

CAB956
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CABINET

13 October 2004

BAA SOUTHAMPTON AIRPORT PREFERRED ROUTEINGS TRIAL APRIL -SEPTEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

BAA Southampton has been carrying out a trial of alternative take off and landing procedures at Southampton Airport. Their objective in the six month trial was to investigate if any one of these alternative procedures can bring about a reduction of aircraft noise to those living near the airport. The trial lasted from April - September 2004 and was carried out in two phases, during which time the Environmental Protection team collated all complaints made to Winchester City Council.

This report details this data, draws conclusions and makes recommendations as to further actions by the City Council in responding to BAA Southampton following this trial.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet notes the outcome of the recent preferred routeings trial, insofar as complaints made to Winchester City Council are concerned.
2. That written representation made to BAA Southampton based on section 5 of this report (together with any additional comments Cabinet may wish to add) be made.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 During April to September 2004, BAA Southampton carried out a noise preferred routeings trial, experimenting with take off and landing procedures. The objective of the six month trial was to investigate if any one of the alternative procedures could bring about reductions in aircraft noise to those living near the airport. The trial was split into two phases.
- 1.2 Phase 1 was during April, May and June. During this first phase, all aircraft above a defined weight were instructed to climb to a greater height before starting to level off or turn away from the runway. Generally, arrivals were instructed to turn onto the final approach from further out from the airport. The potential benefits were anticipated to be that the increased height of flights over residential properties and turns, which avoided densely populated areas, would result in fewer complaints.
- 1.3 Phase 2 ran from 1 July until 30 September and during that time flight procedures reverted back to the original noise preferred routeing (see Appendix A for leaflet detailing routeings).
- 1.4 During the trial, Southampton Airport set up a complaint hot line to take feedback in addition to collating data from local residents and organisations including Winchester City Council and some of its local Members. 1,000 telephone surveys were conducted by the airport during the trial, 500 during Phase 1 and 500 following Phase 2.
- 1.5 In addition six monitors were to be placed in strategic positions around the airport to collect noise data for collation by an independent acoustic consultant. It is understood that one of the noise monitors is sited in Colden Common.

2. Existing Noise Controls

- 2.1 In December 1992, BAA and the owner/operator of Southampton airport signed a Section 106 agreement covering a number of issues concerning runways and operations. Section 9 on 'the preferred Routeing of Aircraft' states that '***the owners are to consult with Eastleigh Borough Council on completion of the agreement to identify the routes preferred by the Council which would create the least nuisance to the occupiers of residential property and to other noise sensitive premises. The owners are to subsequently apply to the Civil Aviation Authority to review the routeing of aircraft using the airport.***'

'The owners are then to ensure that, so far as is reasonably possible, aircraft using the airport use any preferred routes agreed with the Council and the Civil Aviation Authority.'

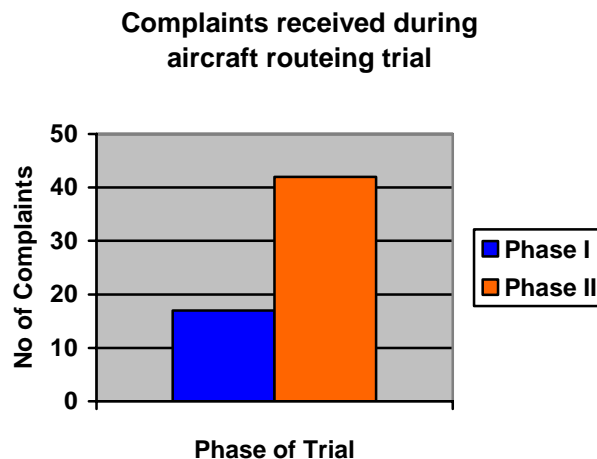
- 2.2 It is to comply with Section 9 of the agreement and examine whether alternative routes would reduce the impact of aircraft noise on the local community, that BAA

Southampton started this project to trial alternative take off and landing procedures from the airport. Ultimately any potential changes to the existing routes following the trials and any subsequent follow up studies must be agreed with Eastleigh Borough Council as the Planning Authority and then the Civil Aviation Authority in terms of aircraft safety and noise disturbance.

- 2.3 At a meeting of the Southampton International Airport Consultative Committee Eastleigh Borough Council gave a presentation on the noise contours for the years 1992,1996,1997,1998,1999,2000,2001,2002 and 2003, which were very similar. Eastleigh BC concludes that although there are a far higher number of aircraft using the airport today, the aircraft are generally quieter, thus mitigating the impact of the increased numbers of movements.
- 2.4 During the years 1999-2002 the Environmental Health Department received on average two complaints a year regarding aircraft noise; however some of these related to military air movements at the airport rather than commercial aircraft.

3. The role of Winchester City Council

- 3.1 The Environmental Health Service does not have any legislative powers to deal with complaints about aircraft noise. Aircraft are specifically exempt from statutory nuisance controls and are vested within the remit of the Civil Aviation Authority. However, airports do operate consultative committees in order to consult and communicate with local stakeholders on any issues relating to aircraft noise. The Southampton Airport Consultative Committee is made up of representatives from a number of organisations including neighbouring local authorities, parish councils, residents associations, chambers of commerce, South West Trains and Hampshire County Council. The City Council is currently represented by Cllr. Murray Macmillan with Cllr Jim Wagner serving as Deputy. There is no officer representation.
- 3.2 The recent trial has presented an opportunity for the City Council to establish the impact of aircraft noise on local residents and consider the preferred routes. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health asked that officers collate noise complaints from residents in the Winchester area during the trial period in order to feedback to members and BAA Southampton at the end of September 2004. The following table is a summary of the numbers of complaints received during the trial period.



- 3.3 During phase 1 of the trial 17 complaints were made and 45 during Phase II. A map showing these will be available for Cabinet members at the meeting showing the

geographical spread of the complainants. All of the complaints related to concerns about increased noise from flights although none of the complainants stated that the noise prevented them from sleeping at night. Complainants' details were logged and the individuals advised to also refer their comments to the airport's complaint line to ensure that they were recorded by BAA.

- 3.4 It is interesting to note that more complaints were received during Phase 2 than during Phase 1 as this relates to a return to the original flight routings whereas Phase 1 was the experimental period. In acoustic terms it would be expected that there would be less noise disturbance from planes that fly higher and turn less sharply as tested in Phase 1 of the trial. However, this does not take into account subjective considerations and other factors which can provoke a complaint. These include:
- a) Heightened sensitivity to aircraft noise following all the publicity which surrounded the trial.
 - b) An increase in the number of flights and destinations from the airport with additional operators or extra flights throughout the day.
 - c) The age and type of planes which can affect noise levels although these were not considered as part of the trial. This aspect could be considered as part of a further review.
 - d) The time of year when the trials were carried out as more people were likely to be in their gardens during the summer months when Phase 2 was carried out.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The Government published a White Paper in December 2003 setting out a strategic framework for the development of air capacity in the United Kingdom for the next 30 years. In their view there is a need to increase capacity across the airport network in order to meet demand which has been fuelled by the growth in low-cost air travel. However the Government accepts that in order to meet this demand, a balance must be struck between the anticipated growth in air travel and the environmental impact that it causes.
- 5.2 The required increase in capacity cannot be met by major airports such as Heathrow, Gatwick, and Stanstead etc and as a consequence the Department of Transport believes that regional airports such as Southampton will need to help meet demands for services. The airport is currently running at two thirds capacity so has scope to increase the numbers of flights from the facility.
- 5.3 The problem with the issue is that a further balance has to be struck between the availability of a local facility which provides convenient access to air travel to many European destinations and the impact upon the same community that it serves. Many of the complainants who contacted the City Council stated that they used the facility themselves and recognise its value in terms of convenience for holiday travel. However, there are others who inevitably do not see it in the same light and wish to see the airport's activities curtailed as far as possible in order to minimise its impact.
- 5.4 In purely technical terms there are existing noise controls in place which are closely monitored by Eastleigh Borough Council under the terms of a Section 106 agreement and the Flying Controls Agreement 1992. Using this framework as a benchmark the indications are that, despite the growth in air traffic, noise levels remain constant. However this does not accord with the subjective impression of those living under the flight paths as the experience of the trial indicates. This presents a further problem in

balancing out the science of noise controls with the subjective impressions when change is proposed to the existing arrangements.

- 5.5 It is also difficult to draw any concrete conclusions from the recent trials without specific data on changes in noise levels and impacts upon noise contours around the airport or the results of the surveys of residents but it is clear that any change to existing flight paths results in significant public reaction based upon their perception of the situation and not necessarily on acoustic factors.
- 5.5 Whilst a Consultative Committee provides a useful forum for discussion about developments at the airport and any problems as they occur, it does not allow sufficient opportunity for the detailed consideration of the technical acoustic issues as this requires a high level of knowledge and experience in transport matters. With recent developments at the airport this may be an appropriate time to establish an officer sub group to look at these aspects. This would allow a consensus to be developed on the noise issues which could inform the wider debate within the Consultative Committee.
- 5.6 The recent trial has clearly generated significant reaction within the Winchester District concerning aircraft movements across the area and this is likely to remain particularly with further noise routing trials proposed and the pressure from Government to meet the increasing demand for air travel. These developments increase the need for better communication with local residents from the airport operators in order to ensure that information is provided in a way which supports a desire to work with communities rather than ignoring their needs. A recent public meeting on the issue hosted by Mark Oaten MP generated significant interest from the public. The current Consultative Committee framework with its limited representation for practical reasons does not allow this direct communication with Winchester residents so it is recommended that the airport operators consider holding an annual public meeting within the Winchester District to update them on latest developments at the airport, future plans and to answer questions from concerned residents.
- 5.7 The Airport is holding a Community and Stakeholder Conference on 19 November 2004 when the Independent Consultant's report on the recent trial will be presented. Representatives from Winchester City Council will be in attendance where there will be an opportunity to discuss the trial in more detail and any proposals for future variations as it is understood that there is likely to be further routing options tested as part of the ongoing programme. In this respect, the establishment of the suggested technical officers' sub-group would allow better discussion about the proposals prior to their implementation to ensure that they represent the least intrusive option possible. In addition, it is clear that there will be continuing concerns about the amount of disturbance arising from aircraft overflying the Winchester District since any decisions to alter the existing arrangements will have an impact upon Winchester City Council residents. It is therefore recommended that discussions should be held with Eastleigh Borough Council about how the extent of City Council representation on the Airport Consultative Committee could be increased in order to ensure that the scale of views can be properly expressed.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

8. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 8.1 There is no direct connection to the current corporate strategy but assessing the impact of aircraft noise is included within existing core Environmental Health functions.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Southampton Airport Noise Preferred Routeings Trial maps