

MINUTE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON 12 JUNE 2003THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM - REVISED CONSULTATION PAPER

(Ref: Minutes of Economic Development Committee, March 2003, page 1136, para. 698)

The Committee gave consideration to a revised Government consultation paper on the future development of air transport in the South East of England over the next 30 years. The document had been reissued following a High Court judgement that the original had wrongly excluded options for the development of Gatwick Airport. The material issues, however, particularly those relating to the impact on Runnymede of any expansion of Heathrow Airport, were largely unchanged.

Members recalled the Government's position that the demand for air travel was still increasing and that there would shortly be a need for new runway capacity in the south east. The Government sought a sustainable long term development of aviation which maximised the social and economic benefits of growth while minimising the environmental impact. The paper once more sought views on future airport capacity requirements, the location of any new capacity, whether there should be one major 'hub' airport in the south east and measures needed to control and mitigate the effect on the environment. The proposed options for major growth in south east airports were:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Heathrow: | a new runway with associated terminal development. |
| Gatwick: | one or two new runways with new terminal development. |
| Stansted: | one to three new runways and associated terminal development. |
| Cliffe: | a new airport built on the south side of the Thames Estuary. Four/five runway airport with terminal facilities. |

Members noted, however, that the Cliffe proposals were unlikely to secure the backing of funders and a major airline or consortium in view of the scale of investment required. Two of the key players, British Airways and the British Airports Authority, had previously expressed a preference for concentrating future growth at Heathrow. The specific proposals for Heathrow were:

- a new 2,000m long runway to the north of the existing Airport;
- new terminal facilities to service the third runway;
- enhanced public transport (maybe including Airtrack);
- additional motorway road infrastructure adjacent to the Airport;
- 230 hectares of agricultural land acquired and 260 residential properties demolished.

The development of Heathrow in this manner would give rise to a range of social, economic and environmental issues. In considering an appropriate form of response, Members took account of the views expressed by the Planning Committee on 4 June and a Council resolution of 10 June which drew attention to the serious impact on the local quality of life that further expansion would bring, particularly in respect of pollution, transport and housing problems.

Some Members again expressed concern over the adverse environmental impact of additional development in terms of noise and air pollution, traffic generation, infrastructure problems and the increased pressure for housing. Equally, it was recognised that Heathrow played a significant role in the local economy, both directly and indirectly. While the economic impact of growth at the airport was difficult to assess, on balance the Committee concurred with the view of the Planning Committee that the maintenance of Heathrow's position as a 'hub' airport was desirable. This was, however, subject to enhancements of public transport to the south and west of the airport to ease the impact of increased traffic (with the Airtrack project forming the core of the improvements) prior to any development of a third runway. It was also conditional upon guaranteed strict controls on night flights, air and noise pollution and water run off forming a fundamental part of any planning permission. The Committee wished to reiterate the Council resolution of 10 June as a preface to these further views.

RESOLVED that -

the Council resolution of 10 June 2003 be reiterated and the comments set out in Annex '1' attached be conveyed to the Department for Transport as the Council's detailed response to the consultation paper entitled 'The Future Development of Air Transport in the UK: South East'.

A requisition having been made in accordance with Standing Order 39.2 that the votes of the Committee be recorded; there voted:

For: Councillors M.J. Brown, A.J. Davis, J.M. Edwards and J.R. Furey (4)

Against: Councillors A. Alderson, C. Knight, R.J. Ray and B.J. Relph (4)

The Chairman exercised his second vote in accordance with Standing Order 39.8 to carry the motion.

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM -
REVISED CONSULTATION PAPER

VIEWS OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Should additional air transport capacity be provided?

1. *The first issue of principle that the Committee has considered is whether airport policy for the South East should aim both to maximise the social and economic benefits that growth in aviation would bring whilst trying to minimise the environmental impact. Historically the Council has adopted the view that airport expansion brings with it significant economic advantages. However, an important aspect of such support is that the environmental impact must be minimised. The Economic Development Committee believes that whilst there are many economic and environmental issues to consider, the principle of supporting airport expansion to maximise social and economic benefits should remain its view.*

The Regional Picture

2. *Whilst no new runways have been constructed in the South-East since the Second World War, airport development around London has been raised on a regular basis, both in terms of new runways and terminal capacity, but no long-term strategy has been accepted or approved by successive Governments.*
3. *At one level, a long-term solution of an entirely new hub airport at Cliffe, in Kent, is attractive in providing for projected growth whilst having perhaps the least impact environmentally on man (although greater impact on the natural environment). It can also be provided with good transportation links, and help regenerate land to the East of London. Fundamentally, however, it would need the backing of funders (presumably BAA) and a major airline or consortium (presumably BA) neither of whom appear inclined to enter into a long-term commitment for the scale of investment required.*
4. *The inclusion of Gatwick as an option brings with it the opportunity to increase the potential for higher passenger capacity in the South East than proposed in the earlier Consultation Paper. The potential expansion of Gatwick increases the options for consideration from 7 to 25.*
5. *If the principle of expansion of airport capacity is accepted, the second issue that the Committee has examined is whether such expansion is appropriate at Heathrow.*

Should Heathrow Airport expand?

6. *The expansion of the airport capacity at Heathrow gives rise to the same issues that the Council considered when examining the proposals for a Fifth Terminal. In that situation the economic impact was weighed against the environmental (traffic generation, noise and air pollution, problems created for water run-off and impact on the flood plain) issues. Previously the Council considered that the economic benefits to the area were an overriding issue so long as measures were introduced ameliorating the environmental concerns.*
7. *Of particular interest to the Council has been the impact of adding a significant generator of traffic into an already overloaded local motorway and road network. With T5 it was considered important to develop public transport links to the south and west of the Airport and particular emphasis was placed upon the development of Airtrack (the enhanced rail link from Guildford-Woking-Runnymede-Staines-Heathrow). The Council noted with some disappointment that this did not form part of the enhanced public transport links associated with the recent Government approval of the Fifth Terminal.*

8. *It is important to note that implementation of a decision on airport policy would take several decades. If future development is directed away from Heathrow it is possible that its role would only begin to change (after the completion and operation of T5) over a 15-30 year period as the proposals for an alternative 'hub' are developed. The impact over that timescale is difficult to predict. However, two of the major parties who would be involved with airport expansion, BA and BAA, have indicated previously that they have a preference for concentrating future growth at Heathrow. Furthermore, it is understood that they would be reluctant to endorse the proposals for the development of a 'hub' airport at Cliffe. It is unclear at this stage how the inclusion of Gatwick has influenced their preference. The issue will influence the outcome of the consultation if a pragmatic solution to airport expansion is to evolve.*
9. *The Council, as it develops its policy position on the proposals for additional airport development, has again looked to balance the economic benefits with the environmental impact of the proposals for the Airport. The Economic Development Committee considers that on balance the Council's position should generally remain consistent with its approach to T5 but insists that the Airtrack rail project is implemented prior to any further expansion. In addition, guarantees need to be obtained, that strict controls on air and noise pollution and water run-off and impact on flood plain will form a fundamental part of the planning permission.*
10. *In addition, there are aspects of the economic benefits of airport expansion that need to be briefly explored. There is no doubt that Heathrow plays a significant role in the local economy, both directly and indirectly. Currently unemployment in the area is low (0.8% in Runnymede, August 2002) and people are drawn into the area to work and/or live. This creates pressure on the housing market and makes it difficult to recruit staff locally. This is a particular problem for some of the key public services. Expansion of the Airport may further highlight these issues. However, it is important to note that since the mid-nineties the South East has benefited from a prosperous local economy. If this level of economic buoyancy is not maintained or is reversed, the pressure on the local labour/housing market may ease (unemployment was 6.5% in April 1993). Whilst there is no easy way of assessing the impact of economic advantage and disadvantage of growth at the Airport, on balance maintaining the position of Heathrow would seem desirable. The Economic Development Committee urges the Government to consider this issue in detail.*