

Ministers urged to withdraw Heathrow noise claim



Councils opposed to expansion at Heathrow have challenged Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to withdraw his claim, made in October 2016, that an expanded Heathrow will be quieter in 2030 than today.

The Department for Transport's revised draft consultation on the airports national policy statement includes evidence showing that 92,700 additional people in the area around Heathrow will be exposed to noise by 2030 as a consequence of the third runway.

The total number of residents affected within the 54dB contour, where people are significantly annoyed by noise, would go up to 678,000 in this period.

While producing this assessment for 2030 the consultation contains no forecasts for earlier years even though the additional runway is now predicted to be open in 2026.

Councillor Ravi Govindia, leader of Wandsworth Council said: "Now that the facts have emerged we urge the Secretary of State to withdraw his earlier statement that noise would not get worse. If he accepts the figures provided for his own consultation he should also now rethink his support for expansion at Heathrow."

The local authorities also urged the Government to publish details of flightpaths so that residents can be aware of how they will be affected before they respond to the government consultation.

Currently only 'indicative' routings are shown. Councillor Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "The councils find it deplorable that the communities which will be affected by noise from a third runway just have no way of knowing who they are. They will only find out after the decision to approve the runway has been set in stone.

"This cannot be a fair way to run a consultation on a plan to place a new runway in the most densely populated part of the UK. "



Councillor Simon Dudley, Leader of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, said: “It is simply unacceptable that the communities affected by this expansion should have to put up with all the associated health impacts. Once again the only sensible conclusion is that Heathrow is simply the wrong place for expansion.”

In their detailed response to the revised consultation the councils say that the evidence demonstrates that an expanded airport cannot be delivered without unacceptable air pollution and noise.

The councils conclude that the revised National Policy Statement (NPS) fails to show how an expanded airport could meet air quality limits in an area where pollution levels are deteriorating. This makes a third Heathrow runway unbuildable while expansion at Gatwick could go ahead without this risk.

Cllr Paul Hodgins, Leader of Richmond Council, said: “This adds further to the case for expansion at Gatwick instead of Heathrow. An extra runway at Gatwick can be delivered with greater economic benefits than Heathrow, at lower cost and with no taxpayer funding. Its environmental impact in terms of noise and air pollution will also be substantially less. Based on the Government’s own evidence supplied for the consultation it is the only rational conclusion.”

The councils have today (19 December) submitted their detailed response to the consultation on the Government’s revised draft National Policy Statement. The final NPS will provide the planning policy framework for an application for a new north-west runway at Heathrow.

The councils’ response to the NPS consultation has been compiled by Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead council.