

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **AVIATION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- 7.1. London (Heathrow) Airport is one of the world's largest airports handling, in the year ending 31st January 2001, 64.5 million passengers, 1.3 million tonnes of cargo, and 460,000 air transport movements. BAA estimate that approximately 68,000 people are employed within the Airport boundaries. Outside the Airport many more are employed in secondary activities within a wide range of supportive commercial organisations and firms which are wholly or partly dependent on the Airport for their livelihood. The most recent major development at the Airport is Terminal 4 which was completed in 1985.
- 7.2. Following local government boundary changes in 1994 the Airport is now entirely outside the Borough boundary. Nevertheless, the Airport still has a major impact on the Borough. It is a major source of employment for Spelthorne residents and, more generally, its presence is an important factor in the relative prosperity of the area west of London. However the existence of the Airport also creates serious adverse environmental effects and pressures. These include increased demands for housing and related employment development with consequent pressure for development of Green Belt land, surface transport problems, noise and pollution.

#### **POLICY CONTEXT**

- 7.3. The latest statement of national policy towards airport development is the 1985 Airport White Paper which followed the decision to permit the development of Stansted as London's third airport. The White Paper is, to some extent, out of date since it predates the identified need for another runway to serve the South East (see paragraph 7.12 below). On Heathrow, the White Paper states that all reasonable steps will be taken to maintain the airport's leading position in world aviation, that removal of the Perry Oaks sludge works is highly desirable and that the possibility of a fifth terminal will be kept under review although the Government could make no commitment at that stage (i.e. in 1985).
- 7.4. The White Paper "A New Deal for Transport" (1998) announced that the Government will prepare a new UK airports policy looking 30 years ahead. A series of regional studies are taking place including one covering the south east that will feed into the preparation of the new policy.

- 7.5. At a regional level, Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9, 1994)<sup>1</sup> considers planning issues relating to South East airports. The Guidance states that some of the considerable growth in air traffic over the next 20 years can be accommodated in existing facilities but it is unlikely that existing and authorised expansion will suffice beyond the first decade of the next century. It recognises the important contribution of the South East airports to the national economy and states that the position of Heathrow and Gatwick as major international airports should be maintained. It continues that airports should make the best use of existing facilities but that additional capacity should be provided where it is justified taking account of economic and environmental considerations. It states that it is for airport operators to consider the scale and timing of the need for additional facilities to accommodate air traffic growth and bring forward proposals in the light of their own views of the market and commercial prospects for those facilities. Any proposal would need to be fully assessed for its environmental and planning impacts in the light of RPG objectives and benefits to the region and UK.
- 7.6. The Surrey Structure Plan (1994) considers airport development in Policy MT18. The policy states that major proposals for airport development should comply with the Plan and Government regional guidance. The local planning authorities in Surrey will oppose any proposal that overall has a significant adverse effect on Surrey. Particular account will be taken of: the effect on the countryside and Green Belt; all forms of pollution; transport infrastructure over a wide area; labour and housing markets; development pressures; water, land drainage and sewerage implications; economic considerations; and safety matters.

### **STRATEGIC AVIATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**

- 7.7. Spelthorne is a member of the recently formed Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG) which is the forum within the Local Government Association for all local authorities to discuss strategic aviation policies. SASIG replaces the former Airports Policy Consortium. SASIG has a membership of over 50 local authorities representing around 12.6 million people. It seeks to ensure that there is a national aviation strategy for the UK that reconciles economic and environmental issues in a sustainable way. It encourages airports and the aviation industry to operate in harmony with the communities they serve.

### **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO HEATHROW**

- 7.8. The Borough Council is conscious of the important economic role of Heathrow. However, in considering possible further expansion of the airport full account also needs to be taken of the environmental impact on surrounding communities, including effects on development pressures, noise and pollution, safety considerations and the effects of additional traffic generation. Account also needs to be taken of the relative

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<sup>1</sup> RPG9 was revised in 2001. It recognises that the guidelines on airports will need to be re-examined following the studies referred to in para.7.4 and the Terminal 5 decision.

costs and benefits (both economic and environmental) of alternative locations for airport expansion.

- 7.9. Heathrow's position at the edge of London and close to significant built-up areas means that greater numbers of people are affected by the airport than would be the case in a less built-up area. Additionally its situation in an area where there are already recognised problems of congestion and difficulties in accommodating development pressures mean that the ability to accommodate further expansion in an acceptable manner is limited. Overall the Council considers that the ability of Heathrow to expand further without causing unacceptable environmental problems is limited and that its capacity will eventually need to be contained because of its impact on surrounding communities.
- 7.10. In 1993 BAA submitted a planning application for a fifth terminal at Heathrow and a public inquiry into the scheme ran from May 1995 - March 1999. A decision is not expected before 2001. BAA propose to construct the terminal on the Perry Oaks Sludge Works site. The proposal also includes an hotel, offices, multi-storey car parks and maintenance facilities, and an extension of the Heathrow Express and London Underground to the site. Main road access would be from the M25 by means of a new spur road. BAA state that the ultimate capacity of the terminal will be 30 million passengers per annum (mppa) increasing the capacity of the Airport as a whole to 80 mppa.
- 7.11. The Borough Council objects to Terminal 5 unless binding guarantees and conditions can be secured to limit the long term environmental impact on the Borough. It submitted detailed evidence to the Inquiry in support of its stance.
- 7.12. In 1989 the Civil Aviation Authority published a report which identified the need for another runway to meet the growing demand for air travel from the South East. Heathrow was identified as one of a number of possible locations for such a runway. Subsequently a Government Working Party was established on Runway Capacity to Serve the South East (RUCATSE) which reported in 1993. Its report looked in detail at possible options for further runway including Heathrow (between A4 and M4). The report made no recommendation as to which site should be developed.
- 7.13. The Government response to RUCATSE, announced in February 1995, ruled out the options studied in RUCATSE for a third runway at Heathrow and invited BAA to examine whether there might be less damaging options for runway development, such as a close parallel runway at Gatwick. The Civil Aviation Authority were asked to co-ordinate further studies to look at the scope for increasing the use of Heathrow's existing runways, taking into account potential capacity gains and environment impact.
- 7.14. The Council welcomes the Government's decision to rule out the RUCATSE option of another runway between the A4 and M4. It sees no scope for any further runway development at Heathrow and would oppose any such proposal.

- 7.15. The following policy will apply to the consideration of proposals for further development of Heathrow Airport.

**POLICY A1**

**In considering proposals for further development at Heathrow Airport (including those outside the Borough on which the Council may be consulted) the Borough Council will take into account economic, environmental, infrastructure and safety effects, having particular regard to impacts on the Borough. The Council will weigh up these effects and will normally oppose proposals that overall would significantly adversely affect the Borough. Particular weight will be given to the need to avoid:-**

- (a) loss of Green Belt**
- (b) increased noise or pollution**
- (c) adverse highway impact (contrary to Policy M5 of the Plan)**
- (d) increased pressure for development**
- (e) increased threat to public safety**
- (f) other adverse impacts on the environment of the Borough.**

**The Borough Council will seek to achieve appropriate mitigating measures where such measures are enforceable and would avoid adverse impacts on the Borough that would otherwise occur.**

- 7.16. The Borough Council considers that airport-related development should be accommodated within the Airport boundary. This is normally the most efficient location for such development and is also the most desirable in planning terms as it contains development pressures on land outside the Airport boundary. It is incumbent on Heathrow Airport Ltd as the Airport operator to ensure that adequate provision is made for airport-related development within the Airport boundary, as only the airport operator can identify and bring forward land for development on the airport. Provision needs to be based on a thorough assessment of likely future requirements for such activities, taking policy considerations into account. Joint studies carried out with BAA and other local authorities in the context of the Terminal 5 Inquiry have identified future space requirements for the major categories of airport related development. A large measure of agreement has been reached between the Council and BAA on an approach whereby land on-airport would be safeguarded for airport-related development and BAA would prepare and regularly update in consultation with adjoining authorities, a Development Strategy for accommodating airport related development.

- 7.17. Car parking is one of the forms of airport-related development that needs to be considered. For this activity future provision needs to be at a level consistent with the wider movement policy objective of encouraging the use of public transport for journeys to the airport. Such a policy driven approach requires continued restraint towards airport parking in off-airport locations close to the Airport, if a real modal shift to public transport is to be achieved, rather than merely a shift in the location of car parking.
- 7.18. No formal provision is therefore made for airport-related development within the Plan area. However, permission may be granted where no conflict arises with other policies of the Plan, in particular those relating to the Green Belt, employment, housing, movement and the environment. For the purposes of Policy A2, airport-related development is defined as: passenger terminals; facilities for handling and storing cargo; maintenance facilities; oil storage depots; airline offices; car parking; car hire depots; catering facilities; or other developments that primarily serve the airport.

### **POLICY A2**

**The Borough Council will expect proposals for airport-related development to be accommodated within the airport and encourage Heathrow Airport Ltd to make adequate provision for this. Such development will however be permitted within the Plan area where the proposal is compatible with the policies of this Plan.**

### **AIRCRAFT NOISE**

- 7.19. Heathrow's position close to major built-up areas means that far more people suffer noise disturbance from aircraft using Heathrow than is the case for any other UK airport. Nearly half a million people are directly affected by aircraft noise from Heathrow. This includes large parts of the Borough notably Staines, Stanwell and Stanwell Moor.
- 7.20. The phasing out of noisier aircraft has led to some reduction in noise disturbance and is likely to create scope for further improvements in the future, but the potential gains to the community have not been fully realised due to a substantial rise in the number of flights. If increases in the number of flights continue in the future then the scope for continued improvements in the noise climate will be undermined.
- 7.21. The Inspector at the Terminal 4 inquiry recommended the imposition of a limit on total air traffic movements of 275,000 per annum. This was rejected by the Government in the Airports White Paper on the grounds that growth in airport capacity should not be artificially constrained. However, since increased movements generally mean increased impact, particularly increased noise disturbance for local communities, the Council considers that controls on air traffic movements are a legitimate and important measure for mitigating the environmental impact of Heathrow on surrounding communities. In the year ending 31st January 2001 there

were over 460,000 air transport movements. Whilst recognising that it would now be unrealistic to seek a return to the 275,000 movements per annum figure advocated at the time of Terminal 4, the Council will continue to advocate the merits of controls over air traffic movements and press for their introduction.

- 7.22. Night flights are potentially a source of great disturbance. At present there is a limit on the total number of movements at night, from which certain propeller aircraft are exempt. A proposal by the Government in 1993 to replace the current regime with a quota system was modified following a High Court challenge by a group of local authorities supported by Spelthorne. The effect of the High Court decision was to retain a limit on the total number of movements at night. The Council will continue to support the retention of controls on flying at night, including a limit on the total number of night flights.
- 7.23. For a number of years the routes of aircraft have, where possible, been set over less populated areas. Additionally runway use has been varied, within the limit of weather conditions, to help reduce the time during a day that particular localities close to the Airport may be subject to more noisy aircraft movements. The Council supports the continuation of such runway alternation measures.
- 7.24. The control of development in areas affected by aircraft noise is covered in paragraph 4.87 of the Built Environment chapter.

### **POLICY A3**

**The Borough Council will strongly support timely and effective measures to minimise the impact of aircraft noise from Heathrow Airport on the Borough. In particular the Council will seek the cooperation and agreement of the appropriate statutory bodies and government departments to retain and/or implement the following:-**

- (a) alternation in the use of runways**
- (b) strict use of routes over more sparsely populated areas**
- (c) controls on flying at night, including limits on the total number of flights at night**
- (d) the imposition of limits on total air traffic movements**

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

- 7.25. Development in areas close to Heathrow and under flight paths for planes on approach or take off from Heathrow may result in increased safety hazards. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) publishes maps defining officially safeguarded areas in which proposals for buildings or structures above specified heights must be notified to it; and Public Safety Zones for which it is Government policy that there should be no

significant increase in the number of people living, working or otherwise congregating. Part of the north of the Borough is within the safeguarded area for Heathrow. The extent of the Public Safety Zones within the Borough is shown on the Proposals Map. In considering development proposals, the Borough Council will apply the following policy.

#### **POLICY A4**

**The Borough Council will not permit development proposals that would adversely affect the safe operation of Heathrow Airport or increase the risk to public safety in the vicinity of the Airport.**

#### **HELICOPTERS**

- 7.26. In recent years the use of helicopters for regular passenger services has developed and defined routes have been established. Because of the proximity to Heathrow and routes for fixed wing aircraft, helicopters are confined to relatively low altitudes when flying over the Borough. This accentuates the degree of noise nuisance experienced. The Borough Council will therefore strongly oppose proposals that result in additional helicopter routes over the Borough or helicopter landing facilities that harm the local environment.

#### **POLICY A5**

**Except for emergency services, the Borough Council will strongly oppose proposals for:-**

- (a) any helicopter landing facilities which cause disturbance, by way of noise or other activity, to the residents of the Borough**
- (b) helicopter routes over the Borough leading to increased disturbance where alternative routes or means of transport exist.**