



BRIEFING PAPER

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Airports in the South East of England

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Summary

This note looks at airport development in London and the South East under the present and previous governments, including the work of the Airports Commission, and how airports are planning to develop their current services.

*Please note that Heathrow is **not** covered in this paper. For more information see our separate paper: [CBP 1136](#).*

The Labour Government's 2003 aviation White Paper generally supported a 'predict and provide' approach, which envisioned demand for air transport in the South East increasing dramatically over the following 25 years. Consequently, it supported the construction of a second runway at Stansted and a third runway at Heathrow. Expansion at Gatwick would be limited by the Gatwick Agreement, which prevents expansion at Gatwick until 2019. It generally supported the growth of smaller airports in the South East, though it rejected plans to expand capacity in the Thames Estuary area.

The Coalition Government published its *Aviation Policy Framework* in March 2013 – this was largely a collection of technical changes that could be made to airports to increase capacity, improve efficiency and ensure that aviation growth in the UK is sustainable in terms of noise and environmental pollution. In July 2017 it began work on developing a new long-term aviation strategy. A 'next steps' document was published in April 2018. The strategy is focused on the consumer offering, safety and security, and ensuring that the UK aviation industry can grow following the UK's anticipated exit from the EU in 2019.

In 2012 the Government set up the independent Airports Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Howard Davies, tasked with making recommendations as to the timing and scale of any future airport capacity. Although it shortlisted a new runway at Gatwick in its interim report, it ruled this out in favour of Heathrow in its final report published in July 2015. In the three years since, the Government has said that it supports Heathrow expansion and on this basis has brought forward a draft National Policy Statement for approval by Parliament.

While a new Thames Estuary Airport has effectively been ruled out, there may be scope for expansion at Gatwick and Stansted in the longer term. In the short term smaller airports in the South East, such as London City, are continuing to expand. There is also a campaign to reopen Manston Airport in Kent to some form of commercial traffic.

Information on the other airports in the UK outside of the South East and London can be found in HC Library briefing paper [CBP 323](#). Further papers are available on Heathrow expansion, [CBP 1136](#), and proposals for a Thames Estuary airport, [CBP 6144](#). These and other briefings on aviation can be found on the [Aviation Briefings Page](#) of the Parliament website.

1. Government policy, 1997-

1.1 Labour, 1997-2010

In 2002 the Labour Government published a series of consultation documents seeking views on the future development of air transport in the UK. One of the consultation documents covered the South East of England.¹ The consultation sought to solicit opinion on three central questions: whether new airport capacity should be provided in the South East and if so, how much; where new capacity should be located; and what measures should be taken to mitigate the environmental impacts of growth.

Campaign groups against airport expansion brought an action for Judicial Review in 2004 to stop the building of a second runway at Stansted and an increase in flights out of Heathrow.² In February 2005 Mr Justice Sullivan found that the decision-making process which led to the adoption of the policies in the White Paper was lawful, subject to two qualifications: that the Government could not pre-judge the scale and location of the proposed second runway at Stansted; and that the proposal to extend the runway at Luton had not been properly consulted on.³

The aviation White Paper was finally published in December 2003. Outside of decisions on Heathrow⁴ the most important decision for the South East in the White Paper was the support for a “wide-spaced second runway at Stansted, with strict environmental controls, as the first new runway to be built in the South East”.⁵ The White Paper also recommended that airport operators should maintain a ‘master plan’ document detailing development proposals.⁶ The Department produced a guidance document for the development of master plans in July 2004.⁷

Several proposals contained in the consultation paper were ultimately rejected. The most significant of these rejected proposals were Cliffe Airport and a second South East hub airport. The consultation found very little support for the concept of a second or alternative hub to Heathrow, which most felt was “impractical and would carry high risks”. Indeed, many airlines stated that an alternative South East hub would work only if Heathrow were to close. In recognising the value to the UK of Heathrow’s status as an international hub airport, the Government rejected the case for attempting to create a second hub

¹ DfT, *The Future Development of Air Transport in the UK: South East, Second edition*, February 2003; see also: DfT, *South East and East of England Regional Air Services Study (SERAS): Appraisal findings report*, April 2002

² “Airport growth to face court challenge”, *The Times*, 6 March 2004

³ *Wandsworth et al vs Secretary of State for Transport*, 18 February 2005 [Case Nos: CO/1314/2004 and CO/1339/2004]; all parties welcomed the decision, see e.g. : [HC Deb 21 February 2005, 1WS](#) and “Runways blueprint survives legal challenge”, *Financial Times*, 19 February 2005

⁴ covered in detail in HC Library briefing paper [SN1136](#)

⁵ DfT, *The Future of Air Transport*, Cm 6046, December 2003, paras 11.6-11.11

⁶ *ibid.*, p141

⁷ DfT, *Guidance on the Preparation of Airport Master Plans*, July 2004

airport in the South East, “whether or not additional capacity is created at Heathrow”.⁸ It also rejected proposals for the development of Goodwin Sands; London Oxford; Marinair; Redhill; Sheppey; and Thames Reach.⁹

In December 2006 the Labour Government published a progress report on the implementation of the White Paper. The paper re-cast the debate about air travel within the context of climate change and environmental impacts, brought about by the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change in October 2006.¹⁰ Aside from this emphasis on climate change and impacts on the local environment, the paper restated the economic benefits of air travel and summarised progress that had been made on the White Paper since December 2003. Specifically with regards to the South East, the report stated that “the White Paper painted a picture of high demand in general and of particular pressures on the existing capacity in the South East. This picture still stands”.¹¹

In its manifesto for the 2010 General Election the Labour Party rowed back a little on the predict-and-provide approach in the 2003 White Paper. It stated that it would “not allow additional runways to proceed at any other airport [apart from Heathrow] in the next Parliament”.¹²

Party Policy in subsequent manifestos

In the 2015 Election Labour ran on a manifesto promising to “make a swift decision on expanding airport capacity in London and the South East, balancing the need for growth and the environmental impact”.¹³

The Party’s 2017 election manifesto stated that Labour “recognises the need for additional airport capacity in the South East”. It welcomed the work of the Airports Commission (see below) and said that it would “guarantee that any airport expansion adheres to our tests that require noise issues to be addressed, air quality to be protected, the UK’s climate change obligations met and growth across the country supported”.¹⁴

1.2 Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, 2010-15

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government stated in its Coalition Agreement that it would “cancel the third runway at Heathrow [and] refuse permission for additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted”.¹⁵

⁸ op cit., [The Future of Air Transport](#), paras 11.12-11.17

⁹ ibid., paras 11.106-11.119; those schemes which proposed developing an airport in the Thames Estuary are considered in further detail in HC Library briefing paper [SN4920](#)

¹⁰ HMG, [Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change](#), 30 October 2006

¹¹ DfT, [The Future of Air Transport: Progress Report](#), 11 December 2006, para 5.5

¹² Labour Party, [A Future fair for All: The Labour Party Manifesto 2010](#), April 2010, p1:8

¹³ Labour Party, [Britain can be better: The Labour Party Manifesto 2015](#), April 2015, p19

¹⁴ Labour Party, [For the Many Not the Few: The Labour Party Manifesto 2017](#), May 2017, p92

¹⁵ HMG, [The Coalition: Our Programme for Government](#), May 2010, p31; separate promises in the 2010 party manifestos can be found at: Conservative Party, [Invitation to join the Government of Britain: the Conservative manifesto 2010](#), April

Shortly after it assumed office in May 2010 the Coalition Government set up a South East Airports Task Force with 'key players' from across the industry to explore ways of making the most of existing airport infrastructure and improving conditions for all users. The group was chaired by the then Aviation Minister Theresa Villiers and its initial focus was on action at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted.¹⁶ The taskforce reported in July 2011. It recommended a package of proposals to address punctuality, delay and resilience issues at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, comprised of new operational freedoms; a performance charter for each airport to motivate stakeholders to take decisions based on the best interests of the whole airport system rather than being driven principally by their own individual commercial interest; and a set of policy guidelines to optimise the utilisation of runway resource at each airport. It concluded that there was some scope for exploring operational freedoms at Gatwick moving forward, but no strong case for additional freedoms at Stansted.¹⁷

The overarching themes of the review were taken up in the [Civil Aviation Act 2012](#). This provided for a new system of economic regulation at the UK's dominant airports.¹⁸ It gave the CAA a primary duty to further the interests of passengers and owners of cargo in the provision of airport operation services and, where appropriate, promote competition in those services. It would achieve this with a system of licences for those airports with 'market dominance'. Only Heathrow and Gatwick are subject to this new regime; Stansted, which was regulated under the old regime, is no longer.

The Government published its *Aviation Policy Framework* in March 2013. It replaced the policy set out ten years previously by the Labour Government. The APF proposed a number of actions to make best use of existing capacity; better regulation and provision for passenger experience (under the 2012 Act) and measures for encouraging new routes and services. It proposed extending so-called 'fifth freedoms' to Gatwick, Stansted and Luton.¹⁹ This policy would be subject to the same conditions that applied to the UK's existing regional fifth freedoms policy, namely that the grant of such rights would be subject to a case-by-case consideration within the context of the current position in the UK's bilateral aviation relationship with the country concerned.²⁰

In September 2012 the Government set up the independent Airports Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Howard Davies, charging it to report on long term capacity options by summer 2015. **A full account of the Commission, its reports and its conclusions is given in the HC Library briefing paper on Heathrow, [CBP 1136](#).**

2010, p23 and Liberal Democrats, [Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010](#), April 2010, p42

¹⁶ [HC Deb 15 June 2010, c48WS](#)

¹⁷ DfT, [South East Airports Taskforce: Report](#), July 2011, pp7-8

¹⁸ further information on the Act can be found in HC Library briefing papers [RP 12/07](#) and [CBP 5333](#)

¹⁹ 'Fifth freedoms' are the rights granted to allow an airline of one country to land in a different country, pick up passengers and carry them on to a third country

²⁰ DfT, [Aviation Policy Framework](#), Cm 8584, March 2013, p34

1.3 Conservatives, 2015-

Unlike in 2010, the Conservative Party's manifesto for the 2015 General Election did not mention Heathrow, it only said that if it formed the next Government it would "respond to the Airports Commission's final report".²¹ When the Commission's final report was published in July 2015, recommending support for a third runway at Heathrow over expansion at Gatwick, the then Secretary of State for Transport, Sir Patrick McLoughlin, said:

There are a number of things that we must do now in order to make progress. First, we must study the substantial and innovative evidence base that the commission has produced. Secondly, we must decide on the best way of achieving planning consents quickly and fairly if expansion is to go ahead. Thirdly, we will come back to Parliament in the autumn to provide a clear direction on the Government's plans.²²

Brexit

On 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. The Prime Minister, Theresa May, triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union on 29 March 2017 to begin the process of exit.

The UK is currently in the process of negotiating its exit from the EU, to take effect on 29 March 2019, a transition period and the shape of our future relationship with the EU. As those negotiations are ongoing, we do not yet know with any certainty what the effects of Brexit on transport policy, industry, services and operations will be.

More information on Brexit and its possible implications for aviation can be found in HC Library briefing paper [CBP 7633](#).

In October 2016 the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, announced that the Government would support a third runway at Heathrow and would bring forward a draft National Policy Statement (NPS) and a consultation on airspace change in 2017.²³ Mr Grayling stated that the Government would give three assurances as regards Heathrow expansion: to tackle air quality and noise; keep costs down; and ensure that the whole UK would benefit from expansion.²⁴

The draft NPS and the consultation on airspace change were published in February 2017.²⁵ However, because of the June 2017 General Election, scrutiny of the NPS – and subsequently the Government's timeline for parliamentary approval – was delayed and is now expected to be completed in summer 2018.²⁶ The Government relaunched the public consultation on a revised draft NPS in October 2017 following feedback from its initial consultation process.²⁷ The draft NPS was

²¹ Conservative Party, *Strong Leadership, A Clear Economic Plan, A Brighter More Secure Future: The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015*, 14 April 2015, p14

²² [HC Deb 1 July 2015, c1484](#)

²³ [HC Deb 25 October 2016, cc162-66](#)

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ DfT, *Heathrow expansion: draft Airports National Policy Statement* and *Reforming policy on the design and use of UK airspace*, both 2 February 2017

²⁶ [Update on draft Airports National Policy Statement process: Written statement - HCWS119](#), 7 September 2017

²⁷ DfT press notice, "[Government outlines next steps for delivering airport expansion](#)", and DfT, *Revised Draft Airports National Policy Statement: new runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the South East of England*, both 24 October 2017

subsequently scrutinised by the Transport Select Committee, which published their report in March 2018.²⁸ We are expecting a vote on the draft NPS before Parliament adjourns for the 2018 Summer recess in July.

In July 2017 the Government published a call for evidence on a new, long-term aviation strategy. It was centred around six themes:

- Customer service;
- Safety and security;
- Global connectivity;
- Competitive markets;
- Supporting growth while tackling environmental impacts; and
- Innovation, technology and skills.²⁹

In April 2018 the Government announced its 'next steps' in taking forward the strategy.³⁰ It is aiming to hold a formal public consultation on its draft strategy in autumn 2018 and to publish its final strategy in the first half of 2019.³¹

In a statement on 5 June the Secretary of State said that the government "is supportive of airports beyond Heathrow making best use of their existing runways ... any proposals should be judged on their individual merits by the appropriate planning authority, taking careful account of all relevant considerations, particularly economic and environmental impacts".³² Alongside the statement the DfT published a new strategy document on making the best use of existing runways.³³

²⁸ Transport Committee press notice, "[Airports National Policy Statement: more work needed before Parliamentary approval](#)", 23 March 2018

²⁹ DfT press notice, "[Government sets out vision for future of UK aviation](#)", 21 July 2017; see also: DfT, [Beyond the horizon: The future of UK aviation - A call for evidence on a new strategy](#), July 2017

³⁰ DfT press notice, "[Government puts consumers at heart of the aviation industry](#)", 7 April 2018

³¹ DfT, [Beyond the horizon: The future of UK aviation – Next steps towards an aviation strategy](#), April 2018, p84

³² DfT, [Proposed Heathrow expansion](#), 5 June 2018

³³ DfT, [Beyond the horizon: The future of UK aviation - Making best use of existing runways](#), 5 June 2018

2. Gatwick

2.1 Ownership

Gatwick is currently owned and managed by a consortium led by the private equity infrastructure investment fund [Global Infrastructure Partners \(GIP\)](#). According to press reports, equity stakes have been sold to the following:

- [South Korea National Pension Service](#) (12%);³⁴
- [Abu Dhabi Investment Authority](#) (15%);³⁵
- [CalPERS](#), the California Public Employees Retirement System (12.7%);³⁶ and
- [The Future Fund](#), an Australian sovereign wealth fund set up by the Australian Government in 2006 (17.2%).³⁷

Over the past six months there has been speculation that GIP is considering selling its stake in Gatwick for a rumoured £10 billion.³⁸

GIP bought Gatwick from BAA plc (now Heathrow Airport Holdings Limited) in late 2009 for £1.5 billion.³⁹ Of the sale price, £55 million was conditional on future traffic performance and the buyer's future capital structure.⁴⁰

A report by the Competition and Markets Authority, seven years after Gatwick's sale, found that overall the forced divestment of the former BAA's London airports portfolio had led to growth in passenger numbers and routes served. It concluded that "the quantifiable benefits ... relating to the benefits from increased passenger numbers such as improved connectivity and choice and downward pressure on fares, would total around £870 million by 2020".⁴¹

Gatwick was sold following an instigation by the competition authorities. For details visit the [archived website](#) of the Competition Commission.

2.2 Regulation

As described with relation to Heathrow, above, a new system of airports regulation came into being in 2014. The CAA granted a licence to Gatwick in February 2014. The licence includes commitments that Gatwick gave on airport charges for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2021. The licence includes conditions that require the airport to address issues such as cleanliness, queuing times, seating availability and information provision in the passenger interest. In addition, it must develop and update robust contingency plans to ensure it is well

Details of Gatwick's economic licence are available to view on the [CAA website](#).

³⁴ "S Korean fund to buy 12% stake in Gatwick", *Financial Times*, 2 February 2010

³⁵ "Abu Dhabi fund purchases 15% stake in Gatwick", *Financial Times*, 5 February 2010

³⁶ "Calpers buys stake in Gatwick", *Financial Times*, 19 June 2010

³⁷ "Future Fund gets Gatwick go-ahead", *Financial Times*, 20 December 2010

³⁸ See e.g. "[Gatwick owners' £175m windfall as sale is tipped](#)", *The Times*, 31 December 2017 and "[Gatwick Airport owner Global Infrastructure Partners mulling £10bn sale](#)", *City A.M.*, 15 April 2018

³⁹ "BAA agrees deal to sell Gatwick for £1.5bn", *Financial Times*, 21 October 2009;

⁴⁰ BAA press notice, "BAA announces the sale of Gatwick Airport", 21 October 2009; and Ferrovial press notice, "[BAA sells Gatwick airport for 1.657 billion euro](#)", 21 October 2009

⁴¹ CMA press notice, "[CMA report shows benefits of BAA break-up](#)", 16 May 2016

prepared for potential disruption and can manage it effectively when it does occur.⁴²

In its mid-term licensing review published in December 2016, the CAA concluded that the new framework appeared to be working well. It said that it was:

... encouraged by the general support the new regulatory framework continues to receive, and have not seen evidence [...] of] a material adverse impact on passengers. Indeed, traffic growth has continued and GAL has met most of its service quality targets.

Therefore, we are not proposing specific changes to the commitments framework at this stage. However, we have potential concerns about the progress of airfield investment projects and some aspects of GAL's relationships with airlines, and will include both of these issues in our ongoing monitoring of GAL's performance under the commitments framework.⁴³

2.3 Airspace/flight path changes

UK airspace contains a network of corridors, or airways. These are usually ten miles wide and reach up to a height of 24,000 feet from a base of between 5,000 and 7,000 feet. They mainly link busy areas of airspace known as terminal control areas, which are normally above major airports. At a lower level, control zones are established around each airport. The area above 24,500 feet is known as upper airspace. All of these airways are designated "controlled airspace". Aircraft fly in them under the supervision of air traffic controllers and pilots are required to file a flight plan for each journey, containing details such as destination, route, timing and height.

Throughout Europe there is a move to restructure European airspace, add capacity, improve safety and increase the overall efficiency of the European air transport network through the Single European Sky (SES) project.⁴⁴

In the UK, the CAA is responsible for the [planning and regulation of all UK airspace](#). Its overarching duties are to maintain a high standard of safety in the provision of air traffic services; secure the most efficient use of airspace; satisfying the requirements of users of all aircraft (commercial aviation, military, and general aviation); and taking account of environmental objectives in line with Government guidance. At the operational level, [NATS](#) (formerly National Air Traffic Services) is the

⁴² CAA press notice, "[CAA publishes licences for economic regulation at Gatwick and Heathrow](#)", 13 February 2014

⁴³ CAA, [Economic regulation: A review of Gatwick Airport Limited's commitments framework - Findings and conclusions](#), CAP 1502, 22 December 2016, p5

⁴⁴ the [SES legislative framework](#) consists of four Basic Regulations (549/2004, 550/2004, 551/2004 and 552/2004) covering the provision of air navigation services (ANS), the organisation and use of airspace and the interoperability of the European Air Traffic Management Network (EATMN)

monopoly provider of air traffic control services to aircraft flying in UK airspace, and over the north-east quadrant of the North Atlantic.⁴⁵

The UK and Ireland is planning to meet the SES requirements through the Future Airspace Strategy (FAS) which sets out a plan to modernise airspace by 2020.⁴⁶

The biggest changes in the UK are in the south east of England (whose airspace was designed over 40 years ago) where London's five big airports and many smaller aerodromes create some of the world's busiest and most complex skies. The first technical report of the Airports Commission's Senior Delivery Group (SDG), published in February 2015, gave a summary of the requirement to redesign the UK's airspace and the challenge associated with it:

Regardless of new runway capacity in the south east, the airspace and route network is not sufficiently resilient or sustainable to fully meet the country's future transport needs. Inbound and outbound routes are not optimised for each individual airport. The frequent interactions between routes prevents aircraft from climbing and descending efficiently, thereby creating additional aircraft noise, fuel burn and CO2 emissions over London and also reducing the spare capacity available to deal with disruption when it occurs.

Alongside the benefits and national/European strategic importance of modernising our airspace and route network, there is one main area of potential dis-benefit – the impact of redistributing aircraft noise. The modernisation programme is underpinned by the transition to satellite-based PBN [Performance Based Navigation] routes that are more precise and flexible than conventional routes. Although PBN routes are designed with the intention of avoiding population centres as far as practicable, changes in the distribution of aircraft noise can have a significant impact on the communities that are affected.⁴⁷

There were airspace trials at both Heathrow and Gatwick as part of the London Airspace Management Programme (LAMP). Gatwick was particularly controversial with local residents and the proposed changes around the airport were postponed.⁴⁸

In November 2013 changes were made to the standard instrument departure routes (SIDs) at Gatwick which enabled the use of modern satellite technology for air navigation for the first time. In its post-implementation review, published in November 2015, the CAA found that:

- Six routes had delivered the aim of the change and would remain in their current state;

A judicial review regarding the airspace changes was withdrawn at the end of 2016; for more information see: [Gatwick Obviously Not.](#)

⁴⁵ note the monopoly only extends above 4,000 feet, below that airports can tender and award contracts for air traffic and approach services; the German equivalent of NATS, DFS, has won a number of such contracts, for example at Gatwick

⁴⁶ CAA, *Future Airspace Strategy for the United Kingdom 2011 to 2030*, June 2011

⁴⁷ SDG, *Airports Commission's Senior Delivery Group - Technical Report Number 01*, February 2015, pp3-4

⁴⁸ NATS, *London Airspace Consultation*, October 2013; LGW, *London Airspace Change – Gatwick Local Area Consultation*, May 2014; GACC, *London Airspace Change – Gatwick Local Area Consultation*, August 2014 and NATS press notice, "[NATS postpones network changes relating to Gatwick](#)", 1 October 2014

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- One route had not delivered the aim of the change and should be modified to an acceptable standard; and
- Two routes had delivered the aim of the change to an acceptable standard but Gatwick had been required to consider whether modification could deliver a better outcome.

Gatwick and the CAA said that they would work to implement any acceptable modifications.⁴⁹

Gatwick ran a six month trial of a departure route called '[ADNID](#)' between February and August 2014. The route, which was trialed on westerly departures from Gatwick, was tested to gather data as part of wider work looking at how to use UK airspace more effectively and efficiently, as well as how to make the most of Gatwick's single runway capacity (as part of FAS). Gatwick intends to use the findings from the trial and consultation to re-visit its airspace change proposal and route designs. Press reports indicated that there was an uptick in noise over some areas during the course of the trial. Gatwick argued that this was not a direct result of the trial but because of generally increased activity, which was partly seasonal and partly to do with renewed economic growth.⁵⁰

In February 2017 the Department of Transport published a consultation on UK airspace policy reform.⁵¹ In October the Government announced it would proceed with most of the main proposals in the paper included establishing an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise; providing industry with ways to assess noise impacts and choose between route options to help them manage change more effectively; and bringing compensation policy for airspace changes in line with policy on changes to aviation infrastructure.⁵² New Air Navigation Guidance took effect from 1 January 2018 and a new airspace change process began on 2 January under CAP 1616.

Further information on the airspace strategy and changes to the airspace change rules can be found in HC Library briefing paper [CBP 7889](#).

2.4 Second Runway

Background

When it purchased the airport in 2010, GIP stated that it had no interest in putting forward planning permission for a second runway 'for at least a decade'.⁵³ This was unsurprising as there is a long-standing agreement in place that prevents development of a second runway at Gatwick until 2019. The so-called '[Gatwick Agreement](#)' was signed in August 1979 between what was then the British Airports Authority and West Sussex County Council. The agreement was consequent to BAA's application for a second terminal, a wider runway and other associated changes

⁴⁹ CAA press notice, "[CAA decision on Gatwick Airport airspace departures review](#)", 11 November 2015

⁵⁰ "[Gatwick Airport's potential new departure route trial ends amid complaints of increase in noise in West Kent](#)", *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 11 August 2014

⁵¹ [HC Deb 2 February 2017, cc1182-3](#) and DfT, [UK airspace policy: a framework for balanced decisions on the design and use of airspace](#), CM 9397, 2 February 2017

⁵² DfT, [Consultation Response on UK Airspace Policy: A framework for balanced decisions on the design and use of airspace](#), Cm 9520, 24 October 2017

⁵³ "Gatwick's new owner rules out second runway for a decade", *The Times*, 9 February 2010

and was given a 40-year duration. The agreement was made following the council's concern that "the development of the second terminal ... would either be advanced as a justification or ultimately lead to a demand for a second operational runway at Gatwick Airport or both possibilities".

The previous Labour Government indicated in the 2003 White Paper that it would not seek to overturn the Gatwick Agreement.⁵⁴ However, it did take the precaution of safeguarding the land that would be required to build an additional runway at Gatwick after 2019.⁵⁵ In July 2012 Gatwick published a new master plan setting out a vision of the airport to 2020. This reiterated that there were no plans for a second runway during this period and that the airport would focus on making the best of its existing infrastructure.⁵⁶ The master plan has yet to be revised in light of developments over the past six years.

Airports Commission

This changed following the setting up of the Airports Commission in September 2012 and the airport began a campaign advocating expansion at its site rather than at Heathrow. In its December 2013 interim report, the Commission stated that Gatwick's single runway was operating at a high level of utilisation and forecast that it would reach capacity within less than ten years. It said that a second runway could generate more point-to-point movements, possibly to new destinations, which could feed into a 'hub' network that might attract a network carrier (like, e.g. BA at Heathrow).⁵⁷ In terms of noise, the Commission concluded that the numbers of people affected by noise in the Gatwick area was "relatively low".⁵⁸

The Commission proceeded to consider a second runway at Gatwick and two proposals for Heathrow in more detail and in July 2015 it concluded that while Gatwick had "presented a plausible case for expansion", being "well placed to cater for growth in intra-European leisure flying", it was "unlikely to provide as much of the type of capacity which is most urgently required: long-haul destinations in new markets".⁵⁹ It therefore recommended that a third runway at Heathrow proceed as it could provide the desired capacity most easily and quickly.

Gatwick's response to the Commission's final report

Gatwick was naturally disappointed by the decision and said that its proposal remained the "only deliverable option". It said that although the Commission had opted for Heathrow, the evidence it had taken showed that expansion at Gatwick was deliverable.⁶⁰ Gatwick published an analysis of the Final Report in August 2015, setting out its areas of concern. It charged that "key elements of the Commission's report and evidence base, although comprehensive in many respects, suffer from

⁵⁴ op cit., [The Future of Air Transport](#), paras 11.69-11.71

⁵⁵ ibid., paras 11.80-11.81

⁵⁶ Gatwick Airport, [Gatwick master plan 2012](#), July 2012

⁵⁷ op cit., [Interim Report](#), paras 6.73-6.76

⁵⁸ ibid., para 6.80

⁵⁹ op cit., [Final Report](#), p4

⁶⁰ Gatwick Airport press notice, "[Gatwick expansion remains only deliverable option](#)", 1 July 2015

omissions or superficial analysis in some critical areas and are not sufficiently thorough in a number of important respects, nor are the Commission's assessments or their presentation in the final report always balanced and fair".⁶¹ It highlighted the nature and timing of the need for additional capacity; regional connectivity; the economic benefits to the UK; noise impacts; air quality and deliverability risks as the main areas of concern.

Sir Howard Davies wrote to the London Assembly and the Secretary of State for Transport in September 2015 responding to these particular points.⁶² In a separate statement, he said that Gatwick's dossier "appears to repeat many points which Gatwick made to the Commission in the course of its work and which, unsurprisingly, were carefully considered. They did not alter the Commission's view that Heathrow was the best option".⁶³

Over the following 12 months, until the Government announced its support for a third runway at Heathrow in October 2016, Gatwick continued to press its case for expansion and there was speculation that even if the Government said it would support Heathrow Gatwick could still consider putting in a planning application for a second runway.⁶⁴ In his statement on 25 October 2016 the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, said that although Gatwick had not been selected as the Government's preferred site for expansion, it "remains a key part of our national transport picture and will continue to do so in the future".⁶⁵

In its response to the announcement Stewart Wingate, Chief Executive of Gatwick, said that the airport was "disappointed as we do not believe this is the right answer for Britain" and warned that "the challenges facing Heathrow have not changed. Our message today is that Gatwick stands ready to proceed when the time comes".⁶⁶

Future expansion plans

Since the Government's decision to support expansion at Heathrow above Gatwick and the publication of its draft National Policy Statement in support of that goal, Gatwick has continued to indicate that it would like to continue to grow.

In November 2016 Stewart Wingate said that he would still like to see a second runway at Gatwick "at the earliest opportunity".⁶⁷ There were also reports that Gatwick would "press ahead with plans to plough £1.2bn into a radical overhaul of its terminals over the next five years,

⁶¹ Gatwick Airport, [A Second Runway for Gatwick: Airports Commission Final Report – Areas of Concern](#), 10 August 2015, p2

⁶² Airports Commission, [Sir Howard Davies: letters following the Airports Commission final report](#), 28 September 2015

⁶³ [Sir Howard Davies statement](#), 19 August 2015

⁶⁴ see, e.g. "[Gatwick Airport to pursue second runway regardless of government's decision on Heathrow expansion](#)", *City A.M.*, 15 November 2015 and "[Gatwick plans to build second runway - even if Heathrow wins airport expansion bid](#)", *The Independent*, 8 October 2016

⁶⁵ [HC Deb 25 October 2016, c163](#)

⁶⁶ Gatwick press notice, "[Gatwick Airport responds to Government decision on airport capacity](#)", 25 October 2016

⁶⁷ "[Gatwick boss Stewart Wingate wants government to approve his "complementary scheme" to Heathrow expansion](#)", *City A.M.*, 21 November 2016

despite losing out to Heathrow in the race to expand its capacity".⁶⁸ These plans were initially set out in the airport's 2014-24 Business Plan, which outlined plans to create two 'world class' terminals by refurbishing the North Terminal to match the improvements in the South Terminal.⁶⁹

In January 2018 there were reports that Gatwick is investigating the potential of using its emergency runway to boost capacity once the Gatwick Agreement expires in 2019.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "[Gatwick to move ahead with £1.2bn upgrade after losing out to Heathrow](#)", *Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 2016

⁶⁹ GAL, [Revised Business Plan to 2024](#), January 2013

⁷⁰ "[Gatwick Airport mulls use of emergency runway to boost capacity as it waits for expansion green light](#)", *City A.M.*, 22 January 2018

3. Stansted

3.1 Ownership and regulation

Stansted is owned by [Manchester Airports Group \(MAG\)](#). MAG bought the airport in 2013 from the former BAA for a reported £1.5 billion.⁷¹ MAG is owned by Manchester City Council (35.5%); the Codan Trust Company (Cayman) Limited (trustee for the IFM Global Infrastructure Fund (35.5%));⁷² and the remainder by the Greater Manchester borough councils.⁷³

In 2014 the CAA determined that Stansted does not have substantial market power as regards either its passenger or cargo markets.⁷⁴ Stansted had been subject to price controls under the previous regulatory system.⁷⁵

Stansted was sold following an instigation by the competition authorities. For details visit the [archived website](#) of the Competition Commission.

3.2 Expansion

Background

Stansted has been talking about a second runway for more than a decade, though it withdrew the relevant planning application in 2010⁷⁶ and has not indicated any intention more recently to return to the issue. This was the 'G2 application' to Uttlesford District Council, originally submitted by BAA in Summer 2006. It followed the more successful 'G1 application' to lift planning conditions on passenger and movement limits.

In April 2006 Stansted submitted a planning application for permission to lift its planning condition limits on passengers and air transport movements.⁷⁷

This was refused, went to appeal and a public inquiry was held in 2007. The Inspector recommended that the appeal be allowed and planning permission granted, subject to conditions. In October 2008 the then Secretary of State, Geoff Hoon, broadly agreed with the Inspector's assessment and granted planning permission to change two planning conditions:

- for an increase in the number of flights to and from the airport in a year from 241,000 to 264,000 air traffic movements; and

⁷¹ "[Manchester Airport buys Stansted for £1.5bn](#)", *Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 2013

⁷² IFM is in turn owned by 29 separate pension funds

⁷³ information from the [FAME](#) database; see also MAG, [Prospectus for £5,000,000,000 Multicurrency programme for the issuance of Bonds](#), 31 January 2014

⁷⁴ CAA, [Notice Of Determination under Section 8 of the Civil Aviation Act 2012 – Stansted Airport](#), CAP 1135, 10 January 2014; and [Market power determination for cargo services in relation to Stansted – statement of reasons](#), 24 March 2014

⁷⁵ CAA, [De-designation of Manchester and Stansted airports for price control regulation: The CAA's advice to the Secretary of State](#), July 2007; CAA, [Extending the current price control on Stansted Airport - a consultation](#), December 2006; and DfT, [Decision on the regulatory status of Stansted Airport](#), February 2008

⁷⁶ BAA Stansted press notice, "[Stansted to withdraw runway planning application](#)", 24 May 2010

⁷⁷ "[Stansted expansion fails to take off](#)", *The Times*, 30 November 2006

- an increase in the maximum number of passengers using the airport from 25 million to 35 million per annum.⁷⁸

In March 2009 Sir Thayne Forbes dismissed an appeal in the High Court by the pressure group Stop Stansted Expansion.⁷⁹ Leave to appeal the decision was rejected in June 2009 and the group announced that they would seek no further appeals.⁸⁰

Airports Commission

The Airports Commission looked at two options for a new hub airport at Stansted: a four runway and a five runway airport. It rejected both of these in their own right but also largely in comparison with the Thames Estuary/Isle of Grain hub option. For example, although the £59 billion to £80 billion cost would be less than the Thames Estuary option, Stansted would:

- not offer the same potential to address noise impacts in the south east of England;
- have significant environmental and heritage impacts (over 150 listed buildings fall within the proposed footprint for the site, including two Grade I and seven Grade II* buildings, as well as four Scheduled Monuments and one Registered Park and Garden and it would involve the loss of more than 2,000 hectares of high quality agricultural land and up to six villages); and
- come with significant risks associated with the level of additional capacity which might be provided.⁸¹

In terms of expanding Stansted on a smaller scale (i.e. with a second runway), in its interim report the Commission did not think there was a strong demand case as the airport is currently running at about half its permitted capacity; costs would be greater than expanding at Gatwick and its 45 to 60 minute catchment area would be smaller.⁸²

The Airports Commission's final report, published in July 2015, stated that the airport has a long-term aim to secure the lifting of the current planning cap of 35 million passengers a year. The Commission said that it supported "the need to ensure local people are secure in having appropriate levels of protection from unacceptable negative impacts of living close to an airport, but also recognises the strategic importance of Stansted Airport to the wider London airport system". It went on:

... there may be a case for reviewing the Stansted planning cap if and when the airport moves closer to full capacity. Its forecasts indicate that this would not occur until at least the 2030s, although the airport has seen rapid growth since its purchase by MAG, which if sustained over a longer period would bring this forward. The Commission does not have any view as to the outcome of any such review, but is clear that it should be carried out on the basis of a full detailed assessment and consultation

⁷⁸ DfT, *Variation of Planning Conditions, Stansted Airport, Town and Country Planning Act 1990*, October 2008

⁷⁹ "High Court dismisses attempt to block expansion at Stansted", *Financial Times*, 14 March 2009

⁸⁰ SSE press notice, "[Appeal court refuses to re-open Stansted case](#)", 18 June 2009

⁸¹ op cit., *Interim Report*, paras 6.47-52

⁸² ibid., paras 6.56-6.57

process, taking into consideration the environmental and other issues that supported the imposition of the original cap, as would be expected for any planning application of this nature and scale.⁸³

Future expansion plans

In 2014 Stansted held a consultation on its Sustainable Development Plan, which sets out how the airport believes it can develop its single runway to a capacity of around 40-45 million passengers a year within pre-existing environmental limits on noise and air transport movements.⁸⁴

In December 2015 there were calls from Stansted to lift the flights limit at the airport following strong growth.⁸⁵ In December 2016 the airport announced plans for a new £130 million arrivals building to support growth to 35 million passengers a year and enable full use of the single runway.⁸⁶ It was granted planning permission in April 2017.⁸⁷

In February 2018 the airport submitted a further planning application to Uttlesford District Council to raise the current cap on the number of passengers it is permitted to serve from 35 million passengers per annum (mppa) to 43 mppa.⁸⁸ Consultation on the application closed at the beginning of May. Information can be found on the [UDC Planning Portal](#).

⁸³ op cit., [Final Report](#), p332

⁸⁴ Stansted Airport, [Sustainable Development Plan 2015](#) [accessed 23 November 2016]

⁸⁵ "[Stansted airport owner urges government to increase flight limit](#)", *The Guardian*, 3 December 2015

⁸⁶ Stansted press notice, "[London Stansted Airport unveils plans for new £130 million arrivals building to transform the passenger experience](#)", 14 December 2016

⁸⁷ Stansted press notice, "[London Stansted Airport receives planning permission for new £130 million arrivals building](#)", 5 April 2017

⁸⁸ Stansted press notice, "[London Stansted Airport commits to long-term growth within approved flight and noise limits](#)", 22 February 2018

4. Biggin Hill

[Biggin Hill](#) provides specialist aviation for predominantly the business market. It services commercial aircraft, and business and general aviation, including training pilots and recreational users.

Biggin Hill Airport has existed since 1917 and the London Borough of Bromley has owned the freehold since 1974 when it was purchased from the Ministry of Defence. It is currently operated by [Regional Airports Ltd.](#), which entered into a 125-year lease of the airport in 1994.⁸⁹

In 2015 the airport published a noise action plan.⁹⁰

It states that its future strategy is to build “on its success as a service centre for business and general aviation by attracting more businesses and jobs to be based at the airport, and to maximise the use of existing surrounding industrial property”.⁹¹ In early 2017 the airport secured funding for the construction of new office space, a hangar and business parking facility, and the development of a hotel.⁹²

⁸⁹ Bromley Council, [Interactive Unitary Development Plan, Written Statement - 12. Biggin Hill Airport and environs](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹⁰ Biggin Hill Airport, [London Biggin Hill Airport Noise Action Plan](#), 28 August 2015

⁹¹ Biggin Hill Airport, [The future](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹² “[London Biggin Hill airport expansion set for take off thanks to £15m loan from HSBC](#)”, *City A.M.*, 28 March 2017

5. London City

[London City Airport](#) is located in the East London Docklands. It was sold in February 2016 to a consortium led by the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Wren House, part of the Kuwait Investment Authority, for a reported £2 billion.⁹³

It published its master plan in November 2006, setting out its plans to maximise use of the airport's existing runway.⁹⁴ In August 2007 the airport submitted a planning application to Newham Borough Council proposing an increase in flight movements from 80,000 to 120,000 per annum. In October 2008 Newham granted planning permission for the application subject to a completion of a legal agreement, finalised in July 2009.⁹⁵

In 2012 the airport published its plans for the City Airport Development Programme (CADP).⁹⁶ This involved seven aircraft parking stands, an extended terminal building, a new eastern passenger pier and associated works on a platform over the King George V Dock. The airport submitted its plans to Newham Council in 2013, there followed public consultation and a public inquiry.⁹⁷ The former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, had objected to the application, but these objections were withdrawn by the new mayor, Sadiq Khan, in May 2016.⁹⁸ The Government granted planning permission in July 2016.⁹⁹ The West Terminal Extension is due to be complete by 2020, while phase 1 of the East Terminal Extension is planned for 2022.¹⁰⁰

In its July 2015 final report, the Airports Commission said that it expected the airport to take into account "the needs of its local residents, to reinforce the airport's valuable connectivity and specialist business travel provision for London".¹⁰¹

In May 2017 the airport published a Carbon Management Policy.¹⁰² It also has an Air Quality Action Plan that sets out a range of measures to be implemented up until the end of 2018.¹⁰³

⁹³ "[London City Airport bought for £2bn by Canadian-led group](#)", *BBC News*, 26 February 2016; it was previously majority-owned by GIP, who own Gatwick

⁹⁴ London City Airport, [Airport Master Plan](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹⁵ London City Airport, [About CADP](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹⁶ London City Airport, [CADP Summary](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹⁷ for information on the campaign against CADP, see Hacan East, [press releases](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

⁹⁸ "[New London Mayor Removes Obstacle to City Airport Expansion](#)", *Bloomberg*, 10 May 2016

⁹⁹ HMT/DfT press notice, "[£344 million London City Airport expansion hailed by Chancellor](#)", 27 July 2016

¹⁰⁰ London City Airport, [The future of London City Airport](#) [accessed 4 June 2018]

¹⁰¹ op cit., [Final Report](#), p333

¹⁰² London City Airport, [Carbon Management Policy](#), May 2017

¹⁰³ London City Airport, [Air Quality Action Plan 2016-2018](#), 2015

6. Luton

[London Luton Airport](#) is owned by Luton Borough Council and operated on their behalf by London Luton Airport Operations Ltd., comprised of the Spanish airports manager Aena S.A. (51%) and Australian investment company AMP Capital (49%).¹⁰⁴

In September 2001 London Luton published a 'development brief', setting out its vision for the next phase of development at the airport.¹⁰⁵ This was subsequently adopted by Luton Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Luton published a draft master plan in October 2005 which contained proposals for a full-length replacement runway south of the existing runway, a new south terminal, additional aircraft stands and a new control tower. Following consultation the airport company withdrew the plan in July 2007, reportedly because the returns available under the remainder of the 30-year lease (granted in 1998) were not sufficiently attractive to justify the investment.¹⁰⁶ In September 2012 the airport published a revised master plan, setting out a programme to improve access to and facilities at the airport; expand capacity to accommodate 18 million passengers per year within the existing boundaries; and improve sustainability.¹⁰⁷

In its July 2015 final report, the Airports Commission said that following planning application approval Luton would be able to achieve a capacity of 18 million passengers per year by 2025 and deliver an improved passenger experience. The Commission supported discussions to develop rail infrastructure and services for the airport.¹⁰⁸

Luton is currently undergoing a £150 million development which will see the airport increase its capacity to 18 million by 2020. Phase 1 opened in July 2017.¹⁰⁹ Phase 2, due to open in 2018, will see the opening of the newly extended terminal building, and a new boarding pier with eight boarding gates.¹¹⁰ In April 2018 work began on the new £225 million Luton Airport light rail link, which will transport passengers from Luton Airport Parkway station to the airport in under four minutes once it opens in 2021.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Luton Airport press notice, "[AMP Capital set to buy stake in London Luton Airport from Ardian](#)", 24 April 2018

¹⁰⁵ Luton Airport, [Airport Development Brief](#) [archived 22 April 2012]

¹⁰⁶ "Expansion at Luton airport scrapped", *Financial Times*, 7 July 2007

¹⁰⁷ Luton Airport, [Revised Masterplan](#), September 2012

¹⁰⁸ op cit., [Final Report](#), p333

¹⁰⁹ DIT press notice, "[Phase one of £150 million Luton Airport transformation completed](#)", 13 July 2017

¹¹⁰ Luton Airport press notice, "[LLA welcomes Aviation Minister](#)", 19 January 2018

¹¹¹ "[Construction begins on Luton Airport rail link](#)", *Rail Technology Magazine*, 17 April 2018

7. Lydd (London Ashford) Airport

[Lydd Airport](#) is ultimately owned by Saudi-based [FAL Holdings](#), with a minority of shares held by [Atlantic Bridge Aviation Ltd.](#)

In January 2007 the airport submitted formal planning applications to Shepway District Council for a runway extension and other improvements. Both of these applications were called-in by the Secretary of State in June 2010.¹¹² A public inquiry finished looking at the proposals in September 2011 and in April 2013 the Government gave the go ahead for a 294m runway extension with a 150m starter extension and a new passenger terminal.¹¹³ The runway extension is expected to be complete by early 2019.¹¹⁴

In April 2016 the Government announced that Lydd would be the permanent home of search and rescue helicopters in the south east.¹¹⁵

¹¹² [Letter from GOSE to Shepway District Council](#), 22 June 2010

¹¹³ [Letter from CLG/DfT to London Ashford Airport](#), 10 April 2013 and [London Ashford, The Future of Lydd Airport](#) [accessed 5 June 2018]

¹¹⁴ ["Lydd Airport expansion: New terminal build could be brought forward says boss Hani Mutlaq"](#), *Kent Online*, 1 February 2017

¹¹⁵ MCA press notice, ["Lydd Airport made permanent home of search and rescue helicopters in the south-east"](#), 13 April 2016

8. Manston

Over the past five years or so there has been a great deal of interest in the future of aviation on the site of the former Manston Airport.

There has been no functioning airport on the site for four years and its owners currently have a planning application to turn the site into a mixed-use area comprised of homes and business premises. A rival proposal to reinstate aviation operations on the site was withdrawn in May 2018.¹¹⁶

The former RAF Manston was purchased by a New Zealand company, Infratil, in August 2005 for £17 million. Over the next eight years commercial passenger services from the airport were operated by Flybe, Monarch and KLM. In October 2013 Infratil announced they would sell Manston Airport for £1 to a company called Manston Skyport, owned by Ann Gloag, co-founder of Stagecoach Group. It began running the airport in November 2013. Manston Skyport announced its intention to close Manston airport in March 2014, less than four months after its purchase. The airport closed in May 2014 and its commercial aerodrome licence was returned to the CAA.

While the chances of any passenger operations returning to Manston are probably slim, there is a proposal to turn it into a 'freight hub', championed by Sir Roger Gale MP, RiverOak and others.¹¹⁷ In May 2018 RiverOak explained their proposals to turn Manston into "a hi-tech, efficient operating environment ... a very compelling proposition for the air cargo market".¹¹⁸ They are supported by the [Supporters of Manston Airport](#) campaign group. The Government's view is one of tacit support for the return of aviation operations but has insisted that it is a matter for the local community, the owners and the local authority.¹¹⁹

The Manston site was used as a temporary lorry park in Summer 2015 during Operation Stack.¹²⁰ The Government has said that the site is not included in its long-term plans to deal with congestion to and from the Channel ports after Brexit.¹²¹

A summary of the Manston case can be found in the Transport Select Committee's report [Smaller Airports](#) (Ninth Report of Session 2014–15), HC 713, 13 March 2015.

¹¹⁶ ["Plans to re-open Manston Airport have been 'temporarily' withdrawn"](#), *Kent Live*, 8 May 2018; details of what is happening at Manston can be found on the [Thanet Council website](#)

¹¹⁷ RiverOak Investments media statement, "[Government confirms support for an air freight hub at Manston](#)", 15 September 2016

¹¹⁸ RiverOak Investments media statement, "[RiverOak Strategic Partners parliamentary briefing focuses on the hi-tech potential for Manston to improve air cargo productivity](#)", 23 May 2018

¹¹⁹ [HC Deb 15 September 2016. c1020](#)

¹²⁰ this is explored further in: Transport Committee, [Operation Stack](#) (First Report of Session 2016–17), HC 65, 1 June 2016

¹²¹ [HC Deb 14 May 2018. c68](#)

9. RAF Northolt

[RAF Northolt](#) in west London is used by both military and civilian aircraft and is home to units from all three Armed Services and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

In 2011 the MOD engaged Ernst & Young and Mott MacDonald to make a technical and commercial assessment of future development options for RAF Northolt (codenamed Project Ark). A redacted copy of that report was published in February 2012.¹²²

After consideration of the options in that report the MOD announced in April 2013 that RAF Northolt would remain an active military base. However, in recognition of the pressures on the defence budget, it was also announced that further revenue would be generated from the existing estate by increasing the number of commercial flights at the site from a cap of 7,000 to 12,000 per year. That increase was within NATS airspace capacity recommendations and was approved following consultation with the DfT, CAA and NATS.¹²³ Representatives from RAF Northolt also met with the Leader of the London borough of Hillingdon, local councillors, and residents' associations to discuss the proposal.¹²⁴

As part of its work, the Airports Commission examined several proposals that would allow for more extensive use of RAF Northolt for commercial air traffic that would otherwise use Heathrow. Among those proposals was the integration of RAF Northolt into Heathrow to enable it to be used as a 'third runway'. In its July 2015 final report, the Commission said that it was not "convinced that there is a credible solution for providing a transfer service between RAF Northolt and Heathrow or that RAF Northolt is a viable long-term option to address Heathrow's capacity constraints".¹²⁵ It also cautioned that NATS had identified a "high likelihood" that a new North West runway at Heathrow:

... would have significant operational impacts on RAF Northolt [...] While the scheme would not require the end of military movements at Northolt, there is a significant risk that it might not be possible to continue to operate civilian flights from it without some impact on the capacity of the scheme (potentially on a one-for-one basis, reducing capacity by up to 7,000 ATMs).¹²⁶

There was a debate on the future of Northolt in September 2017. Responding to the debate the defence minister, Tobias Ellwood, said that "RAF Northolt remains a core station with many diverse units. The aerodrome is needed by the military every day and is valuable for contingency ... A decision on its future use was taken in 2013, and we will not revisit that decision".¹²⁷

¹²² EY for the MOD, *Project Ark: Technical and commercial assessment of future development options for RAF Northolt*, 1 February 2012

¹²³ [HC Deb 5 September 2013, c489W](#); see also open letter from Squadron Leader R J Willis on RAF Northolt Future Brief, 29 April 2013 [[HC DEP 2013-1536](#)]

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, c488W

¹²⁵ *op cit.*, *Final Report*, p315

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p233

¹²⁷ [HC Deb 13 September 2017, c322WH](#)

10. Southampton

[Southampton Airport](#) is owned and operated by AGS Airports, a consortium of the international infrastructure companies Ferrovial and Macquarie. It was sold by Heathrow Airport Holdings¹²⁸ in October 2014 along with Aberdeen and Glasgow for a combined reported price of £1 billion.¹²⁹

Southampton published its master plan in November 2006, setting out its plans for development within its current boundaries.¹³⁰ There were reports in 2014 that that airport was intending to add a 150 metre starter strip to the existing runway within 10 years.¹³¹

¹²⁸ of which, as explained above, Ferrovial owns 25%

¹²⁹ "[Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton airports sold in £1bn deal](#)", *BBC News*, 14 October 2016

¹³⁰ Southampton Airport, [Our vision](#) [accessed 5 June 2018]

¹³¹ "[Runway expansion could create 1000 new jobs at Southampton International Airport](#)", *Southern Daily Echo*, 13 March 2014

11. Southend

[Southend Airport](#) is owned by the Stobart Group. It completed a two-phase development programme in 2014. The first phase involved the opening of a new railway station and air traffic control tower; a new, re-sited, passenger terminal building; and runway extension. The second stage, an extension to the new terminal, was completed in early 2014.¹³²

In its July 2015 final report, the Airports Commission said that it was “pleased to see the consultation on the West Anglia Route Study taking in to account the future growth of the airport” and welcomed “the focus in the London Southend Airport Joint Area Action Plan on local road improvements that would support the airport and develop local business parks”.¹³³

In October 2017 Southend submitted a planning application to Rochford District Council to extend its terminal building.¹³⁴

¹³² Southend Airport, [About us](#) [accessed 23 November 2016]

¹³³ op cit., [Final Report](#), pp333-4; see also: Rochford District Council, [London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan](#), 2014 [accessed 23 November 2016]

¹³⁴ [“London Southend Airport is gearing up for expansion next year as terminal extension plans take off”](#), *City A.M.*, 9 October 2017

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