

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY

(A) From David Clapham to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

1. I realise that jobs matter, for any council, even if in Bromley unemployment is at the absolute minimum it can be. However, who within the Council has ascertained that the assumptions are reasonable?

Reply

The projected growth in employment numbers is based on evidence from other operational sites and these have been critically assessed by the Consultant team and officers from the Council's Renewal team. It is considered that the range of projected employment numbers are reasonable and are within the employment range for these industrial employment types.

Supplementary Question

Mr Clapham suggested that the additional 2,300 jobs by 2031 was reliant upon 69,000 sq metres employment floor space (equivalent of ten football pitches). Mr Clapham highlighted that the URS (page 52) suggested that the Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners work should be revisited. Mr Clapham asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed - there did not appear to be a direct link and reliance upon the additional hours.

Reply

In his reply, the Portfolio Holder highlighted that development with aircraft related industries was envisaged. Without the necessary flexibility in airport operating hours, the Portfolio Holder had been informed by BHAL that a number of companies connected with aircraft related industries would see Biggin Hill as an unattractive location for investment.

2. The access improvements for West Camp are a vital part of enabling West Camp developments; do the Executive consider the LBB plans for West Camp are also specifically dependent upon additional operational hours for the airport?

Reply

The future redevelopment options for the West Camp Estate are indeed linked to the need for considerable investment in enabling infrastructure. The current Growth Plan advocated by BHAL envisages that much of the long term growth across the wider West Camp Estate will be dependent upon attracting in additional Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMS) and Aircraft Operating Companies (AOCs) who are stressing to BHAL the importance of more flexibility in operational hours.

Supplementary Question

Mr Clapham referred to the URS suggesting that the LPA *'undertakes a detailed infrastructure assessment feeding into the infrastructure delivery plan'*. He asked if the Executive agreed and who would fund any alterations.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that pre-application discussions would take place; in regard to funding, the Council would need to be satisfied that necessary infrastructure costs are met via S106 contributions.

(B) From Mrs Penelope Denby to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

1. Why is the Director for Regeneration and Transformation, who is responsible for developments in Bromley, also allowed to negotiate on behalf of affected residents? Is that not an unsustainable conflict of interests?

Reply

No, I do not believe the Director for Regeneration and Transformation has a conflict of interests. He is the Council's lead officer with responsibility for the Airport and our other commercial interests. The lease first and foremost is a commercial agreement and he is negotiating on behalf of the Council with the other party to the lease. It is entirely appropriate that he undertakes this work and makes recommendations to the Executive. Members and not officers will make the decision.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Denby sought further clarification on how the Director could remain impartial.

Reply

The Leader, however, felt that the Portfolio Holder had satisfactorily responded on this point.

2. Biggin Hill Airport already has longer hours than City, Farnborough and Northolt airports. Biggin Hill say that they want to compete with Luton for business aviation. Why does Bromley Council want to transform our residential borough into another Luton?

Reply

No, we do not want Bromley to become another Luton (one is quite enough). We are, however, required to conduct our negotiations with the Airport in a reasonable manner, carefully weighing up the pros and cons of any proposals they may wish to make. This is what we are doing and in the interests of both our residents and the Airport.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Denby sought to understand why Biggin Hill airport compared itself with other 24-hour operators, such as Luton, if Biggin Hill was not regarded as another Luton.

Reply

In responding, the Portfolio Holder included reference to business aviation at Luton being squeezed out, and he considered that Biggin Hill was not like Luton, not having any scheduled flights unlike Luton which has many.

(C) From Tony Trinick to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

1. Cllr Carr promised me personally that residents would be given the results of negotiations with the airport weeks ahead of any decision-making Council meetings. What date will that be please?

Reply

It is always difficult to be precise on dates when discussing matters of this type. However, I hope the Council will have concluded discussions with the Airport in/by September and we will allow the appropriate time before the decision making meeting.

Supplementary Question

Mr Trinick asked to be kept informed of a date when known, and suggested that residents affected by the flight path would be able to provide a better arrangement with the airport for residents (in the lead flight path) – Mr Trinick felt that what was being offered was not a better deal.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder suggested that it was necessary to await the outcome of negotiations.

2. Do you agree that the GPS system to Runway 03, if approved, is not a benefit for the residents, but to the airport, so it can attract larger aircraft from the States and further afield, which find the current visual approach difficult?

Reply

The new GPS system to Runway 03 will provide the all-weather guidance for aircraft currently using the airport and will not only be a significant enhancement for safety, but will also be of considerable environmental advantage by keeping aircraft higher for longer and following a consistent track unlike at present. The removal of 35% of flights from the runway 21 system can only be seen as a benefit to those residents living under that flight path.

Supplementary Question

Mr Trinick questioned how this could be of benefit to residents – larger aircraft would be attracted and Mr Trinick gave examples of areas where he considered the aircraft would fly over.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that this was part of negotiations with the airport, keeping the interests of residents in mind in so doing.

3. What changes to the flight path route into Runway 021 are being negotiated with the airport, as moving this away from residential areas is one essential element for residents if extra operating hours are to be considered?

Reply

There are no changes proposed to the flightpath route into Runway 21 other than those already announced (raising the vectoring height over Petts Wood and Chislehurst). This is a long established route and widely seen as the safest one from the upper airspace into Biggin Hill.

The Airport is continuing to progress plans for a new approach procedure into Runway 03. They are following a formal process called an Airspace Change Proposal which is the formal process by which the airport submits its plans to the Department of Airspace Policy, the CAA, and National Air Traffic Services as well as consulting other stakeholders. This formal process is already underway. As part of this, residents groups and Councillors have attended focus groups as have pilots, air traffic and airspace providers. Once the output of these focus groups has been considered, the designs will be finalised for consultation. This is expected in the autumn.

As a result of the changes being proposed, inbound traffic into Runway 03 will certainly be higher than before.

The new 03 approach is also expected to reduce the number of flights using Runway 21 by around 35%.

Significant investment will be required to deliver the necessary changes to the runway environment and approach lighting to enable the new procedures to be implemented once they have been formally approved. The Airport has given an undertaking to make this investment as part of their negotiations over the change to the Airport's operating hours.

Supplementary Question

Concerning the flightpath route into Runway 21, Mr Trinick indicated that it would be necessary to see how higher the elevated flight path route would be (above the existing flight path).

In his question, Mr Trinick enquired whether the Council accepted a pledge made by Biggin Hill airport – in this context Mr Trinick made reference to Formula 1 – and there being no need to increase operating hours.

Reply

In response, the Portfolio Holder indicated that he did not see the connection.

(D) From Giuliana Voisey to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

1. The Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation has said that “income to the Council” is not the driving force in the negotiations with the Airport. Then could you please explain why are you pursuing the concept of the community fund, which has the effect of encouraging flights at unsocial hours?

Reply

A community fund will follow on from any change in operating hours and not the other way around.

If any such flights are permitted it makes sense to seek to attract a payment from the Airport for such movements as part of the mitigation measures.

Supplementary Question

Giuliana Voisey questioned how it was possible to consider that Councillors were representatives of affected families by negotiating on noise envelopes and a community envelope.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that Members were taking forward negotiations for all of the borough, keeping all matters in balance.

2. Could you please explain what the grant of £398,000 from LBB to BHAL recorded in BHAL's accounts for 2007 refers to?

Reply

The way BHAL's accounts are constructed is a matter for them. I can confirm that the only money LBB has spent was on resurfacing of the runway at a cost of £1.5m in 1994 prior to the lease being signed.

Supplementary Question

Giuliana Voisey asked how it was possible for Councillors to refer to *reasonable* when imposing anguish to residents without any tangible benefit.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder suggested that if the Council were to receive some income from the Community Fund, so much the better.

3. Could you please explain why you think that the 'noise envelopes' being negotiated protect the residents more than the clauses in the Lease because they do not appear to do so?

Reply

If the areas around the Airport that are adversely affected by aircraft noise are reduced, that would be a good thing. The noise envelopes do not substitute the noise restrictions set out in the Lease, they augment them.

Supplementary Question

In her supplementary question, Giuliana Voisey sought to understand why it was necessary to have a capped number of flights at unsociable hours. Although the flights might be more productive for the economy, she indicated that residents would be stressed (possible sleep disturbance etc) and not strong.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder felt that such concerns were matters of judgement which would be taken into account.

(E) From Anthony Barnes to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

1. The map on P 13 of the NAP shows routing for rwy 03 similar or the same as that which has been in place for many years. Is it intended that the routing, if the GNSS approach is adopted, will be much higher than hitherto, if so, how high?

Reply

The Airport is continuing to progress plans for a new approach procedure into Runway 03. They are following a formal process called an Airspace Change Proposal which is the formal process by which the airport submits its plans to the Department of Airspace Policy, the CAA, and National Air Traffic Services as well as consulting other stakeholders. This formal process is already underway. As part of this, residents groups and Councillors have attended focus groups as have pilots, air traffic and airspace providers. Once the output of these focus groups has been considered, the designs will be finalised for consultation. This is expected in the autumn.

As a result of the changes being proposed, inbound traffic into Runway 03 will certainly be higher than before.

Significant investment will be required to deliver the necessary changes to the runway environment and approach lighting to enable the new procedures to be implemented once they have been formally approved. The Airport has given an undertaking to make this investment as part of our negotiations over the change to the Airport's operating hours.

Until these changes have been approved and implemented, aircraft will continue to use the current route into Runway 03. It would therefore be misleading to use the map with the new route in the Noise Action Plan until these changes have been finalised.

Supplementary Question

Mr Barnes sought to clarify whether negotiations on a new approach to Runway 03 were based on a completely different routing. There would be a higher level for inbound flights and if the approach to the runway was to be completely different, Mr Barnes sought further information in regard to the approach.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder understood there would be a steeper approach to the runway and would arrange for Mr Barnes to have the necessary technical information in writing.

2. If the proposed GNSS approach to land on rwy 03 is adopted, will larger jet and turbo prop aircraft be routed at high level (say 2,400' amsl) to somewhere like or near Kenley to commence the approach to land?

Reply

The new 03 route will certainly be to the west of the airfield and be higher than at present. Once established the route will be followed by all aircraft making an instrument guided approach, whatever type of aircraft that may be.

(Mr Barnes had no supplementary question following the Portfolio Holder's reply).

3. Advice to me from the CAA is that procedures for approach and landing are a matter for the aerodrome and its operators, NOT the CAA. In light of this advice will LBB insist that jet and turbo prop aircraft approaches to land on rwy 21 are straight in on the extended centre line and not via low level circuits above local rooftops?

Reply

The airport manages flights within its own air traffic zone surrounding the airport. The Biggin Hill aerodrome traffic zone is a circle centred on the mid-point of the main runway with a radius of 2.5 nautical miles. It extends from ground level up to the base of the London Terminal Area at 2,500 feet above mean sea level. Outside this area is managed by National Air Traffic Services.

The Runway 21 ILS approach is used for 99% of all jet and turbo prop aircraft using runway 21 which normally make a straight in approach using the ILS for guidance. However traffic arriving low level from the west (normally positioning from Farnborough Airport, Hants) will usually arrive by means of a right hand visual circuit to runway 21 and this takes them over the area of Hayes. This is a procedure that has been in constant use since the aerodrome was built. This saves fuel and hence emissions. They consequently do not cross the area of the borough further to the north east so this gives an advantage elsewhere in the borough.

The numbers of aircraft are very small (less than one per day). However, the proposed new track keeping system can be set to monitor aircraft heights such that aircraft do not drop below a standard 3 degree approach slope at any point during the approach phase.

Supplementary Question

Mr Barnes indicated that his focus was about circuit rather than approach.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder would consult further with Council officers and given the level of technical detail (including mapped information) related to the matter, the Portfolio Holder offered Mr Barnes the opportunity of a meeting to discuss his concerns further. Accordingly, an approach would be made to Mr Barnes to arrange such a meeting.
