# London Councils' parameters for assessing proposals for new aviation capacity

## Background

At the Leaders' Committee meeting on 11 June 2013, all London boroughs agreed on a set of parameters for assessing proposals for new aviation capacity.

The following nine parameters have been drafted to inform and influence the Airports Commission's interim findings, due to be published later this year. These parameters represent a common view from London and support those boroughs that may be most affected by airport expansion, especially near Heathrow.

With these parameters, London Councils continues to ensure that the needs and demands of our communities are heard regarding any potential impacts on which decisions on airport expansion may lead.

## The parameters

1.  **A decision on airport expansion must be taken before May 2015. This is vital to reduce uncertainty to communities and businesses alike. London boroughs recognise the need for expanding airport capacity in the south east in the long term, but all boroughs oppose a third runway at Heathrow and a majority oppose all expansion at the Heathrow site.**

- The current timescale brings uncertainty to communities living close to affected airports, potentially threatened by loss of their houses and increased congestion, pollution and noise. There is also a risk for London's economy to suffer due to uncertainty over future connectivity and capacity. In addition, speculation over new runways at Heathrow has already impacted on land use planning, putting on hold local development plans in surrounding boroughs and in Hillingdon.
- Given the amount of research and consultation currently being done ahead of the publication of the interim report, the Airports Commission should be able to identify the need and the most suitable locations for expansion by the end of 2013. A thorough assessment and public consultation can then be held to help shape a preferred option.

2.  **Any short or medium term solutions to make airports' operational procedures more efficient must not negatively affect local communities.**

- The Airports Commission will recommend options for expanding capacity in the short and medium term by December 2013, when they expect to publish their interim report. These short or medium term solutions should not increase noise and air pollution in local communities.
- As an example, Heathrow is at capacity regarding the number of aircraft movements but

**LONDON COUNCILS**

not at capacity regarding passenger numbers. It is therefore important that slots on the busiest routes are used more effectively, increasing average passenger capacity and the passenger numbers per flight. New regulation or measures should be put in place to encourage a more efficient use of slots to improve airports' resilience.

- Similarly, 66 per cent of the passengers arriving at Heathrow are terminating, as opposed to transferring, passengers. It is therefore sensible that an assessment is made to determine what proportion of these can be transferred to other London airports along with the necessary upgrade in transport links to access the city and other destinations. Any spare capacity in Stansted, Gatwick or Luton as well as other airports in the UK could be used to increase resilience and provide room for higher connectivity.

3. **Should the Airports Commission decide to exclude the Heathrow site from considertion as London's hub airport, this should be accompanied by protecting its ability to respond to airline demand for direct flights. Guarantees from government to support alternative economic development should also accompany this decision.**

- Heathrow supports the local economy (Hillingdon, Hounslow, Spelthorne, Ealing and Slough) both in the form of direct employment and indirectly through the supply chain. Further jobs are supported indirectly in the wider London area and the UK as a whole.

4. **Airport expansion should be delivered without an overall increase in the number of people affected by noise. Airports with over-flown communities must be subject to night flight bans.**

- Heathrow is responsible for 28 per cent of total European airport noise nuisance. Any measures on airport expansion should impose more rigorous noise abatement measures on airports to protect the health and quality of life of local communities.
- As technology delivers quieter aircraft, local communities should progressively benefit from a reduction on noise levels but regulatory measures must support this process. Any options for airport expansion must comply with World Health Organisation noise standards.
- The provision of extra airport capacity in the network should enable the rescheduling of night flights to daytime slots. A ban on night flights will therefore protect the sleep period between 23.30 and 6.00, and would follow the example of leading airports such as Frankfurt.
- Other measures for decreasing noise around airports could include:
    - more ambitious and challenging environmental and noise objectives for airports which effectively accelerate the upgrade of aircraft fleets
    - higher landing fees for noisier aircraft
    - a full ban on the noisiest aircraft
    - improved compensation schemes and better monitoring;
    - operational procedures that reduce noise levels such as changes to the angle of descent and an easterly landing preference at Heathrow.

5. **Any option for new aviation capacity must not negatively affect the ability to meet EU air quality limits in London.**

- Heathrow is a major contributor of air pollution in west London. The primary causes of air pollution around airports are ground-level aircraft operations (planes and supporting vehicles) and motor traffic around the airport including cars, taxis, coaches and freight. This situation has led to a breach of current EU air quality limits (NOx and particulates).
- For local communities near the airport, poor air quality is a major concern which has not been properly dealt with for many years. London boroughs urge the government and the

Civil Aviation Authority to address this issue as a matter of urgency, and to work towards rapid compliance with EU limits.

- Following this principle, no new capacity should be permitted where this leads to European Union air quality limits being exceeded in surrounding areas. Measures to reduce air pollution around airports, particularly motor traffic generated by the airport itself, could include:
  - higher landing fees for the most polluting airlines and aircraft
  - a full ban on the most polluting aircraft
  - the provision of appropriate public transport for both passengers and airport staff
  - access restrictions for the most polluting vehicles accessing the airport
  - use of clean vehicles (e.g. electric, hybrid, hydrogen) in the airport premises.

## 6. Any option for expanding airport capacity should bring economic benefits to local residents and to the London economy as a whole.

- London boroughs recognise the important contribution of aviation to the economy. Any option for expanding airport capacity should bring sufficient and adequate economic benefits to the residents in the affected local area, for example by establishing a target for local employment.
- Impacts on existing jobs and potential job losses in areas surrounding airports (affected by closure or decrease on the number of operations) should also be thoroughly considered.
- The links with regeneration areas and the potential advantages that a new or expanded airport may bring to areas nearby in terms of transport connectivity and economic attractiveness should also be examined.

## 7. The chosen option should guarantee high quality, affordable public transport access to airports, whilst easing congestion on existing transport networks in London.

- There are significant concerns over current surface access to airports in the south east, with affected London boroughs calling for urgent improvements. For example, the existing Gatwick Express, Heathrow Express and Heathrow Connect rail services have their central London termini in Westminster at Vitoria and Paddington. This leads to increased pedestrian activity in and around the stations, additional demand for other public transport services and additional road traffic including taxis.
- Road traffic around Heathrow airport brings unacceptable nuisance and air pollution to London boroughs such as Hillingdon or Hounslow.
- London Councils supports travel to and from airports in sustainable modes for passengers and airport staff. However, an increase in aviation capacity would bring more pressure to existing transport networks in the affected areas. High-quality, affordable and frequent public transport to any new expanded airport must be put in place before the airport is expanded. The dispersal of passengers around London's local transport networks will also need to be carefully planned and managed.

## 8. Aviation must form part of an overall integrated transport strategy which looks at how a high speed rail network may reduce the demand for air travel.

- So far, the links between the high speed rail and air travel in the UK have not been properly examined. Nonetheless, evidence from other European countries shows that high speed rail can replace a considerable number of domestic flights, and therefore reduce overall $CO_2$ emissions.
- An integrated transport strategy that looks at the potential trade-offs between high speed (HS1 and HS2) and air travel is crucial to ensure that any need for airport expansion is adequately calculated.

- Further consideration should be given to creating the right environment for encouraging a modal shift from air to rail, and the associated benefits in terms of reducing the carbon footprint and releasing runway capacity for long-haul flights. This should include extending the proposed high speed network to cities in Scotland (where many people currently fly to and from), considering new pricing mechanisms, and exploring incentives for travelling by rail rather than air.

**9.   Any option for airport expansion should not compromise any other major investments in transport infrastructure.**

- The Airports Commission should assess and outline the likely consequences the different options for new aviation capacity will have in the government's capacity of mobilising resources for transport infrastructure investments in other areas.