

# Draft Airports National Policy Statement

**Cabinet**

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

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Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report sets out the Cabinet's recommended response to the Government's consultation on the draft Airports National Policy Statement.
- 1.2 The Government's proposed policy in relation to the provision of airport capacity is important to Swindon, which has benefitted from good access to Heathrow Airport. This accessibility is one of the factors that has persuaded international businesses to establish and maintain a presence within the Borough, and it is important to the Borough's economy that Heathrow Airport continues to operate as the United Kingdom's premier international gateway. Accordingly, it is important for the Borough Council to make its' views known by responding to the consultation.
- 1.3 Maintaining excellent access to international markets is crucial to achieving the Council's vision of being one of the UK's most successful economies. The Council Plan highlights the aim that Swindon will continue to be a place of opportunity, with businesses wanting to set up and grow here. Good connectivity to national and international markets is critical to achieving this objective, and to attracting new businesses to locate in Swindon as well as retaining those businesses already here. The Government's plans to expand capacity at Heathrow Airport is critical to maintaining this connectivity, as Heathrow is the most accessible International Gateway for Swindon.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the Council passed a resolution requesting that the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills report to Cabinet, when practicable, about how Swindon can take advantage of Heathrow's expansion (Council Minute 62. 2016/17 refers).

## **2. Recommendations**

### Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Authorise the Corporate Director of Economy, Regeneration and Skills to respond to the Government consultation on the draft Airports National Policy Statement by:
  - 2.1.1 Welcoming the Government's decision to expand runway capacity in the south-east through the construction of a third runway at Heathrow Airport,

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given the importance of Heathrow as the main international gateway for Swindon's business community and residents.

- 2.1.2 Endorsing the Government's assessment that such expansion at Heathrow Airport will provide the greatest economic benefit for the UK, including to Swindon through enhancing the potential for increased inward investment in the town by multi-national businesses taking advantage of Swindon's easier access to international markets.
  - 2.1.3 Recognising that expansion at Heathrow Airport will complement the Council's Economic Strategy objectives to maintain Swindon's competitiveness as a location in which new and existing businesses will be able to thrive, notably through the reduced journey times taken to access the Airport from Swindon with the Western Rail Link to Heathrow in place.
  - 2.1.4 Supporting the objectives within the draft NPS to promote improved public transport access to Heathrow Airport, and to specifically urge Government to ensure that the Western Rail Link to Heathrow, with the attendant benefits that it will bring to communities along the Great Western Corridor, be prioritised for delivery in 2024 in accordance with the current construction programme for the scheme.
- 2.2 Request that the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration, and Skills report this decision to Council.

### 3. Detail

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- 3.1 On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017, Government published the draft Airports National Policy Statement [NPS] for consultation. This followed the Government's announcement, on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016, that its preferred scheme for adding new runway capacity in the south-east is the construction of a third runway at Heathrow Airport. The draft NPS provides the planning policy framework for the new runway with which the applicant will need to comply with in order to secure development consent for the scheme.
- 3.2 This decision is a critical one for Swindon, as the Borough has a higher than average proportion of private sector multi-national companies and easy access to international markets is a major factor in the attractiveness of the town as a business location. Therefore, the expansion of Heathrow Airport, and the improvement of transport links to the Airport, are of vital importance to the Borough's economy.
- 3.3 The draft NPS sets out the following measures with which Heathrow Airport Limited will need to comply in order to secure development consent.

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- 3.3.1 Additional domestic flights linking Heathrow to other destinations within the UK.
- 3.3.2 Developing and implementing a world-class package of noise mitigation measures.
- 3.3.3 Developing and implementing measures to ensure that there is no increase in road traffic and that more than half of passengers use public transport to access the airport.
- 3.3.4 A scheme to purchase properties affected by the proposed new runway.
- 3.4 Government has estimated the benefits of the new runway to be:
  - 3.4.1 A £61 billion boost to the UK economy over 60 years.
  - 3.4.2 Tens of thousands of new jobs in the vicinity of Heathrow Airport.
  - 3.4.3 An additional 260,000 flights a year serving more destinations.
  - 3.4.4 Reduced delays and reduced fares for passengers.

## Benefits to Swindon's economy

- 3.5 Expansion at Heathrow, with improvements to the Great Western Railway, will benefit Swindon's economy in the following way:
  - 3.5.1 Increased business investment, attracting more businesses, particularly multinational companies. According to the Centre for Cities (2015), Swindon has the highest concentration of foreign owned businesses in the UK and is ideally placed, because of its' location, land and commercial property cost advantage, and skilled workforce, to benefit from more inward investment.
  - 3.5.2 Productivity improvements by reducing the time costs associated with travel to London and from Heathrow to onward international destinations, for businesses already located in Swindon. By reducing the costs of trading with international business destinations, some companies will experience export growth and / or reduced import costs. This will attract more knowledge-based businesses to Swindon.
- 3.6 There may also be tourism benefits, by reducing travel time which will benefit the planned North Star leisure development, new Swindon Museum and Art Gallery and existing town centre.
- 3.7 Of the options that the Airports Commission reviewed for providing new runway capacity in the south-east, expansion at Heathrow Airport is by far the most beneficial for Swindon. Accessibility is summarised in the following table.

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Airport	Road	Rail	Coach
Heathrow	67 miles 72 minutes	97 minutes (56 minutes with the Western Rail Link in place)	130 minutes
Gatwick	105 miles 109 minutes	125 minutes	190 minutes
Stansted	125 miles 127 minutes	162 minutes	175 minutes

- 3.8 This indicates that access to Heathrow Airport is significantly quicker from Swindon by each of the main modes of transport. In addition, the proposed Western Rail Link to Heathrow, currently programmed to open in 2024, would reduce the journey time by rail from Swindon to around 56 minutes, as well as offering the potential to run direct trains from Swindon to Heathrow Airport if a suitable business case can be established.
- 3.9 Should the new runway at Heathrow be granted Development Consent, it is highly likely that a requirement to make a substantial financial contribution towards the cost of the Western Rail Link [currently estimated to be £1.4 billion] will be one of the conditions applied. In the draft NPS, Government identifies a target for 50% of passengers to be accessing Heathrow by public transport by 2030, and 55% by 2040. For Swindon residents and business travellers to travel to the Airport by rail, the Western Rail Link will be a crucial infrastructure improvement by removing the need to travel to London Paddington before travelling back out to Heathrow. Therefore, to ensure that the best possible access is provided to the expanded Airport, it is considered essential that Government commits to the delivery of the Western Rail Link ahead of the proposed new runway opening in 2026.
- 3.10 Of the options considered by the Airports Commission for expanding runway capacity in the south-east, the expansion of runway capacity at Heathrow Airport is clearly the best one for Swindon as it will give the most direct access to the greatest range of destinations. The third runway will also provide more operational resilience, meaning that travel disruption is more likely to be minimised. It is vital, however, that the Western Rail Link is delivered prior to the new runway becoming operational, to maximise sustainable access by rail from Swindon and other communities along the Great Western Mainline.

## UK Airspace Policy

- 3.11 Government has published a parallel consultation on proposals to modernise the way Britain's airspace is managed. This covers the management of aircraft entering or leaving British airspace, draft guidance on the assessment of noise

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impacts, and the role of an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise [ICCAN].

- 3.12 The consultation outlines that airspace is becoming increasingly congested, and this can lead to delays for flights. The Government's key environmental objectives in relation to airspace management and noise are:
- 3.12.1 To limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people affected by aircraft noise.
  - 3.12.2 Reduce aviation fuel use and carbon emissions through the more efficient use of airspace.
  - 3.12.3 Minimise local air quality emissions and ensure that the UK meets its international obligations on air quality.
- 3.13 The consultation identifies proposed roles and responsibilities for the different Government bodies and agencies responsible for the management of airspace. It specifically identifies Local Authorities as having the following roles and responsibilities:
- 3.13.1 Engagement with communities that might be affected by operational changes which could affect noise levels.
  - 3.13.2 Development and implementation of Noise Action Plans.
  - 3.13.3 Agreement of Noise Controls where required, and the monitoring and enforcement of these.
  - 3.13.4 Engagement with the Civil Aviation Authority [CAA] on the options for and goals of airspace changes.
- 3.14 As Swindon does not have any significant operational Airports within its boundaries, then the Government's proposals have a limited impact on the Council. Should any changes be proposed that would affect airspace management over the Borough area, then the Council would be a consultee to these changes and would have the opportunity to make representations to the CAA and to the planned ICCAN if Government decides to establish this. This would not offer a significant change to the current processes. For major airspace management proposals, such as those for the new runway at Heathrow Airport, Government will be the final arbiter, with their decision drawing upon the advice of both the CAA and the ICCAN.
- 3.15 This consultation seeks to establish the ICCAN as an additional advisory body to consider airspace changes, and makes minor amendments to the current process. These are aimed at increasing the transparency with which decisions on airspace management are made. There are no substantive changes that concern the role of the Borough Council within the process, and therefore it is

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recommended that the consultation is noted but that no formal response be submitted.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 An extensive process has already been undertaken by Government to examine all options available for the expansion in runway and airport capacity in the south-east. This has been a lengthy process, subject to extensive scrutiny and debate, and the Council has previously identified the expansion of Heathrow Airport to be its preferred option.
- 4.2 Even at this stage of the process, it is feasible for Government to change its policy decision and to either not provide the additional capacity at south-east airports, or to direct that such provision be made at one of the other existing airports or through the construction of a new airport serving the region. It is not considered that such a further review, or the decision to move the additional capacity away from Heathrow Airport, would offer any benefits to Swindon. Moreover, it is likely that such a decision would in fact have a detrimental impact upon the economy of the Borough, given the higher than average dependence of Swindon's economy upon the private sector and international companies.
- 4.3 Accordingly, the preferred option remains to support Government's decision to provide additional runway capacity through the construction of a third runway at Heathrow Airport.

## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There are no legal or human rights implications arising from this report. It is considered that the recommendations are compatible with Convention Rights.

### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other implications arising from this report. Government has published a Health Impact Assessment, an Appraisal of Sustainability, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment alongside the draft NPS. None of the identified environmental impacts from the proposed new runway will directly affect Swindon.

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## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) was undertaken as this report proposes no change in services provided by the Council. The Government has published an Interim Equality Impact Assessment alongside the draft NPS which considers diversity impacts, and this will be developed further as the proposals for expansion at Heathrow Airport are taken through the Development Consent process.

## Risk Management

- 5.5 There are no risks for Swindon Borough Council arising from this report.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None

## **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for April 2017.