

Heathrow Consultation

Impact on South East London

Introduction

Heathrow is consulting on the biggest changes to its flight paths since the airport opened in 1946.

It could bring benefits to SE London. For the first time the area could get a daily break from the aircraft.

At present many areas are overflowed all day long by Heathrow planes. That could change.

A lot of places also get overflowed by London City aircraft. They are not subject to this consultation but some of the changes proposed for the Heathrow planes could ease the burden on these areas.

Why are the flight paths changing?

Even if Heathrow remains a two runway airport the flights would change. The changes are being driven by new technology at airports across the world. Air traffic controllers are moving from a ground-based system to guide the planes in and out of the airport to a more sophisticated satellite-based one.

It means that aircraft can be guided more precisely along narrow routes. It is the sort of flight paths London City introduced in 2016. They save the airlines money and fuel, increase the resilience of the airport and are expected to cut CO₂ emissions from each plane.

London City made the mistake of only introducing one set of routes so all the planes fly over certain communities. There is no sharing of the noise.

Heathrow's plan is very different. It wants to put in place a number of these concentrated routes so that they can be rotated to give people a break from the noise.

The consultation assumes a new runway will be built at Heathrow.

So, what's being proposed?

We don't yet know the exact flight paths. What Heathrow does show in its consultation document are 'blocks': areas of London where there will be one or more flight paths.

Check out pages 2-17 to see the arrivals blocks:

<https://afo.heathrowconsultation.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/01/3649-HRW-3R-A3-maps-booklet-AW-update-2-V1.pdf> There will be some departures over parts of the area – check out pages 20-21.

This is how the respite will work

The pattern of alternation which is being proposed:

For people under a flight path heading towards either the **northern runway** (that is the new flight path to the new runway) or the **southern runway**, this is the offer:

¼ of the day with no planes

½ the day with 'moderate' overflying (i.e. a plane every few minutes rather every 90 seconds)

¼ of the day with a plane every 90 seconds

For people under a flight path heading towards the **middle runway** (the current northern runway)

½ day with no planes

½ day with a plane every 90 seconds

But there could be some more respite on offer for people within these blocks, thus providing each area with more respite.

Areas of Concern

There are some areas of concern:

Departures: In some of the blocks Heathrow says: *"Flight paths within this area may be active at the same time as flight paths within some of the departures design envelopes over the same area, but departures would be much higher (over 5000ft)."* Our view is it would be disappointing if flight paths could not be designed so that areas this distance from Heathrow avoid being overflown by arrivals and departures.

The 'Squeezed Middle': These are areas which could be impacted by aircraft heading for the middle runway plus either the northern or southern runways. Unless the flight paths are carefully designed, meaningful respite for these areas may not occur.

Meaningful Respite: It is important that the flight paths are far enough away from each other for the respite to be meaningful.

Co-ordination with London City: It would be important that the new flight paths should be coordinated with London City flight paths to avoid, where possible, areas being overflown by both sets of aircraft at the same time.

None of this should take away from the fact that collectively we have won our campaign for the principle of respite to be extended to SE London. But these are points to be made in our responses to the consultation and in our campaigning beyond that.

What else is the consultation looking at?

It also covers night flights, westerly preference (which could have a bearing on SE London) and Independent Parallel Approaches.

We have put short briefings on our website covering these topics: www.hacan.org.uk

We have also produced a 4 page summary of the consultation document which might help you navigate the consultation: <http://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Heathrow-Consultation-summary.pdf>

The full consultation can be found here: <http://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Heathrow-Airspace-and-Future-Operations-Consultation-document-Final-low-res.pdf>

The consultation closes on 4th March.

What happens next?

Heathrow will assess the responses to the consultation. It will then publish detailed flight paths for consultation in 2021/22, with a view to having the new flight paths in place by 2026.