

10<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Planning Department  
Eastleigh Borough Council

Sent via email: [planning@eastleigh.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastleigh.gov.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Re: Southampton Airport Full Planning Application - F/19/86707**

Further to our letter of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, please accept this letter as a supplementary formal consultation response to, and support for, the planning application reference F/19/86707 from Southampton Airport for the construction of a 164 metre runway extension at the northern end of the existing runway, associated blast screen to the north of the proposed runway extension, removal of existing bund and the reconfiguration and extension of existing long stay car parking to the east and west of Mitchell Way to provide an additional 600 spaces.

Since our last submission in support of this planning application, there have been two, unrelated, significant events that reinforce the need for the runway extension, namely, the collapse of FlyBe on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In consideration of these events, the LEP is keen to reiterate its support for the planning application to extend the runway and urges Eastleigh Borough Council to approve the application for the benefit of the Solent economy and to strengthen connectivity throughout the UK in the face of the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is the lead economic growth organisation covering the Solent economy, which extends from Hayling Island in the east to the Dorset border in the west, and includes Portsmouth and Southampton, the Isle of Wight and the world famous Solent waterway.

With three islands, three peninsulas, and 340 miles of coastline, the Solent economy is inextricably influenced by its coastal geography, which gives it a unique economic and cultural identity. Overlaid on this outstanding physical geography and natural environment is a growing population, the most urbanised area of southern England outside London, resulting in a complex and unique geography where an outstanding natural environment, and intensely urban and industrial geography coexist.

This distinctive physical and socio-economic geography, and the role of the area as home to a number of nationally significant economic assets such as the Port of Southampton, the ExxonMobil Petrochemical site at Fawley, Her Majesty's Naval Base in Portsmouth, and Southampton International Airport define the Solent as a Gateway economy, where connectivity is key.

The presence of such as large number of nationally significant gateway assets places unique demands on economic infrastructure - and in particular transport infrastructure and operations - that are not felt elsewhere. It also presents an unrivalled opportunity to unlock the potential of this world class economy, which resides within a world class environment and our work to develop a new economic strategy for the Solent - Solent 2050 - as directed by central Government, is placing our Gateway assets - including Southampton International Airport - at its core. It is imperative, therefore, that proposals for the extension of the runway proceed so that the airport can grow and strengthen the key role it performs for the Solent and wider central south economies.

Southampton International Airport has one of the shortest runways of any commercial aerodrome in the UK. The current length of the runway is a significant limiting factor on the mix, size and range of commercial aircraft that can be accommodated, which restricts the breadth of destinations served and does not support the resilience to market fluctuations that a larger range of carriers would provide. The UK Government's Aviation Policy Framework (2013) sets out national policy that allows the aviation sector to continue to make a significant contribution to the UK's economic growth. A key priority of this framework is to work with the aviation industry to make better use of existing capacity at airports across the UK, which is exactly what the application is proposing.

The Government also announced in February 2017 that it is developing a new strategy, which will explore how the UK can maximise the key role that the world class aviation sector plays in developing global trade links. More recently, the Government National Policy Statement (NPS) 2018 evidenced the benefits of, and gave support for, wider airport development, as forecasts show continuing passenger growth into the 2050s and beyond. Whilst the primary focus of the NPS is development at Heathrow Airport, it reasserts that other Government policy on national airport capacity is set out in the Aviation Policy Framework published in 2013. Consequently, the NPS does not affect Government

The Airport Masterplan aims to bring about growth in passenger numbers and an improvement in the passenger experience. This will be achieved through extension of the runway - allowing larger planes with an increased range to operate from the Airport - as well as the provision of better passenger facilities and improvements to surface access. Through implementation of the Masterplan, the Airport will be better placed to attract new carriers and increase the number of destinations served. This will support the Solent economy through improved connectivity and access to markets for businesses, through an extended ranges of destinations for residents, and supporting our world-class visitor economy attracting new visitors.

The collapse of FlyBe and the impact on the aviation sector of COVID-19 mean that the airport runway extension is now needed, not only for growth, but for the airport to survive as a viable operation.

FlyBe accounted for circa 90% of all flights to/from Southampton Airport and so the impact of the company's collapse was immediate and devastating. The routes connected the Solent economy and a broad regional population and businesses with destinations in the wider UK and mainland Europe, and did so in a way that was both time and cost-effective, that other modes could not replicate. Anecdotal evidence is indicating that, now, to get to these destinations, people are continuing to use air travel, but travel (predominately by car) to alternative airports a considerable distance away, and so creating an environmental dis-benefit and reducing the attractiveness of the Solent as a place to locate business and invest. An example of the continued need for fast connections from the Solent to the wider UK is businesses operating in the Solent's maritime defence cluster, which provides much of the sophisticated technology that is deployed within the systems of Royal Navy vessels being built elsewhere in the UK.

On the back of the FlyBe collapse has come the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a devastating impact on the demand for passenger air travel. Indeed, it is forecast that there will be a decline in world total passengers in 2020 of between 52% and 59%<sup>1</sup>. Ensuring local economies are connected to each other will be an important feature of economic recovery, and in this regard, Southampton Airport must be in a position whereby it can support the wider recovery of the Solent economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a damaging impact on the Solent economy with a potential £11bn short term drop in GVA and 26,800 jobs expected to be lost across the Solent in 2020 according to Experian's latest Covid 19 scenario. Research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies<sup>2</sup> has identified that coastal economies - such as the Solent - will be most negatively impacted by the pandemic and it is imperative that opportunities - such as the plans to extend the runway - are supported that can bring forward new investment that can have a catalytic impact on the wider economy.

Southampton International Airport represents an unprecedented opportunity to secure environmentally sustainable passenger growth owing to its co-location with Southampton Airport Parkway Station. The range of enhancements to sustainable transport that form part of the Masterplan, and as set out in the WSP Transport Assessment that supports the planning application, underscore this opportunity. The increased range of destinations and routes that will be unlocked by the runway extension will mean that the airport will be able to provide for passengers from the region, which, presently, are making car trips to Gatwick, Heathrow, or further afield to access the routes they need.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Documents/COVID-19/ICAO\\_Coronavirus\\_Econ\\_Impact.pdf](https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Documents/COVID-19/ICAO_Coronavirus_Econ_Impact.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14888>

The proposed development is committed to a range of measures to mitigate environmental impacts, including, ensuring that the airport's direct operations become carbon neutral by 2030; ensuring that all of Southampton International Airport's vehicles (excluding the fire response vehicles) are electric by 2025, subject to regulatory approval; and ensuring that ground electrical power is available to all aircraft by 2030, amongst others. It is recognised that the mitigation package is expected to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions due to operation of the proposed development, by at least a saving of 65,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, due to Southampton International Airport becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The connectivity that air transport provides powers economic growth regionally and nationally. For many companies here in the Solent, this connectivity is essential to day-to-day operations, with connections to domestic and overseas markets, facilitating the flow of trade, tourism, investment and knowledge. The Solent is internationally facing, and as the UK looks to new markets, global connectivity from a regional airport makes connectivity easier, opens up new markets, and helps attract inward investment.

The Solent LEP, therefore, remain supportive of the application from Southampton International Airport Ltd and encourages Eastleigh Borough Council to approve these ambitious and deliverable proposals, so that the airport may strengthen its role within the Solent economy.

Should you have any questions in relation to this letter, please contact Stuart Baker ([stuart.baker@Solentlep.org.uk](mailto:stuart.baker@Solentlep.org.uk) / 023 9268 8676).

Yours sincerely,



Brian Johnson  
Chairman  
Solent Local Enterprise Partnership