

# Heathrow Expansion Consultation

## Background Briefing

### What is the Government consulting on?

It will consult on proposals to:

- end **runway alternation** on the existing runways (and introduce **mixed-mode**);
- build a **3<sup>rd</sup> runway** and a **6<sup>th</sup> terminal**;
- abolish the **Cranford Agreement**;

The Aviation White Paper said the new runway would be a 'shorter' runway. But the Government is now consulting on a longer runway. Although still not full-length, it will be able to take all but the largest planes. The new runway would be in constant use for landings and take-offs throughout the day but, we are told, no night flights.

### Decoding the jargon

#### Runway Alternation

This is the current practice where planes, when they land over West London, switch runways at 3pm. This gives the people in many parts of West London a half day's break from the noise. Runway alternation does not apply when planes land from the west over Berkshire because of the Cranford Agreement – see below.

#### Mixed-Mode

At present, when the landing planes switch runways at 3pm, so do those taking off. It means that planes land and take off from separate runways. If runway alternation is abolished, planes would be landing and taking off from the same runway (at least for part of the day). That is called mixed mode. This is what the Government wants to introduce.

#### Cranford Agreement

There was an agreement made in the early 1950s forbidding planes to take off over Cranford because it is so close to the easterly end of the northern runway. That means that planes flying over Berkshire must all land on the northern runway and take off from the southern runway. So there can be no switching of runways at 3pm. But, of course, since mixed-mode requires planes to land and take-off from both runways at the same time, the Government would need to get rid of the Cranford Agreement before it could introduce mixed mode.

#### Westerly Preference

As a rule planes land and take-off into the wind. In the UK, the wind blows from the west about 70% of the time. When the west wind blows, planes land over London and take off over Berkshire. But they also do this if an east wind is blowing to a strength of up to five knots. This is known as westerly preference. The Government is proposing to retain westerly preference.

## The Impact of the Proposals

### 1. 800,000\* flights using Heathrow each year

If the Government's proposals go ahead, the number of flights using the airport will nearly double. Former Aviation Minister Gillian Merron told Parliament earlier this year that flight numbers could reach 800,000 if a third runway goes ahead and runway alternation on the existing runways is abolished. That's up from 473,000 last year.

- A **third runway** on its own would mean flight numbers reach **720,000** per year
- The **end of runway alternation** would bring in an extra **80,000**

**Total = 800,000**

■ **There is a cap of 480,000 on the number of flights which can use Heathrow in a year. It was imposed in 2001 when the Government gave the go-ahead for Terminal 5. If numbers were to exceed the limit, BAA would need permission from a Planning Inquiry.**

**\* It appears that 800,000 may now not be reached because the consultation document is saying that 'mixed-mode' on the existing runways would cease when a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway is fully operation but many residents, aware of broken promises over the years, are sceptical about this.**

### 2. Many more flights across London and the Home Counties

800,000 flights a year translates into around **500 extra flights a day**. This will result in more flights and more noise for residents across London and the Home Counties.

### 3. Community destruction

A third runway would be built between the A4 and M4, north of the existing airport. It would require the demolition of well over 750 houses, including the entire village of Sipson. More than 3,000 people would lose their homes. Schools, pubs and churches would all go.

### 4. New flight paths

The Government has not provided exact details of the new flight paths in the consultation. But, because planes need to line up with the runway several miles from touchdown, it is clear the new landing flight path will be over:

- **Holland Park and High St Kensington;**
- the northern parts of **Earls Court, Hammersmith** and **Chiswick;**
- **Heston.**
- To the west, the flight path is likely to be over **Maidenhead** and **Slough.**
- **There will be new take-off routes over Harrow, Northolt and Paddington**

### 5. Loss of West London's half day's peace and quiet

The ending of runway alternation - where planes landing over West London switch runways at 3pm - will take away the valued half day's peace and quiet enjoyed by residents in these areas. **This will include removing the half day's peace and quiet at the National Trust's property in Osterley.**

### 6. Climate Change

The World Development Movement has calculated that the annual CO2 from a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway would be equivalent of all the CO2 produced by Kenya in one year.

## Why is the Government consulting now?

The 2003 Aviation White Paper outlined the Government's belief that a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway and 6<sup>th</sup> terminal were required at Heathrow. It also argued that runway alternation should be abolished so that more planes could use the existing runways. But the proposals were put on the back-burner because there were fears that, if the expansion went ahead, **air pollution levels** in the Heathrow area would exceed the EU legal limits (due to come into force in 2010). So BAA pressed ahead with its plans to expand Stansted first, while the Department for Transport set up a working group to re-assess future air pollution levels around Heathrow – the Project for the Sustainable Development of Heathrow (PSDH).

### Future Air Pollution Levels: Given the all-clear

**The Project for the Sustainable Development of Heathrow report on future air pollution levels at Heathrow has been published alongside the consultation.** The Department for Transport argues in the PSDH report that its reassessment of future levels of air pollution at Heathrow would allow expansion to take place as both aircraft and cars will become cleaner in coming decades.

### The Government argues expansion meets key noise targets

It said that expansion could only go ahead if the area affected by aircraft noise once any expansion has taken place would not be greater than the area affected in 2002. That is not as challenging as it sounds for two reasons:

1. Concorde was still operating in 2002. Because of the way that the Department for Transport measures noise, the retirement of Concorde in 2003 would allow BAA Ferrovial to bring in many more planes without extending the area affected. Using DfT noise measurements, one Concorde every 4 hours followed by 3 hours 58 minutes of silence is the equivalent of 120 Boeing 757s coming over every 2 minutes.
2. The area which the Aviation White Paper said should not be expanded is the '57 decibel contour', i.e. the area where noise levels average out at 57 decibels or higher over the course of a year. But the recent ANASE Study, which the Government published earlier this month, found that, in order to match the area where people start to get annoyed, the Government should be talking about a 50 decibel contour. But the Government says in the consultation document that The ANASE study is not robust enough to be incorporated into policy making despite accepting its main finding that people get annoyed at levels well below 57 decibels.

## How long will the consultation go on for and what happens next?

### Public Inquiry Required?

The Planning Bill, which is going through this session of Parliament, would restrict future public inquiries to simply looking at the local impacts of a new development. A 3<sup>rd</sup> runway or 6<sup>th</sup> terminal would require a public inquiry of this sort. The introduction of mixed-mode would not normally require a public inquiry as no new land would be needed but in this case there would need to be a planning inquiry because the introduction of mixed-mode would mean the annual cap on the number of flights using Heathrow would be exceeded and the Government said in 2001 that, if it were to be exceeded, BAA Ferrovial would need to get permission from a planning inquiry.