

1 May 2019

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Secretary of State,

I am responding to your request for further information on how potential airspace changes will affect your constituency. I'm grateful for the interest that you continue to have in these important issues.

As you will already be aware, Heathrow's Airspace and Future Operations consultation closed on 4 March and we are currently considering all of the feedback we received, a summary of which will be published at the next stage of our consultation.

At this stage of the overall airspace change process, it is not possible to say exactly how Surrey Heath will be impacted by airspace modernisation as we have not yet designed flight paths. The design envelopes presented in our Airspace and Future Operations Consultation showed where it is theoretically possible to position one or more flight paths but it does not mean that the final flight paths will be spread across the full width of the envelope. The envelopes also show the lowest and highest possible estimated heights at which aircraft would fly. I have attached a table that details how the design envelopes A5, A6, B4, D4 and I3 would impact each of the 3 postcodes that you raised. GU18 5YY (Lightwater) is potentially impacted by 4 envelopes, GU15 3HD (Camberley) by 4 envelopes and GU20 6QF (Windlesham) by 3 envelopes.

I know that you were keen to understand more about the Consultation and so I have answered a series of questions below. I hope that you find this useful.

## **How is Surrey Heath overflown today?**

The three example areas you identified are mainly overflown either by aircraft arriving into Heathrow when the airport is on easterly operations (i.e. when there are winds from the east which is around 30% of the time), making their way from one of the holding stacks towards their final approach to land at Heathrow; or by departing aircraft when the airport is on westerly operations.

I have provided more specific information below:

- GU20 6QF: On easterly operations, arrivals are typically between 6,000ft-7,500ft. On westerlies, departures are typically between 5,000ft-10,000ft.
- GU18 5YY: On easterly operations, arrivals are typically between 6,000ft-7,500ft. On westerlies, departures are typically between 5,000ft-10,000ft.

- GU15 3HD: On easterly and westerly operations, arrivals are typically between 5,000ft-7,500ft. On westerlies, departures are typically between 6,000ft-10,000ft – however, the majority of these are to the east of the area.

The overall pattern and heights of Heathrow's air traffic have remained similar for many years, although the position of aircraft will generally vary day to day depending on factors such as weather conditions, aircraft type and the position of other flights in the area. This will, then, affect how many planes fly over these areas on any given day.

I have attached maps and high-level analysis of flights over Surrey Heath to show the general pattern of air traffic in and out of Heathrow in relation to the area. The maps show a day of flights on easterly operations and a day of westerly operations in relation to the three areas you identified.

Other attachments show high-level analysis of a day and of a week of easterly operations and westerly operations over Lightwater respectively – located in the middle of the areas you mentioned, this should give a general overview of the number and height of aircraft over this general area. My colleagues gathered this information using our online tool, 'xPlane' – this is available on the Heathrow Noise website and allows residents to carry out their own analysis of information of flights over their area, such as the number, height and types of aircraft. It can be found at: <http://xplane.bksv.com/xplane/>.

### **Why is there a spread of aircraft over these areas today? Will this change in future?**

On easterly operations, all three areas you identified are overflowed by arriving aircraft – these are flights that have been directed by NATS air traffic controllers from one of Heathrow's holding stacks towards the final approach to land. There are no defined routes, which is why there is a broad spread over the area.

On westerly operations, all three areas are overflowed by departing aircraft which have left the Noise Preferential Routes (NPRs) after they have reached 4,000ft – at which point NATS air traffic controllers direct them towards their destination. However, in the future aircraft will remain on the route until they reach 7,000ft, thus removing the spread that is seen today.

### **What are the current noise levels of these areas?**

As mentioned in my previous letter, we have recently deployed a noise monitor in the grounds of the Hammond Junior School in Lightwater. This will record noise levels over a six month period and is visible on our Webtrak flight tracking system at <https://webtrak.emsbk.com/lhr>. A community noise report will be produced once the data has been processed. The next stage of consultation on flight path options will include noise effects which will permit comparison with noise levels gathered from this newly deployed monitor.

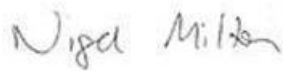
### **What are the next steps of the airspace change process?**

We will be presenting final flight path options and full analysis of each route in the final stage of consultations for both IPA and expansion. Currently the final statutory airspace consultation for introducing Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA) is planned for 2020, and expansion for 2022.

At that stage, we will consult on the detailed impacts that the developed options may have. These could show that some areas within the design envelopes are affected less than today, some more, and some similar. However, we cannot know what those areas will be until we have done the detailed design work. We believe that this work should not start until we have a full understanding of noise sensitive locations within different local communities, which is why in the recent consultation we were asking for information about local factors that people think we should consider before we work up the detailed flight path options.

I hope this is helpful and if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch. It was good to catch up with you briefly in Aberdeen last week and I look forward to continuing our discussions on these important issues for you and your constituents.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel Milton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nigel Milton  
Director of Communications