

Planning Committee

05 February 2025



Application No.	24/01370/MIS
Site Address	Northern Runway, Heathrow Airport, Hounslow
Applicant	Heathrow Airport Limited.
Proposal	Adjoining Authority Consultation - Consultation by the London Borough of Hillingdon for enabling works to allow implementation of full runway alternation during easterly operations at Heathrow Airport including the creation of a new 'hold area' at the western end of the northern runway, the construction of new access and exit taxiways, the construction of an acoustic noise barrier to the south of Longford Village and temporary construction compounds (Hillingdon ref: 41573/APP/2024/2838)
Case Officer	Kelly Walker/Matthew Clapham
Ward	Outside the borough boundary but adjoining Stanwell North
Called-in	N/A.

Application Dates	Valid: 20.11.2024	Expiry: N/A	Target: N/A
Executive Summary	<p>This Council has been consulted by the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) about an application for enabling works to serve the northern runway, to allow the implementation of full runway alteration during easterly operations at Heathrow Airport. As an adjoining authority consultee, this Local Planning Authority will provide comments on the proposal, the application falls within the LBH who will be responsible for determining the application.</p> <p>Although the physical works are relatively small scale, they will allow the practical implementation of the ending of the 'Cranford Agreement', and consideration of the associated environmental impacts. The 'Cranford Agreement' dates back to 1952, and it prohibits, under normal Heathrow Airport operations, easterly aeroplane take-offs (i.e. towards central London) on the northern runway. On 15 January 2009 the then UK Government announced that it was ending the 'Cranford Agreement' (as part of the consultations on a proposed Third Runway). In September 2010 the Government reaffirmed the decision to end the 'Cranford Agreement'.</p> <p>Planning permission for the same scheme was allowed at appeal in February 2017, however this was not implemented and has since expired, hence the requirement to re-submit.</p>		

	<p>The current application will enable full runway alternation when the wind blows from the east, as well as the west.</p> <p>An objection has been received from the Council's noise officer, as the proposed works to enable full alteration on Easterly operations will clearly increase the number of flights landing directly over Stanwell Moor resulting in significant adverse impacts on the residents of Stanwell Moor.</p>
Recommended Decision	This Council raises objection on noise grounds.

MAIN REPORT

1. Relevant Planning History

1.1 The site has the following relevant planning history:

13/01001/MIS	<p>Consultation from London Borough of Hillingdon for enabling works to allow implementation of full runway alternation during easterly operations at Heathrow Airport including the creation of a new "hold area" at the western end of the northern runway, the construction of new access and exit taxiways, and the construction of a 5 metre high acoustic noise barrier to the south of Longford Village.</p>	<p>Objection by Spelthorne BC on noise grounds 26/09/2013</p> <p>Refused planning permission by London Borough of Hillingdon</p> <p>Allowed at appeal 02/02/2017</p>
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1.2 Planning application ref 13/01001/MIS referred to above was submitted for the same application as the current proposal and permission was allowed at appeal by the Secretary of State (SoS) on 2 February 2017, subject to conditions. This permission has now expired, without being implemented and therefore a new application has now been submitted.

1.3 At that time Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) were consulted on the application by the London Borough of Hillingdon and raised an objection, due to the adverse noise impact the easterly alternations would have on the residents of Stanwell Moor. It was noted in the Council's response that if Hillingdon was minded to approve the application, a condition should be imposed to extend the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant to residents in the higher noise contours, to all residences within the 57dB LAeq 16hr contour that were likely to experience a significant adverse increase in noise levels of 3 or more dB LAeq 16hr. As noted above, following the refusal by Hillingdon, (ref 41473/APP/2013/1288) permission was allowed at appeal ref APP/R5510/A/14/2225774 in 2017 and a less restrictive noise condition, along with others were imposed on the consent.

1.4 It is important to note that the previous appeal decision is a material planning consideration and carries significant weight for decision making purposes. The applicant notes in their Planning Statement that '*...It is clearly material*

that all of the principles raised by this application have already been examined through an independent inquiry and the proposals supported by the Secretaries of State.'

2. Background

- 2.1 The 'Cranford Agreement' was established in 1952. The agreement prevented aircraft from taking off from the northern runway in an easterly direction over Cranford, except in exceptional circumstances. The purpose of the Agreement was to ensure the Cranford residents, who are located close to the end of the northern runway, would not suffer from unacceptable noise pollution associated with aircraft taking off.
- 2.2 In 2007, the Government consulted on the proposal to end the 'Cranford Agreement' in a Document called "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport". Subsequently, the Government made a decision to end the Agreement in 2009, and this decision was reaffirmed by the Government in a Ministerial Statement in 2010.
- 2.3 The applicant states that aircraft technology has moved on since the 'Cranford Agreement' was drawn up in the 1950's. During take-off, modern aircraft climb higher more quickly and the noise they make is less disruptive to the residents of Cranford than it would have been 70 years ago.
- 2.4 Whilst the 'Cranford Agreement' has now ended, it is not possible for Heathrow to use the northern runway (and runway alternation) efficiently for "easterly operations" (taking-off in an easterly direction), as it is necessary for some works to be carried out to include new and altered taxiways and other associated development.

3. Description of Current Proposal

- 3.1 This application is a neighbouring Authority consultation by the London Borough of Hillingdon for enabling works to allow implementation of full runway alternation during easterly operations at Heathrow Airport including the creation of a new 'hold area' at the western end of the northern runway, the construction of new access and exit taxiways, the construction of an acoustic noise barrier to the south of Longford Village and temporary construction compounds.
- 3.2 Heathrow Airport lies to the north of Spelthorne and this Council has been consulted as an adjoining Authority. The London Borough of Hillingdon is the determining authority, and SBC has been consulted along with a number of other consultees. The applicant has set out the proposed development in their submitted Planning Statement, which explains that the Easterly Alternation Infrastructure project is split into two main elements:

• Northern Runway

Proposed taxiway infrastructure located in the north-west corner of the existing airfield. The main purpose of this infrastructure is to provide additional capacity to allow departing aircraft to access the existing Northern Runway.

This consists of the following elements:

- Three parallel taxiways, parallel to the runway centreline. The two most northern parallel taxiways will primarily be used as part of the runway hold area. The third, most southern parallel taxiway will primarily be used to provide access and egress from the existing aircraft stands on the north side of the T5a terminal.
- A taxiway link connecting the three parallel taxiways.
- Two new Runway Access Taxiways (RATs), which will provide a taxiway route for aircraft departing from Runway 09L.

. • Noise Barrier

Proposed noise barrier located north-west of the existing airfield. The main purpose of the proposed noise barrier is to provide mitigation against ground noise from the airport to residents in Longford Village.

- 3.3 The Applicant is aiming to introduce easterly runway alternation by 2028 as set out in Heathrow's Sustainability Strategy. The applicant comments that easterly alternation would bring predictable periods of respite from aircraft noise to thousands of residents. The introduction of easterly alternation would mean that affected communities would share environmental effects and the benefit of respite fairly and equally, as they do today when the Airport is on westerly operations.
- 3.4 As with the previous application, the consequence of the above enabling works will be a change in the pattern of aircraft movements and associated noise around the airport. The change will impact on Spelthorne Borough and in particular, Stanwell Moor. The applicant states that the subsequent redistribution of noise around Heathrow Airport will result in lower noise effects in some locations and higher noise effects in others, but it will enable noise emanating from aircraft operations to be more fairly distributed around the airport than it is at present.
- 3.5 Implementing the full alternation on easterlies will not result in any changes to the operating hours of Heathrow Airport, nor the aircraft movement cap.

4. Consultations

Consultation	Response
Environmental Health (noise)	Raises objection on noise grounds.
Environmental Health (Air quality)	No objections, recommend conditions

5. Public Consultation

- 5.1 The applicant has advised that prior to the submission of the planning application to Hillingdon, their project team completed a period of community

engagement in September 2024, visiting neighbouring communities that will experience a change from Easterly Alternation, including an event at Stanwell Moor Village Hall, which was attended by 36 persons.

- 5.2 Following the submission of the current planning application to the London Borough of Hillingdon. Hillingdon has carried out public consultation, including consulting Spelthorne Borough Council. Therefore, this council is a consultee and is not responsible for determining the application which falls to the London Borough of Hillingdon.

6. Planning Issues

- Noise
- Air Quality

7. Planning Considerations

- 7.1 The proposed physical works, in themselves which are set out in para. 3.2 above, are relatively minor and are not considered to have any adverse impact on Spelthorne Borough. Furthermore, given the limited scale of these physical works, it is not considered that the noise and disturbance associated with the construction phase would have any adverse impact on this Borough.
- 7.2 However, the proposed enabling works will result in an increase in aircraft flying over Stanwell Moor during easterly operations, which will lead to an overall increase in noise affecting properties in that part of the Borough. At present, aircraft can only take off during easterly operations from the southern runway, which results in the vast majority of aircraft landing on the northern runway. Consequently, very few aeroplanes fly over Stanwell Moor and land on the Southern Runway. The proposed enabling works will allow aircraft to take-off during easterly operations on the northern runway over Cranford. This in turn, will allow the southern runway to be used mainly for landing purposes during these times. Although the use of the runways will alternate during the day to give residents some respite, the noise impact from the increase of flights landing over Stanwell Moor will be greater than at present.
- 7.3 The applicant is proposing some mitigation and compensation measures for residents most affected by the change in the flight patterns. They are proposing that “...households newly exposed to the 69dB LAeq 16hr contour or more will be offered home relocation assistance”; and that “...households newly within the 63dB LAeq 16hr contour and experiencing a noise increase of 3dB or more will be eligible for residential acoustic insulation with 100% of the cost of insulation met by HAL” [Heathrow Airport Limited]. However, it is not clear from the applicant’s noise assessment if the residents of Stanwell Moor (and Stanwell) will benefit from these measures (they do not specify if the residents of Stanwell Moor and Stanwell would experience an increase in noise levels of 3 or more dB LAeq 16hr).
- 7.4 With regard to westerly operations, the level of flights taking off over Stanwell Moor and the alternation of the runways during the day will remain the same. It is noted that the proposals are shown to result in a slight improvement for

the residents of Stanwell (not Stanwell Moor) as the number of aircraft taking off on the southern runway during easterly operations will reduce.

- 7.5 The applicant also comments that *'...beneficial decreases in aircraft 'ground' noise exposure have also been identified in Stanwell and Stanwell Moor due to the reduced activity at the western end of the southern runway.'*

Noise

- 7.6 The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has been consulted and has raised objection on the adverse impact of noise on the properties in Stanwell Moor.
- 7.7 As noted above, previously in 2013, SBC was consulted on a very similar scheme and raised an objection, due to the adverse noise impact the easterly alternations would have on the residents of Stanwell Moor. However, if the LBH was minded to approve the application, a condition was recommended to be imposed to mitigate noise impacts. Following Hillingdon's refusal of planning permission, an appeal was allowed subject to conditions, including relating to noise. Given this decision is a material planning consideration and the proposal is very similar to the one previously allowed, this needs to be given substantial weight. In the appeal decision. The Secretary of State (SoS) stated, *'...With regard to the Inspectors' conclusions on the impact on noise on living conditions the Secretaries of State agree with him that the noise mitigation measures proposed by your company should be supplemented by provision of the 'Cranford-specific' insulation scheme to which the Inspector refers and which he proposes should be imposed as a condition in granted planning permission... They agree with the Inspector that such measures would be proportionate, particular to the development, adequate and appropriate and in compliance with the development plan, the Framework and the NPSE,'* (Noise Policy Statement for England).
- 7.8 However, given the passage of time and the substantial proposals submitted, the Council's noise officer remains concerned with the adverse impact the proposal will have on the properties in Stanwell Moor within Spelthorne Borough. The Noise Officer has made the following comments:

'Due to its proximity to the Southern runway, most of Stanwell Moor falls within the 64-69 dB, 16h noise contour, derived owing to noise from planes taking off during Westerly operations. This noise level can be quite significant, impacting the daily lives of residents. During Westerly operations, residents of Stanwell Moor are exposed to constant stream of aircraft noise for half the day, either between 07.00-15.00, or 15.00-23.00 period.

Currently, during Easterly operations residents of Stanwell Moor get a respite from constant noise and only experience occasional landings, averaging 36 arrivals a day. If full Easterly alternation is implemented, these 36 arrivals a day would increase to approximately 328 planes landing over Stanwell Moor during an 8-hour daytime period, significantly increasing the noise and frequency of overflights and significantly affecting the residents who live in Stanwell Moor.

The impact of the residents during night time operations is less clear. Currently, Heathrow is allowed 5,800 landings or take-offs a year between 23:30 and 06:00. The majority of these are assigned to landings between 04:30 and 06:00, and Heathrow is allowed to use either runway for landings, resulting in residents of Stanwell Moor already getting disturbed sleep. The Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application states that to the west of the airport additional “sleep awakenings” are forecasted to “slightly increase” (A sleep awakening is defined as number of N60 events where aircraft noise occurs and when the noise can awake a person from sleep.). The statement also specifically mentions Stanwell Moor as one of the impacted locations, suggesting it is expected that residents will see increased night time overflights. The Environmental Statement does not articulate the exact number of additional sleep awakenings expected to occur, nor the reasoning behind them occurring.

The noise mitigation on offer will not provide any mitigation from noise outdoors and as such the additional noise will impact residents’ gardens, local parks and play areas.

The supporting documentation accompanying the planning application failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the precise increase in noise levels that Stanwell Moor will experience. This lack of clarity raises concerns about the potential impact on the community, as accurate borough specific noise data would have been preferable.

Due to the proposed works enabling full alteration on Easterly operations, this clearly will increase the number of flights landing directly over Stanwell Moor. Consequently, in relation to impact on noise, Environmental Health recommends that Spelthorne Borough Council object to the proposal due to the significant adverse impact Easterly alternations will have on the residents of Stanwell Moor’.

7.9 Therefore, an objection on noise grounds should be raised.

Air quality

7.10 The air quality assessment undertaken for the Proposed Development concludes that no significant air quality effects are predicted and the air quality effects of implementing easterly alternation are negligible. It states further that: -

‘The quantity of air pollutants emitted from aircraft may change slightly because of the Proposed Development, but the principal impacts will be associated with the change in the spatial distribution of emissions across the airfield. The Proposed Development does not involve an increase in aircraft movements or passenger throughput at the airport, but it will lead to a change in aircraft movement patterns on the ground and in the air, during easterly operations only, which occur for approximately 30% of the time. The main effect in air quality terms would be an increase in the number of aircraft departing on the northern runway and arriving on the southern runway (09R) during easterly operations and an equivalent decrease in the number of

aircraft departing on the southern runway and landing on the northern runway during easterly operations.'

- 7.11 The Council's EHO on air quality has been consulted and raises no objection to the proposal although some conditions have been recommended. The conditions include the submission of an Environmental Construction Management Plan and Construction Logistics Plans to help mitigate the impacts on air quality. These comments have been forwarded directly to the Case Officer at Hillingdon. It is also important to note that during the appeal in 2017, the SoS raised no objection on air quality grounds, and imposed conditions to ensure mitigation measures are implemented, '*... The Secretaries of State agree with the inspectors conclusion that mitigation of the air quality effects of the proposed development is necessary and justified and that the proposed mitigation would be reasonable, proportionate and sufficient to adequately mitigate the adverse effects of the development so that there would be no conflict with the development plan in this regard.*'
- 7.12 There is no objection on air quality grounds subject to the imposition of a condition to ensure mitigation measures are implemented. (as with the previous scheme allowed at appeal).

Conclusion

- 7.13 There is a concern that the proposals will have an unacceptable noise impact on Spelthorne's properties within Stanwell Moor and objection is raised on this basis.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 That the London Borough of Hillingdon be informed that this Council raises "**objection**" to the proposal, on the ground that the proposal will have an adverse noise impact on the residential properties within Stanwell Moor which are located within this borough.
- 8.2 The London Borough of Hillingdon is also advised that if the LPA is minded to grant approval for this proposal, the conditions relating to noise and air quality that were previously imposed on the appeal scheme ref APP/R5510/A/14/2225774 should be imposed with this scheme.