

This consultation and other associated documents are very technical in nature and efforts must be made by HAL to engage with communities through future planned consultations on the detail of new flight paths affecting arrivals and departures.

Future Operations and changes to Airspace

The 'early growth' report states "*We have been testing how more flights could be introduced without unacceptable effects on the environment and communities and without undermining the efficiency and resilience of the airport and airline operations*"

However, this period of early growth coincides with a number of airspace changes which Heathrow is already planning for, namely:

1. Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA)
2. A new Compton (CPT) Standard Instrument Departure (SID) Route
3. Easterly alternation
4. 3.2 degree slightly steeper approaches (SSA)

Bracknell Forest Borough Council notes that flight envelopes linked to these changes will pass over the borough. However, changes proposed for the Independent Parallel Approach and the Compton Departure Routes will have separate consultations over a year apart. This is confusing for residents who need to be given clearer details on what is being proposed and the potential impact upon them.

Moving forward, consultation material needs to be simplified and made easier for residents to understand by overlaying all potential airspace and flights path changes on one map. The Council would also expect HAL to carry out more localised workshops in areas potentially impacted by any changes. Venues could include:

- Cranbourne Hall, Winkfield
- North Ascot Community Centre
- Carnation Hall, Winkfield
- Whitegrove Community Centre
- Martins Heron Community Centre
- Forest Park Community Centre
- Crownwood Community Centre

In addition, whilst the Council accepts that there is a need to protect existing ‘areas of tranquillity’ it is primarily concerned with minimising the potential impact of noise on the health and well-being of residents. In particular, we are concerned for residents living towards the north east of the borough where the flight paths will be lower.

Efforts should be made to avoid flying over dense residential areas and other noise sensitive locations such as hospitals and schools.

Ambition of the Surface Access Strategy (SAS)

It is stated in the document that the “Expansion of Heathrow is a unique opportunity to change the way people travel around the airport” (para 3.1.2). Bracknell Forest Council would like to see the ambition of the SAS extended to help facilitate sustainable transport within and across the sub-region, not just to and from the airport.

This is particularly important given that a stated aim of the airport’s expansion is to help facilitate economic development, much of which will be situated in the vicinity of the airport. The impacts of the airport’s expansion are far greater than just travel to and from the airport itself, yet the surface access strategy has remarkably little to say about this.

The current strategy provides very little new transport infrastructure outside the Heathrow campus. The Council would like to see much greater ambition and commitment for the provision of an extensive active travel network, bus improvements, highway improvements and mitigations and long-term public transport investment.

Mitigation of Traffic Impacts

The document does not provide any proposals for mitigation measures for any increases in traffic on existing local roads outside of the airport boundary, stating that this will be provided in the future as part of a later transport assessment. The Council believes this is a serious omission from the current consultation, and that this is an important area of the scheme that is likely to require further consultation.

During construction Bracknell would like to see as much of the work associated with the realignment of the M25 carried out off line to limit the impact on Bracknell as traffic uses the A329/A322 as an alternative outer orbital route to the M25.

Buses

While it is clearly hard to be specific about the nature of bus routes that will be provided in the future by a multitude of operators, the Council believes that HAL should be much clearer on the level of financial support that will be available towards the provision of improved bus services. This will allow the public transport commitment made for an expanded airport to be much better understood in the context of current funding levels

Bracknell hopes that accessibility for the mobility impaired is taken into consideration with regard to any proposed vehicle access charge as use of public transport can be limited, reducing the option of traveling by sustainable modes.

No More Traffic

The 'no more traffic pledge' is based around the same boundary used to define colleagues (airport related employees), and it therefore excludes the traffic generated outside the airport by related development and facilities. This might include development within the Development Consent Order(DCO) red line which is displaced by the expansion, but which is located outside the no more traffic pledge boundary. The Council believe that the 'no more traffic pledge' needs to include access to any development displaced by the expansion.

Southern Rail

Paragraph 3.2.42 states that "Heathrow has always been at the forefront in investing and promoting expansions to the rail network at the airport. We have continued to work closely with government and Network Rail to support the case for delivering the Western and Southern Rail Links."

Despite this comment, the Council notes that HAL are not offering their view on preferred Southern Rail scheme despite the different scheme options providing very different kinds of connectivity to the airport.

For many years, Bracknell Forest Council has been a supporter of Southern Rail Access and formed part of the original Airtrack forum. The Council would like HAL to take a much more active role in promoting southern rail, including being clearer on the kind of scheme HAL believe would best serve the interests of the airport and the wider region. Southern Rail Access should serve the wider southern region and not simply focus on direct access to and from London.