

County Council

14 December 2018

Items 6(b) and (c) Notices of Motion from Mr Acraman and Mrs Russell

Draft Gatwick Master Plan – Briefing Note

Briefing Note

In January 2015, after a notice of motion debate, the County Council agreed that it is opposed to a new runway to expand Gatwick Airport because “the environmental damage is without question, whereas the economic benefit is unproven and may well be negative”. This was in response to the Airports Commission’s consultation on the shortlisted options for future airport capacity, which included a second runway at Gatwick and two options for a third runway at Heathrow.

The Airports National Policy Statement (NPS - June 2018) effectively grants outline planning permission for a north-west runway at Heathrow Airport. Alongside the publication of the NPS, the Government published a report on the future of UK aviation, ‘Aviation Strategy: making the best use of existing runways’ (June 2018), which sets out its policy support for airports (beyond Heathrow) “making best use of their existing runways”, subject to related economic and environmental considerations being considered.

In the light of revised aviation forecasts, the Government is preparing a National Aviation Strategy (NAS) that will address how to make best use of existing runways in the period to 2030 and, assuming that a third runway at Heathrow is delivered by 2030, it will also set out a long-term vision for the period to 2050. However, the NAS will not address the issue of new runways (as that was addressed by the Airports Commission). Consultation on the NAS is likely to commence through the publication of an Aviation Green Paper before the end of 2018. The NAS will then be finalised in 2019.

Against this background, Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) consider that Gatwick will need to grow to meet future demand for air travel and to deliver global connections into the early 2030s. Accordingly, GAL are revising their non-statutory Gatwick Airport Master Plan, which sets out their vision about how the airport could develop and grow, balancing economic growth and environmental impact. The draft of the new Master Plan was published by GAL for comment on 18 October 2018 for 12 weeks until 10 January 2019. The full draft Master Plan is available on GAL’s website.

The new Master Plan, which will replace the current 2012 Master Plan, sets out the plan for the next five years together with three growth scenarios looking five to 15 years ahead to 2032. The scenarios, which could be taken forward separately or in combination, are:

- to increase throughput using the existing main runway;
- to bring the existing standby runway (also known as the emergency or northern runway) into routine use (for departing flights for smaller aircraft only) alongside the main runway; and
- to continue to safeguard land for an additional runway to the south (while not actively pursuing one at this stage given Government’s support for expansion at Heathrow).

GAL consider that their proposals are in line with the Government's policy support for making best use of existing runways and that they will deliver highly-productive, incremental new capacity with minimal environmental impact, to complement expansion schemes at other airports across the South East (including a third runway at Heathrow).

The draft Master Plan also contains environmental information as well as information on economic and employment strategies and community engagement strategies.

In early January 2019, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure will be asked to approve the County Council's response to the consultation on the draft Master Plan.

Following consideration of the consultation responses and the Aviation Green Paper, the new Master Plan will be finalised by GAL in 2019. GAL will also update the Airport Surface Access Strategy alongside the new Master Plan.

No direct approvals or permissions would be required under the planning system to increase throughput using the existing main runway.

At present, the existing standby runway is only used when the main runway is temporarily closed for maintenance or in emergencies. A 1979 legal agreement between the County Council and BAA, the owners of Gatwick at that time, precludes the simultaneous use of the standby and main runways. Although this agreement expires in August 2019, the routine use of the standby runway is also prevented under a 1979 planning permission.

If GAL decide to take forward a scheme to bring the standby runway into routine use, it would be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and approval would need to be obtained from the Secretary of State through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.

GAL are clear that further technical work is required if the scheme is taken forward as a NSIP. If a DCO application is made, the County Council would be a statutory consultee in that process and it would need to formally respond following submission and, as required, to appear at an examination to present its case (before the final decision is made by the Secretary of State).

In accordance with the national Aviation Policy Framework 2013, land to the south of the airport is safeguarded for an additional runway through the Crawley Borough and Horsham District local plans. Safeguarding prevents development that would add constraints or increase the costs or complexity of the development or operation of an additional runway. The need to safeguard land is likely to be addressed by the Aviation Green Paper, publication of which is due shortly. Even if the Government decides (when it finalises the NAS next year) that safeguarding should continue, the actual area to be safeguarded will be determined by the local planning authorities through the reviews of their local plans.

Lee Harris

Executive Director Economy, Infrastructure and Environment