



Sustainable Transport Strategy 2006 – 2016

Islington's Local Implementation Plan

Appendix I: Air Travel Policy Statement

Appendix I

Air travel policy statement

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this statement is to establish the council's policy on air travel. Air travel to, from and within the UK has increased five-fold over the last 30 years and all evidence suggests that air travel will continue growing over the next 30 years (Department for Transport, July 2004). It is inevitable that airport capacity will need to be addressed and we need a balanced approach that addresses the important environmental issues. The global impact of the growth in air transport is not being addressed and it is the council's view that we should manage the demand for air transport and work towards sustainable aviation.
- 1.2 The council is very concerned about increases in noise, air pollution and greenhouse emissions, and additional traffic, that would be likely to result from the range of airport expansion proposals around London. We have a number of specific concerns and these are outlined in this policy statement.

2.0 Strategic issues in air travel

- 2.1 Islington Council does not support significant growth in airport capacity in southeast England. New runways and airports will stimulate unsustainable growth and have impacts on Islington's transport environment. The objective should be to manage the demand for air transport, replace some air trips with rail trips, and to work towards more sustainable aviation options.
- 2.2 Where growth is to be provided for, the council would like to see the issues in this section taken into consideration for each individual airport.

Growth in air travel

“Passenger traffic has climbed nearly 9% per annum over the past 45 years, equivalent to 2.4 times the average increase in Gross Domestic Product – and by 14% in 2004 alone.” (Environment for Europeans, June 2005)

- 2.3 In 'The Future of Air Transport' (Department for Transport, July 2004), the Government suggested that there was a need for additional growth in airport capacity in the South East. The council believes that if there is to be any expansion in airport capacity, it should be at Stansted Airport.
- 2.4 New airport developments should be planned with the aim of inflicting the minimum misery on the smallest number of people, and effective use of existing infrastructure. The council recognises the need for some minor increase in capacity and the development of Stansted would best manage demand for air transport in South East England. We do not foresee any expansion at Gatwick for the foreseeable future and the council is opposed to any further development at Heathrow Airport.
- 2.5 The council would like to see Gatwick Airport developed to focus on the tourist market. However, the development of Stansted as a second international hub for London, along with appropriate demand management measures, should secure London as a world city for international aviation and

provide adequate runway capacity to deliver this objective. Expansion of Stansted Airport would also be supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM's) ambitious plans for the economic and social development of the Thames Gateway area to the east of London. Furthermore, the high-tech industries developing to the south of Cambridge, and at Milton Keynes, will need a second hub airport to the north-east of London by 2015 (London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group, 2005).

- 2.6 We believe Heathrow Airport has reached its full potential and cannot be allowed to expand any further. Heathrow Airport cannot be expanded in a way that complies with EU air quality standards or that is acceptable in terms of noise and other environmental impacts.
- 2.7 The council also supports increased use of regional airports to relieve pressure on the crowded airports around London. It is not sustainable to require passengers taking international flights to travel long distances on England's over-crowded roads and rail network to travel to London's airports, particularly since the roads and rail to airports are already over-crowded.

Replacing air travel with rail travel

- 2.8 The council does not support a 'predict and provide' model for the long-term planning of airports and air travel in South East England. A sustainable economy and environment for London requires careful planning, monitoring and management of demand for air travel. Instead of increasing air travel, we support moves to reduce current air travel demand by replacing shorter air trips within the UK and to parts of Europe with more efficient, affordable and sustainable modes of transport such as rail and coach services. Until low-cost airlines are replaced with rail services, demand for flights will continue to increase.
- 2.9 By 2007, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) will open, providing a truly high-speed rail link with a refurbished and upgraded rail terminal in London at St. Pancras station. With these fast and efficient surface transport improvements, Eurostar could readily be extended to other destinations in Europe taking pressure off shorter flights from the UK to the continent.

International greenhouse responsibilities

“While the EU’s total greenhouse gas emissions fell by 3% between 1990 and 2002, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from international aviation increased by almost 70%.” (Environment for Europeans, June 2005)

- 2.10 The aviation industry has failed to address adequately the global impact of the growth in air transport (London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group, 2005). The expansion of any airport cannot be justified unless the volume of greenhouse gas emissions that would result from that expansion, including emissions from additional aircraft flights, is consistent with the government’s overall climate change targets. Although international aircraft emissions are not included in the UK’s Kyoto Protocol target, they nevertheless make a significant contribution towards climate change and must therefore be prevented from increasing, and eventually be reduced.

Emissions trading extended to air travel

- 2.11 To encourage more fuel-efficient aircrafts and discourage half-empty planes, the council supports emissions trading being extended to aviation, and being charged per aircraft rather than per passenger. This policy change would encourage airlines to ensure that all seats are filled for each flight, thus reducing carbon emissions.

Alteration of current taxation system

- 2.12 Similarly, to encourage fewer planes in the skies over South East England, we encourage the Government to abolish the current airport departure duty and replace it with a duty paid by airlines for each commercial aircraft (passenger and freight) taking off from a British airport. Currently, the Government imposes a £5 duty on each passenger carried by an airline. But it is the aircraft and not the individual passengers who cause pollution, and taxing per aircraft will encourage airlines to minimise empty seats on all their flights.

Reversal of existing subsidies to air travel

- 2.13 Appropriate pricing mechanisms should be established to require airlines to meet the full external costs arising from their operations, and to encourage people to use existing rail services where suitable. Budget airlines are able to offer consumers cheaper travel than more efficient and environmentally-friendly rail services due to a range of subsidies to air travel such as the exemption of aircraft fuel from government taxation. This makes it nearly impossible for existing rail services to compete, let alone for new and upgraded rail services to be provided. A new airline fuel duty should be hypothecated towards providing improved rail transport.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.14 The environmental impacts of airport growth and growth in air travel must be minimised and mitigated. All proposals to expand London airports and increase air travel should therefore be subjected to a Strategic Environmental

Assessment (SEA). Such assessments would examine the range of alternatives, including reducing air travel demand through improvements to inter-city rail services and changes to pricing mechanisms. The social, economic and environmental impacts of the various alternatives could then be compared.

Mirroring flight times with rail timetables

- 2.15 In order to minimise car traffic to and from airports, flights should only depart and arrive at times when trains are running. This means either extending timetables or cutting out late night and early morning flights.

3.0 Managing the environmental impacts of air travel

- 3.1 Those living under flight paths in London have endured many nuisances in recent years and it is unfair to diminish their quality of life even further. Airport operators must work to mitigate the social and environmental impacts of airports. The council's main concern is to reduce the negative environmental impacts of air travel, including noise, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. These impacts are discussed below.

Noise

- 3.2 Islington Council has received complaints about aircraft noise and opposes changes that would lead to additional aircraft noise, especially at night. The council also opposes any increase in night flying for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports to prevent any further deterioration.

Air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions

- 3.3 The council is concerned that increases in air travel will have a detrimental effect on air quality and will increase greenhouse gas emissions. Aircraft emissions not only include carbon and nitrogen, which are currently measured, but up to a third is water vapour, which also contributes significantly to the greenhouse effect.
- 3.4 The council supports the development of more stringent air quality action plans and green travel plans for airports, including development of new technology to reduce aircraft emissions as well as emission reduction among other vehicles in use at airports.

Airport-related traffic congestion

- 3.5 The council is concerned with the potential additional traffic congestion that is likely to result from increased airport capacity. Increases in capacity should be subject to the provision of appropriate levels of surface access and all environmental, congestion and other local impacts should be minimised in planning for increased growth. If any airport is to expand its capacity, it is essential that this expansion does not lead to any additional motor vehicle travel to, from or within the airport. Every effort should be made to ensure that high-quality, affordable and convenient public transport to each airport is available, and any new public transport infrastructure must be completed before the airport is expanded.

- 3.6 Measures should be taken to reduce airport-related car travel, such as increased parking charges and road user charging. Airport car parking should also be limited to current levels.
- 3.7 Finally, the council should not be required to meet the costs of road and rail improvements that are required as a result of airport development.

4.0 **Issues around specific airports**

- 4.1 There are a number of specific issues that must be addressed for each of London's airports. Stansted, Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton and London City airports are discussed in this section.

Stansted Airport

- 4.2 If Stansted is to grow, vehicle trips and parking must be capped at current levels despite growth. Recent consultation on the Stansted master plan forecast that traffic related to Stansted would double on 2004 levels by 2010. This additional traffic will have a significant negative impact on traffic in London, particularly on the North Circular Road which already suffers serious congestion (ALG, 2005b). More frequent, faster and cheaper rail services between London and Stansted are already needed, so any expansion of Stansted will likely require significant additional rail capacity.
- 4.3 Most crucially, there must be a high-speed extension of Crossrail 1 from Stratford to Stansted through the Tottenham Hale interchange before any significant expansion of Stansted goes ahead.
- 4.4 Another infrastructure improvement that would help to facilitate efficient travel to Stansted is the extension of the East London Line to Highbury and Islington station. This would improve access to Stansted from central London using the Victoria Line via the Tottenham Hale interchange.
- 4.5 Even if Stansted is not expanded, there is a need for more frequent Stansted Express services from Tottenham Hale to facilitate transfers from the Victoria Line at Tottenham Hale. In addition, better promotion of this option would be beneficial.
- 4.6 There is also a need for improved rail replacement services to ensure that traffic levels do not significantly increase when the Stansted Express is not running or Liverpool Street station is temporarily closed.

Gatwick Airport

- 4.7 Both Thameslink and the Gatwick Express serve Gatwick Airport. The option to take Thameslink from Farringdon and King's Cross stations is more feasible for Islington residents and better promotion of this option is encouraged. Once Thameslink 2000 is introduced, Islington residents will also be able to ride to Gatwick Airport from Finsbury Park station.
- 4.8 The Gatwick Express offers a high-speed link from Victoria station, which is an easy connection from Islington on the Victoria Line. The council supports

the extension of the East London Line to Highbury and Islington station, thereby providing an improved connection from East London to Gatwick via Victoria.

Heathrow Airport

- 4.9 The Piccadilly Line offers a direct connection from Islington to Heathrow Airport. The council supports more frequent Piccadilly Line services to relieve congestion to airport services during peak times.
- 4.10 The Heathrow Express also offers train services from Paddington station, which is served by three Underground lines that Islington residents can take from King's Cross station (Circle, Hammersmith and City, and Bakerloo). The council encourages more frequent Heathrow Express services during peak times. However, completion of Crossrail 1 would significantly reduce travel time from most parts of Islington to Paddington station and Heathrow Airport.

Luton Airport

- 4.11 Thameslink provides a direct link to Luton Airport from King's Cross station and Farringdon station in Islington. The council encourages more frequent Thameslink services during peak times. The completion of Thameslink 2000 improvements will also improve access to Luton from Islington.

London City Airport

- 4.12 The long-awaited London City Airport extension of the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) is now open and direct travel time from Bank station in the City of London is 22 minutes. Islington residents can travel to London City Airport with Silverlink train services from Highbury and Islington and change to the DLR at Canning Town station. The council encourages more frequent Silverlink services during peak times.
- 4.13 The council also supports the extension of the East London Line to Highbury and Islington station, thereby providing an alternative connection to the DLR.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Islington Council believes that the growing demand for air travel should be managed, that more sustainable aviation must be achieved. There should not be any overall growth in airport capacity in South East England, but if there is to be any expansion in airport capacity, it should be at Stansted Airport.
- 5.2 Where growth is to be provided for, the council would like to see the following issues taken into consideration for each individual airport around London:
- we support moves to reduce current air travel demand by replacing shorter air trips within the UK and to Europe with more efficient, affordable and sustainable modes of transport such as rail and bus services
 - we believe that the expansion of any airport cannot be justified unless the volume of greenhouse gas emissions that would result from that expansion is consistent with the government's overall climate change targets

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- we support emissions trading being extended to aviation, and being charged per aircraft rather than per passenger
- we support a new airline fuel duty which should be hypothecated towards providing improved rail transport
- we encourage the Government to abolish the current airport departure duty and replace it with a duty paid by airlines for each commercial aircraft taking off from a British airport
- we believe that any proposal to expand London airports and increase air travel should be subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- we believe flights should only depart and arrive at times when trains are running

5.3 The council's main concern is to reduce the negative impacts of air travel, which includes noise, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. A balanced approach is therefore needed to manage current and future demand for air travel.

References

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