

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2002 AT 2.00 P.M.**

**COUNTY COUNCIL (EXTRAORDINARY MEETING)**

**TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2002 AT 10.30 A.M.**

Agenda Item No.

Cabinet

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County Council

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Report of the Director of Environment

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**CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: SOUTH EAST (SERAS)**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the main points of the Council's draft initial response to the above Government consultation and to propose that Cabinet agree the response and the County Council endorse the main points. Also to inform Members of the next stages in the process and the opportunity for further comment.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Government will produce a White Paper next year setting out its long-term aviation policy. This consultation raises options for new runway developments in the region which will have enormous implications for Hertfordshire.
- 2.2 The options include up to three new runways at Stansted, creating an airport twice the size of Heathrow, and one new replacement runway at Luton, which would create an airport the size of Gatwick. The implications, in particular for increased aircraft noise, surface access infrastructure, road and rail, and urban development, have raised enormous public interest in the county.
- 2.3 Following a series of public meetings in the Luton and Stansted areas and joint working with county and neighbouring authorities the County Council submitted its initial response to the Department of Transport to meet the consultation deadline of 30 November.
- 2.4 Since then following a legal challenge the Government have announced that they will extend the consultation period and include options for development at Gatwick. There will therefore now be a further opportunity to respond in Spring next year.
- 2.5 As reported to the Cabinet on 28 October, a draft initial response has been sent to the Department for Transport following consideration by the Regional Planning Issues Panel. The main points the County Council has sought to stress in this response are:

- Its concern as to the overall implications for the quality of life of Hertfordshire residents, particularly in terms of traffic, housing developments and aircraft noise, should the South East airports develop on the scale proposed in the consultation document.
- Its total rejection of any new runway development at either Stansted or Luton airports.
- Its dissatisfaction with the consultation process, especially the treatment of Luton Airport, and with the quality of some of the information made available on the implications of development.
- Its concern that the White Paper should only be produced after a full and proper consultation process including consultation upon the full use of existing runways at Luton.
- Its concern that the consultation is based on unconstrained demand figures for air travel in the South East rather than, as the Government's own policy would suggest, residual demand after the aviation industry has paid for the external costs it imposes, including environmental costs.
- Its concern that neither the overall aviation policy nor the individual sites has been subject to any sustainability appraisal.
- Its concern over the uncertainty for the funding of prospective developments and in particular the funding of essential infrastructure works.
- Its particular concern regarding the stress major infrastructure such as the M25 is already under in the South East and the difficulties in dealing with these problems even without additional airport development.
- Its support for a 'plan, monitor and manage' regime for airport planning. However, if the Government determines the 'plan' should involve the development of new runways in the South East and East the County Council would require further consideration of alternative sites for a viable, environmentally acceptable new airport.

### **3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 The Government's options for airport development in the South East have enormous implications for Hertfordshire. The County Council's initial response to the consultation explains the reasons for concern and for the rejection of proposals for any new runways at Luton and Stansted.
- 3.2 The Cabinet is asked to agree these views and the County Council to endorse them but also recognise that the consultation period has been extended and a further response will be made next year in the light of any new issues and Government statements.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Government is seeking to produce a long-term sustainable aviation policy. A White Paper to be published next year is to say how much new development is required over the next 30 years, where it should go and what controls, compensation and mitigation arrangements should be made.
- 1.2 In the South East<sup>1</sup> it is an issue of lack of runway capacity. The four major airports, Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton, have planning permissions for about 165 million passengers per annum (mppa) and the capacity of the existing runways is assessed at about 185 mppa. Even with a further 5-10 mppa from other airports in the region this capacity is well below the unconstrained midpoint demand forecast for 2030 of 300 mppa. It is only just sufficient to meet the forecasts for 2015 of 200 mppa.
- 1.3 The Government's consultation document (SERAS) therefore sets out options for airport development. These are limited to new runways at the major airports and a new estuarial airport at Cliffe in north Kent. The options for Stansted are for 1, 2 or 3 new additional runways and for Luton 1 new replacement runway on either the existing or a NNE/SSW alignment.
- 1.4 To achieve a capacity of 300 mppa to meet forecast demand would require 3 or 4 new runways, involving either a multi-runway Stansted or Cliffe. Options to achieve a lesser capacity almost inevitably require at least one new runway at Stansted, as the additional passenger throughputs available from Heathrow and Luton are relatively small.
- 1.5 The consultation document also reiterates that it is Government policy that the aviation industry should pay the full costs of the environmental costs it imposes. The effect of charging these extra costs is not reflected in the demand forecasts which would suggest the real level of demand to be accommodated is less than that forecast.
- 1.6 Gatwick was not included in the consultation as a legal agreement rules out construction of any new runway before 2019. This was challenged by Essex and Kent County Councils and others with the result that Gatwick is now to be included. The developing situation is considered in section 2 below.
- 1.7 In view of the enormous implications of the proposals for Hertfordshire and the lack of publicity given to many aspects of the consultation process the County Council (following a Cabinet resolution 28 October) embarked on a public information strategy and held a series of public meetings. The overwhelming response at these meetings was a total rejection of any new runways at either Stansted or Luton.
- 1.8 Two small questionnaires distributed at the meetings for Luton and Stansted have elicited over 2,000 responses. Of those from the Luton area 98% were against a new replacement runway there and of those at Stansted 95% were against any new runways at the airport.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: for the purposes of this report the South East includes London and the East Region.

- 1.9 Officers have also worked with colleagues in the Districts and adjoining authorities to gain a common understanding of the consultation's implications. This has involved retaining specialist consultants to consider a range of technical aspects but there remain many unanswered questions.
- 1.10 Both the public feedback and the technical work have been taken into account in developing the response to Government. The initial response was considered by the Regional Issues Panel on 20 November. The report setting out the suggested response and an appendix containing answers to the 21 questions posed in the consultation document was sent to all Members. Panel also considered an appendix setting out the reasons this County opposes new runways at Luton and Stansted.
- 1.11 The report and appendices as amended have been sent to the Department for Transport to meet the original 30 November deadline and a copy of the main response is appended. A copy of the full response and appendices with more detailed comments has been placed in the Member's Room. The Department have also been sent supporting information and copies of the over 2000 questionnaire replies.

## **2. Consultation Extension**

- 2.1 As a result of the legal challenge the Government have decided to extend the consultation. The Minister for Transport has announced that he will bring forward options for development at Gatwick early next year with a further four month consultation period.
- 2.2 Responses already received will be considered but further responses may be made during the extension period. The County Council will therefore want to make a further final response next spring but there seems no reason for it to withdraw its initial response.
- 2.3 It is not clear at present whether the new consultation will be anything more than the existing consultation options plus those for Gatwick. The Government have already received many responses, such as those querying the use of demand forecasts without reference to environmental costs, which ideally should be incorporated in any new consultation.
- 2.4 More particularly there have been proposals for new airport development options which were not included in the original consultation. Of most importance to Hertfordshire are those for Luton Airport where the airport operators have stated a preference for extending the existing runway rather than constructing either of the consultation options for replacement runways and in addition suggested a second widespaced runway to create an airport the size of Heathrow.
- 2.5 Other options are being suggested elsewhere in the county and at present it is unclear how the Government is going to handle them or the perceived weaknesses in the consultation process to date which have been brought to their attention. It would clearly be unreasonable to consult the public on one set of options however flawed and then propose others in the White Paper.

2.6 During the extended consultation period the Scrutiny Committee intends to hold a Public Hearing on aviation policy. This will be instead of that originally planned for the 11 December. In addition the County Council together with Essex and East Hertfordshire District Council has retained consultants to help maintain pressure on the Department for Transport to try to ensure the wider issues are considered.

### **3. The County Council's Initial Response**

3.1 The reasons for Hertfordshire's concern over airport development are contained in the preamble to the Council's response to the questions tabled in the consultation document:

- Hertfordshire has two of the major South East airports immediately on its borders, Stansted in the east and Luton in the north west. Heathrow lies 10 miles to the south west. The county therefore experiences the direct results of the three airport's operations, the noise from overflights, congestion on its roads and railways from airport passengers and employees and pressure for housing and other developments.
- As an attractive mixed rural and urban county Hertfordshire is home to airport users and airport employees and to companies that benefit from locations near airports, especially Heathrow. However, with an unemployment rate, which for the past 2 years has remained consistently below 2%, the jobs created by the nearby airports create problems of labour shortage rather than meeting ones of labour surplus.
- With the disbenefits of aviation so readily apparent in the county, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has consistently maintained a policy of resisting airport developments on its boundary which would seriously affect the county's environment. Having considered the proposed options for development at Stansted and Luton and the assessments of impact HCC is firmly of the view that such levels of growth are totally unacceptable.

3.2 The main points that the initial response seeks to stress are listed below together with a brief explanation or reasons. Members are asked to endorse these points. The detail is contained in the response report and appendices.

*1. Its concern as to overall implications for the quality of life of Hertfordshire residents, particularly in terms of traffic, housing developments and aircraft noise, should the South East airports develop on the scale proposed in the consultation document.*

3.3 The implications for the quality of life of Hertfordshire residents are plain to see and cannot be over-stressed. Noise, traffic congestion and urban development changing the rural character of the area will be inevitable. The scale of the development envisaged is simply enormous.

*2. Its total rejection of any new runway development at either Stansted or Luton airports.*

3.4 At Luton the unacceptable impacts are in particular noise, surface access and landscape intrusion.

- The area and number of people directly affected by aircraft noise would increase by a factor of 3. With 4 times as many flights over Hertfordshire both proposed runway options would be unacceptable.
- In addition the impact of night noise is likely to be excessive as freight operations increase.
- On the roads increased traffic on the A505 will bring added pressures to Hitchin while additional local traffic, for example on the B653, will be excessive. Airport traffic will use up much of the extra capacity on the M1 if it were widened and seriously add to congestion if it were not.
- On the railway SERAS have underestimated the number of likely rail passengers and therefore the additional pressures on the Thameslink line through Hertfordshire.
- A new runway would mean large scale earthmoving on the Hertfordshire border with serious landscape, ground water and flooding implications.
- It is questioned whether such a costly scale of development is worthwhile for the relatively small increase in capacity.

3.5 At Stansted the unacceptable impacts are in particular noise, surface access, urbanisation and the impact on the rural area.

- With one new runway the number of people directly affected by aircraft noise will treble and with four runways 50,000 people would be affected over an area of nearly 400,000 sq. kms.
- With development almost inevitably would come more night flights. The severe implications of night noise is not considered by SERAS.
- 50% of Stansted traffic departs over Hertfordshire the majority of the time with 100% arriving over the county the rest of the time. These flights are kept artificially low to avoid particularly Luton traffic which increases noise disturbance and the potential for accidents.
- Concerns remain over air traffic control implications and safety with over an additional 500,000 flights at the two airports.
- Hertfordshire's roads will come under immense pressure from the scale of development envisaged, in particular the M25 and the A120. Traffic between the airport and Harlow will put further pressure on Sawbridgeworth unless there is an alternative link between the M11 and A414 which itself would put pressure elsewhere on the network.

- The West Anglia rail line will require massive investment if it is to carry the increased airport traffic without disrupting the existing local and commuter services. Concerns remain as to the funding and implementation of such major schemes, particularly if they are to keep pace with airport development.
- A major multi-runway airport with over an additional 80,000 workers cannot be accommodated in the largely rural area around Stansted without massive urbanisation. SERAS hugely under-estimates the amount of house building that would be required if long distance commuting and massive dislocation to the existing local economy are not to result.
- The highest levels of urban growth envisaged in the London Stansted Cambridge Study would be the minimum that would be required for one additional runway. This level of growth would have enormous implications for the rural area and the local towns such as Bishop's Stortford.

*3. Its dissatisfaction with the consultation process, especially the treatment of Luton Airport, and with the quality of some of the information made available on the implications of development.*

- 3.6 The consultation document starts from the premise that full use should be made of the existing South East runways. This would mean expanding Stansted to about 35 mppa and Luton to 15 mppa. However at Luton the Government have assumed as part of its 'maximum use' scenario that the airport would have a new replacement runway with a capacity of 31 mppa. The people near Luton have been faced with a fait accompli which has seriously flawed the consultation process.
- 3.7 These concerns have been intensified by the recent statement by the Luton Airport operating company that their preference is for development options which were not included in SERAS. These involve a 'maximum use' proposal of an extension to the existing runway.

*4. Its concern that the White Paper should only be produced after a full and proper consultation process.*

- 3.8 The White Paper will set out the Government's policy regarding the location of new airport development. The industry will then bring forward planning applications to Public Inquiry but under the new regulations those Inquiries may not consider the merits of the location decision. It is therefore essential that the public and the local planning authorities are satisfied the policy decision is only made in the light of full consultation and all relevant information.

*5. Its concern that the consultation is based on unconstrained demand figures for air travel in the South East rather than, as the Government's own policy would suggest, residual demand after the aviation industry has paid for the external costs it imposes, including environmental costs.*

- 3.9 The implications of the Government actually imposing its policy that the aviation should pay its environmental costs have not been considered in SERAS. This is

particularly important in view of the increasing concerns over aircraft emissions and global warming.

*6. Its concern that neither the overall aviation policy nor the individual sites has been subject to any sustainability appraisal.*

- 3.10 While SERAS contains a vast amount of information on economic benefits and environmental disbenefits this is nowhere brought together in the kind of sustainability appraisal that only such policy or development proposal should have. The concern is that a sustainability appraisal on a proposal that has already been determined will be too late to have any useful effect.

*7. Its concern over the uncertainty for the funding of prospective developments and in particular the funding of essential infrastructure works.*

- 3.11 SERAS anticipates that the aviation industry will fund infrastructure directly related to airport developments. However even if it does, and infrastructure is provided in line with rather than after development, there will be other works which will need funding. Hertfordshire would want the White Paper to be absolutely clear how such developments are to be funded and the timing anticipated.

*8. Its particular concern regarding the stress major infrastructure such as the M25 is already under in the South East and the difficulties in dealing with these problems even without additional airport development.*

- 3.12 Airport development of this scale will place massive additional pressure on the M25. The results of the Orbit Multi Modal Study which were not available to SERAS have not shown how additional capacity is to be made available.

*9. Its support for a 'plan, monitor and manage' regime for airport planning. However, if the Government determines the 'plan' should involve the development of new runways in the South East and East the County Council would require further consideration of alternative sites for a viable, environmentally acceptable new airport.*

- 3.13 'Predict and provide' has been abandoned in transport planning and should now be for aviation. The 'plan' should be in the light of demand management measures to ensure the industry pays its full environmental costs and of measures to realise alternatives to airports in the South East. These could be both airport developments in the regions and competition from high-speed trains.

- 3.14 However, if after pursuing these measures the Government is determined to provide new runways in the South East, it is the County Council's firm view that they should be on an environmentally acceptable new site where noise impacts can be minimised to allow 24 hour working. Further consideration needs to be given to such potential sites before any decision is made.

- 3.15 The County Council would accept that making the full use of the maximum capacity of the existing runways at Stansted and Luton is an option that the Government might wish to pursue subject to further work on the environmental implications of such development. However new runways at either site are totally unacceptable for the

reasons set out in the initial response, based on the findings of SERAS itself, and if the Government does require new runways in the South East and East it must look to a new site.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The Government's consultation on future airport development in the South East (SERAS) has resulted in a resounding rejection by the Hertfordshire public of the options proposed for new runways at Stansted and Luton. The County Council has submitted its initial response to Government in the light of this view and of consideration of the enormous implications of such development for the county as contained in the SERAS report and supporting documents.
- 4.2 The extension of the consultation period to accommodate options for Gatwick provides the Government with an opportunity to address many of the points raised in the County's response. The County Council will work with its District and neighbouring councils to have these issues addressed and will make a further submission to Government at the end of the extended consultation period.
- 4.3 It is therefore suggested that Cabinet agrees the initial response and the County Council endorses the main points. It is also suggested that the County continues to press the case with Government regarding consultation on Luton airport, before making a further final response in Spring next year.