Farnborough Airspace Consultation Responses

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Calls may be recorded for training or monitoring

Date: 6 May 2014

Dear Sirs

**Farnborough Airspace Consultation**

I am writing to set out Waverley Borough Council’s views on the above consultation.

By way of background Waverley is Surrey’s largest Borough and covers an area of 133 square miles of South West Surrey and includes the settlements of Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh together with a number of rural villages. The Council represents a community of around 120,000 residents. A substantial part of the airspace under consultation over flies this Borough. The airspace routing to the south of the airfield overflies a significant area of AONB at relatively low level and the corridor is focused over the Weldon Heath SPA (Special Protection Area).

The Council has very strong concerns that the proposals do not adequately explain the potential increase in noise impacts of flying across the Borough or the potential detriment to air quality below the narrow routing. In view of this it cannot support the proposals.

While we recognise that these proposals are not linked to the planning permission for Farnborough airport which allows up to 50,000 air traffic movements annually, we consider there is little doubt that these proposals will assist TAG in catering for this increased number of flights and provides the basis for the introduction of larger planes.

We note that the proposal is to introduce controlled airspace to serve Farnborough airport. The Council questions why it is necessary to seek to classify such a large area as controlled. Indeed the area proposed appears greater than similarly designated areas which facilitate flying at Southampton and Bournemouth airports, both of which cater for much higher levels of activity. The approach you are proposing would appear to disadvantage other flying activities and gives the perception of setting in place sufficient airspace capacity to facilitate significant increased flying activity from Farnborough. We would welcome clarification on this point. It is noted that a significant proportion of this area lies in Waverley.

Waverley’s main concerns relate to the potential impact on SPAs and our residents, particularly those living in Farnham and the surrounding villages. In particular TAG’s aspiration to route traffic in the way that most suits their business needs will result in flights being directed into narrow corridors concentrating noise and pollution in specific areas to the detriment of Waverley residents. We note that flights will be redirected from Fleet and Church Crookham towards Farnham. North Farnham and Hale, in particular, are elevated from sea level which will intensify impacts. They also contain sensitive uses including schools and elderly persons accommodation. Areas South and East of Farnham, while more sparsely populated, are tranquil in nature and will be adversely affected by the proposed flight corridors.

 The Council would ask that the proposals are revisited to give some respite to these areas by introducing regular variations in flight routes. Such an approach formed part of the recent consultation by NATS Gatwick, where the option of respite routes was offered for consideration and comment.

In addition air traffic coming from or going to the North West of Farnborough should not be required to do a loop to the South as a part of their route.  In so doing this brings air traffic over areas of Waverley that does not currently have any.

The Council has also identified inconsistencies between the maps provided for comparing the existing and proposed scenarios. Maps B4-B8 look at existing arrivals and departures in terms of flights per day, wheras maps B9-B11 look at proposed flights in terms of height. No such information on heights is provided on maps B4-B8 and therefore it is not possible to comment effectively on the proposed changes.

We note that the consultation indicates that the new airspace design should lead to less noise due to the optimisation of new arrival and departure routes. Lowering the airspace as proposed to encompass inbound traffic would also appear to suggest higher noise levels as a dedicated space at low altitude will be created. The impacts, in terms of noise or pollution are not made clear in the consultation. Should these plans go ahead, Waverley asks that the effects of noise and pollution are regularly monitored in the north Farnham and Hale areas, and that this information published and made available on a regular basis. The Council would want to be involved in agreeing the location of any monitoring equipment.

We understand that the exact location of the flight paths will only be determined once NATS have considered the feedback from the consultation. It is important the Councils and the communities they represent fully understand how any changes in noise levels will affect them. In view of this I would ask that Waverley, and the communities it represents have the opportunity to comment on the detailed design of routes at the lower altitudes proposed. This suggests that a further round of consultation should take place when new routes are firmed up and that this consultation makes its clear what the likely levels of noise will be, together with what the changes in the altitude of flights compared to the existing situation are and, crucially, is undertaken in a way which can be easily understood by those without technical knowledge in this area. We would also like conformation that the approaches proposed represents industry best practice.

Waverley asks that it be kept informed of the outcome of this consultation, and also that we receive feedback form you on the above comments.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Evans

Head of Planning Services