

**CONSULTATION ON NOISE ACTION PLAN 2010 – 2015 BY BAA STANSTED**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **29 September 2009**

*From:* **Executive Director, Environment Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **N/a** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **To consider the Consultation Draft Noise Action Plan 2010 – 2015 prepared by BAA Stansted**

*Recommendation:* **That Cabinet agrees the draft response set out in this report and delegates to the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning in consultation with the Executive Director: Environment Services the authority to amend the response for submission to BAA Stansted by 2 October 2009.**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 BAA Stansted is consulting on a Draft Noise Action Plan for 2010 to 2015. The consultation will run until 2 October 2009. The consultation document can be viewed at:

[http://www.stanstedairport.com/portal/page/StanstedNoise%5EConsultation+and+sc+2009/fb499442dff91210VgnVCM10000036821c0a\\_/448c6a4c7f1b0010VgnVCM200000357e120a\\_/](http://www.stanstedairport.com/portal/page/StanstedNoise%5EConsultation+and+sc+2009/fb499442dff91210VgnVCM10000036821c0a_/448c6a4c7f1b0010VgnVCM200000357e120a_/)

Alternatively paper copies can be made available and a copy has been put in the Members' lounge.

- 1.2 The consultation was discussed by Policy Development Group on 16 September. Policy Development Group generally supported the response, and recommended that reference be made to the noise impacts of holding patterns over the County, the need for reductions year-on-year in aircraft noise and the additional impacts of small aircraft from other airfields. These comments have been added into the proposed response set out in italics below.
- 1.3 Local people in Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire have been raising concerns about increased aircraft noise with Members for those areas. Members have met with officers from the County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to discuss this issue. As set out below, while there will be a chance to raise these concerns during consultation on changes to flight patterns expected later this year, it is considered that the present consultation also presents an opportunity to highlight this issue.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **Consultation on Terminal Control North (TCN)**

- 2.1 Members will be aware of proposed changes to airspace for Terminal Control North (TCN) – the area covering Reading, Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, Thetford, Lowestoft and the southern part of Cambridgeshire – conducted by NATS (formerly National Air Traffic Services). An initial consultation on these changes was held in 2008 and reported to Cabinet on 20 May 2008.
- 2.2 In February 2009, NATS announced that there would be a new consultation on revised proposals for the TCN area, but no date has been finalised - NATS' website states that a decision on the start of the consultation is unlikely to be made "until later in the summer." NATS' consultation will be reported to Members as soon as it is available.

### **Consultation on Stansted Airport Noise Action Plan 2010 - 2015**

- 2.3 The consultation considered in this report is being conducted by BAA Stansted and sets out proposals for managing noise in the vicinity of the airport; it does not include any proposals for changes to airspace. Nevertheless, given the wide impacts of aircraft noise, particularly affecting

South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, it is considered that the County Council should also respond to this consultation to ensure that the concerns of residents beyond the airport are highlighted. General comments are suggested in this report; further more detailed comments on changes to flight paths can be made as part of the TCN consultation in due course.

### **3.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

#### **Section 3 – Purpose and scope**

- 3.1 This section sets out the background to BAA Stansted's Draft Noise Action Plan. The requirement for airports to produce Noise Action Plans arises from the 2002 EC Environmental Noise Directive and the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006. Action Plans are designed to manage noise impacts arising from aircraft departing from and arriving at the airport, and, if necessary, include actions for noise reduction.

#### **Section 4 - Description of the airport location**

- 3.2 This section describes the location of Stansted within the region and its recent development. Stansted has grown as a commercial airport from its opening in 1991 - with permission for handling up to 15 million passengers per annum (mppa) - to its current position, serving 22.3 million passengers (2008). Under its existing permission the airport can handle up to 35 mppa. A planning application for a second runway and terminal building was submitted in March 2008, which would expand capacity to 68 mppa. This application was called in for determination by the Secretary of State and is currently awaiting a date for examination at public inquiry.

#### **Section 5 - Background to noise and regulation**

- 3.3 This section describes the regulatory framework governing aircraft noise at the international, European and national levels. It should be noted that the only noise controls available to local authorities are through the planning process, as conditions on the granting of planning permission. County or District authorities have no powers to control noise of overflying aircraft through environmental health or other legislation.

#### **Section 6 – Stansted airport's framework for noise management**

- 3.4 This sets out BAA Stansted's approach to noise management. BAA's objective is:

*To gain the trust of our stakeholders that we are using best practicable means to minimise existing noise impacts, and this approach will continue into the future, within the framework established by Government.*

- 3.5 The consultation sets out five key ways to achieve this:

- (1) Reducing noise impacts wherever practicable, through promoting the use of quieter aircraft and aircraft operations and noise mitigation schemes.
- (2) Engaging with communities affected by noise to understand their concerns and priorities.

- (3) Influencing planning policy to minimise the number of noise sensitive properties built around the airport.
- (4) Reviewing the airport's organisation to ensure that noise is managed efficiently and effectively.
- (5) Improving BAA Stansted's understanding of noise through research and comparison with the best international airports.

These themes are developed further in the Action Plan set out in Section 9 of the document.

- 3.6 Section 6 highlights that Continuous Descent Approach (CDA) – the smooth descent of aircraft that reduces noise impacts – is currently monitored only on Stansted's western runway. BAA is seeking to introduce this practice on the eastern runway – which could potentially reduce the noise impacts on towns and villages in Cambridgeshire – but this is dependent on the reorganisation of airspace that may follow changes to TCN. Given this, CDA could not be introduced until later in the Action Plan period. Currently this practice is prevented on the eastern runway by conflicting demands on airspace with Luton airport.

### **Section 7 - Results of the 2006 noise mapping**

- 3.7 As described above, Stansted's existing planning permission limits the movement of passengers to 35 mppa. The permission also places limits on the area subject to certain specified average levels of noise. Noise contours are mapped by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the results of the 2006 mapping are set out in Section 7 of the consultation, in the form of tables giving approximate numbers of dwellings and people subject to these noise levels.
- 3.8 Maps are also given in Annex B of the Action Plan, showing the area around the airport subject to these noise levels. These are reproduced as Appendix A to this report. As can be seen, the mapped area focuses on the immediate environs of the airport and a narrow area extending approximately 30 kilometres north-east / south-west of the airport, from Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire to Great Sampford, near Saffron Walden in Essex.

### **Section 8 - Provisions envisaged for evaluating the implementation and the results of the Action Plan**

- 3.9 This sets out 10 key indicators that BAA Stansted propose to use to measure the success of the Action Plan. These include the percentage of quieter aircraft using the airport, the population inside different noise contours, percentage of aircraft achieving a CDA and numbers of noise related enquiries.

### **Section 9 - Our approach to managing noise – the action plan**

- 3.10 This sets out a series of proposals grouped under the five areas described in paragraph 3.5. Some timescales are given and the relevant performance indicator listed against each action.

## 4.0 PROPOSED COMMENTS

- 4.1 The consultation asks five questions. Respondents are asked to tick a box that describes how satisfied they are with the Noise Action Plan and additional space is provided to explain the reasons for this choice.
- 4.2 A suggested response from the County Council to each question is given in italics below.

***Question 1: To what extent do you think that BAA Stansted's noise strategies outlined in the draft noise action plan are targeting the most important problems in relation to aircraft noise? (Options: Completely / partially / not very / not at all / don't know)***

Proposed County Council response:

- 4.3 *Box – “Not very”*
- 4.4 *Cambridgeshire County Council considers that the Action Plan:*
- *Lacks clear targets and measurable outcomes.*
  - *Is insufficiently challenging.*
  - *Fails to consider the wider impacts of aircraft noise on communities – such as in South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire – at some distance from the airport.*
- 4.5 *The Action Plan deals more with managing the existing problem and people's complaints, than actively reducing aircraft noise and its impacts. There is also little acknowledgement of how this problem may change if passenger movements increase from the current level of 23 mppa to the permitted level of 35 mppa.*

***Question 2: To what extent do you think that the draft noise action plan provides a suitable framework to manage aircraft noise? (Options: completely / partially / not very / not at all / don't know)***

Proposed County Council response:

- 4.6 *Box – “Not at all”*
- 4.7 *57 actions are listed in the Action Plan (Section 9) of which about half are already in place. Of the total 33 are of little direct impact a follows:*
- *4 relate to the internal management of BAA Stansted.*
  - *13 relate to the gathering or dissemination of information.*
  - *9 refer to community engagement practices.*
  - *7 deal with the review of existing policies or the production of guidance.*

*While these actions may be beneficial in responding to complaints or providing information, they will not themselves have a direct effect on aircraft noise.*

4.8 *Of the 24 or so other more practical measures listed, half are already in operation. The remaining 12 are vague and contain no clear targets, for example:*

- There is a commitment to prioritise airlines using quieter aircraft by 2010, but there is no target to achieve a certain percentage of aircraft by a particular date.*
- Similarly, the action dealing with the phasing out of noisier aircraft is worded as a commitment to consult on voluntary phasing by 2010, with no targets for a reduction in percentages of noisier aircraft to be met by a particular date.*
- There is a commitment to introduce a new system of tiered fining levels for noise infringements, but there is no indication what this might be or what result it is designed to achieve.*
- There are a number of actions concerning overflying standards, but the Action Plan would only commit the airport to monitoring infringement or achievement, not to achieve any targets.*
- The introduction of Continuous Descent Approach is expressed as a commitment to monitor compliance by 2015, rather than to achieve a particular target.*
- Other actions are even vaguer – for example, the commitment to “continue to work with NATS and all stakeholders to implement new technologies as they become available”.*

4.9 *The Action Plan is deficient in clear targets (such as percentage of quieter aircraft using the airport by certain dates) and measurable outcomes (such as reductions in the number of people affected). The EC Directive states that, as a minimum requirement, action plans should “contain estimates in terms of the reduction of the number of people affected (annoyed, sleep disturbed, or other)”. It is essential that there is a firm commitment in the Plan for a year-on-year reduction in aircraft noise.*

4.10 *In addition, given that over the period 2010 to 2015, the airport is likely to serve rising passenger numbers and aircraft movements, there also needs to be an analysis of how this would affect the numbers of residents experiencing aircraft noise.*

**Question 3: The draft noise action plan proposes a number of performance indicators to measure progress in implementing the action plan. To what extent do you think that these performance indicators are sufficient? (Options: completely sufficient / fairly sufficient / not very sufficient / not at all sufficient / don't know)**

Proposed County Council response:

4.11 *Box – “Not very sufficient”*

4.12 *While many of these performance indicators may be useful measures – such as the percentage of quieter aircraft, or population within a noise contour – they will have no effect if there are no targets to aim for. As outlined above, the accompanying Action Plan is deficient in setting clear targets and measurable outcomes.*

4.13 *While using average levels to plot the population affected by aircraft noise may be a useful indicator closer to the airport, these measures are unlikely to reflect the true impact noise causes further away. There is considerable distress caused by the noise from aircraft flights and holding patterns away from the immediate vicinity of Stansted, in places like South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. In quieter areas such as these, aircraft noise is experienced as loud events against a quiet background and an average measure over a particular period of time is unlikely to capture this. Increased movements of light aircraft from local airfields add even more to this impact.*

4.14 *The Action Plan needs to acknowledge the wider impacts of aircraft noise beyond the immediate vicinity of the airport. This approach is supported by legislation and guidance, for example:*

- *The EC Directive encourages the use of special indicators where the noise may operate only for a proportion of the time or in quiet areas in open countryside.*
- *DEFRA's 'Guidance for Airport Operators to Produce Airport Noise Action Plans' (March 2009), states in paragraph 3.12, 'Issues for Consideration', that airport operators should "Consider the opportunities for the protection of quiet areas". Paragraph 2.10 adds that, "Where appropriate, airport operators are advised to investigate opportunities for protecting quiet areas in general using ameliorative measures, such as more sophisticated flight path management."*

*The County Council considers that these opportunities have not been adequately explored in the Action Plan.*

**Question 4: As part of its objective to limit and where possible reduce the impacts of aircraft noise, Stansted has set a benchmark goal to be in the top fifth of airport companies for best practice in international airport noise management on comparable sites. To what extent do you think that this goal is sufficiently challenging? (Options; too challenging / sufficiently challenging / not very challenging / not at all challenging / don't know)**

Proposed County Council response:

4.15 *Box - "Don't know"*

4.16 *It is difficult to answer this question without knowing Stansted's current performance, how many international airports there are of comparable status and what criteria are used to judge best practice. For this goal to be meaningful, there needs to be a clear understanding of how the airport's current performance compares internationally, and a clear plan – with targets and dates – of how this is to improve. As outlined, the Noise Action Plan is vague on measurable targets and firm commitments to achieving them.*

**Question 5: Do you have any other comments on Stansted Airport's draft Noise Action Plan?**

Proposed County Council response:

- 4.17 *As outlined, the County Council considers that the Noise Action Plan is insufficiently challenging and too narrow in scope. This arises from the objective in Section 6 which puts more emphasis on gaining the trust of stakeholders than on achieving reductions in noise nuisance. This objective needs to emphasise that the reduction of noise and noise impacts should be the primary purpose; if this can be achieved then gaining the trust of stakeholders will follow. It is therefore suggested that the long-term objective on page 12 should be:*

*“To reduce aircraft noise and the impacts of aircraft noise wherever people are affected, using best practical means and by involving and listening to all our stakeholders. We will achieve this within the framework established by legislation, exceeding its requirements wherever possible.”*

## **5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

### Resources and Performance

- 5.1 There are no significant resource or performance implications in responding to this consultation.

### Climate Change

- 5.2 There are no significant climate change and environmental implications in responding to this consultation. The proposed responses set out in Section 4 are intended to influence the drafting of the Noise Action Plan and raise awareness of noise impacts in Cambridgeshire, which it is hoped will result in reduced distress to residents.

### Access and Inclusion

- 5.3 There are no significant implications.

### Statutory Duties and Partnership Working

- 5.4 There are no significant implications. As outlined in paragraph 3.3 above, local authorities have no powers to take action against aircraft noise, other than through conditions placed on planning permissions.

### Engagement and Consultation

- 5.5 There are no significant implications. The County Council is responding to a consultation by BAA Stansted.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

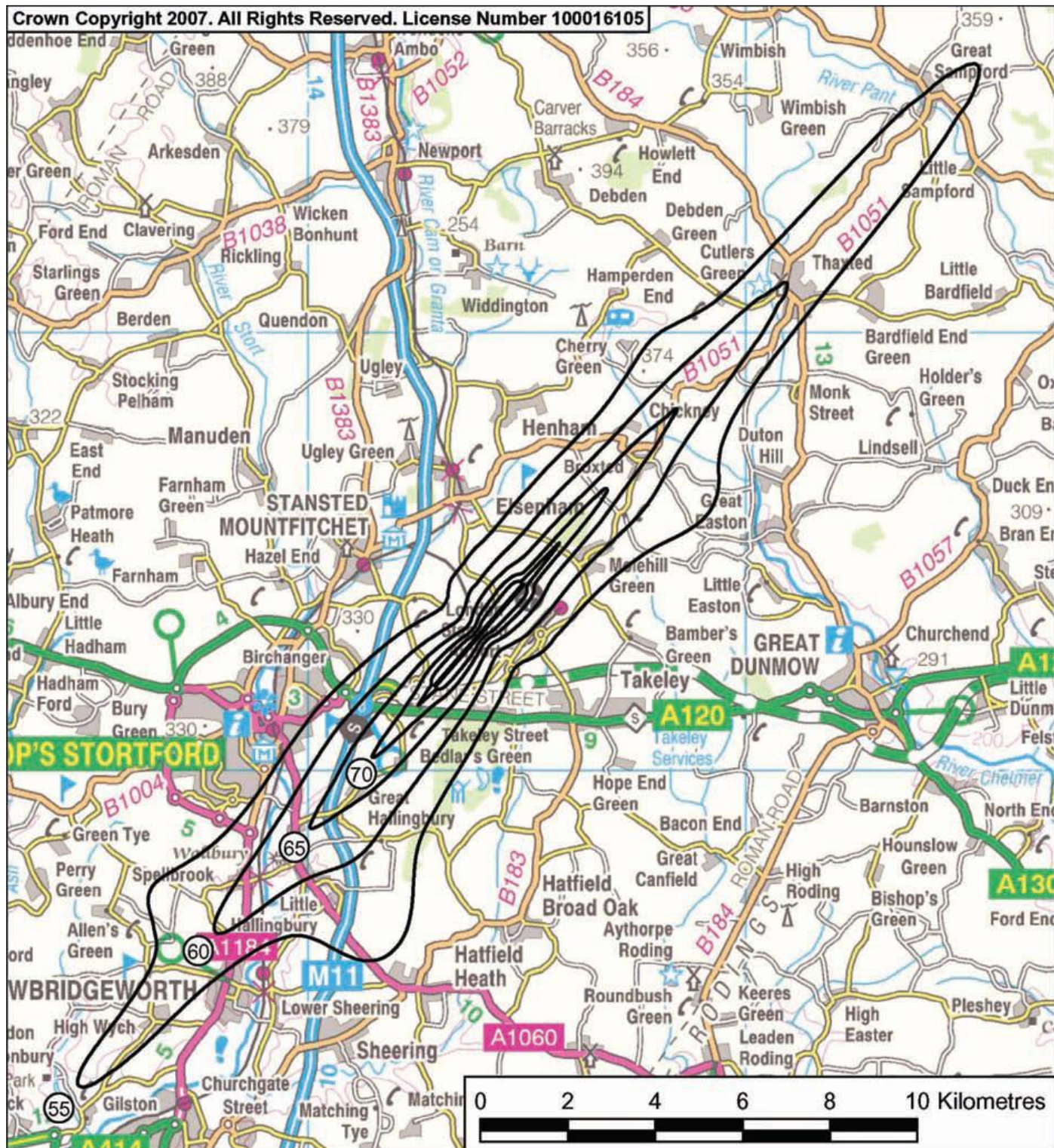
- 6.1 Following Cabinet, it is proposed that the final response be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning in consultation with the Executive Director, Environment Services and submitted to BAA Stansted by 2 October.
- 6.2 As described, there is likely to be a separate consultation on changes to



airspace for Terminal Control North. This will be reported to Members when it becomes available.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stansted Airport Environmental Noise Directive, Noise Action Plan 2010 to 2015: Draft for Consultation.</li></ul>	A Wing 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Castle Court, Cambridge

**Appendix A: Stansted Noise Contour Map (Extract from Noise Action Plan)**  
**Showing noise contours for Lden (average noise levels for day, evening, night)**





**Appendix A: Stansted Noise Contour Map (Extract from Noise Action Plan)**  
**Showing noise contours for Night (average noise for night – 23.00 to 07.00 hours)**

