

**NATS and Green Issues TCN Consultation
Councillor briefing record – South Cambridgeshire District Council**

17 April 2008, 3pm

Attendees:

James Garland - Green Issues

Harri Howells - NATS, Kathy Wood - NATS

Cllr David Bard, Cllr Sue Ellington, Cllr Vicky Ford, Cllr Nick Wright, Cllr Tony Urgee, Cllr Sebastian Kindersly, Cllr Jamie Lockwood, Cllr John Batchelor, Cllr Nigel Cathcot, Cllr Cicely Murfitt, Cllr Daphne Spink, Cllr Richard Barrell, Adam Finch, Alison Talkington – South Cambridgeshire District Council

- The first issue raised related to leaflet distribution. The NALC had delayed mailing out the leaflets for nearly a month – the package was postmarked 19th February but a number of parish councils in the district did not receive leaflets until 18th March. The request was made to extend the consultation because of this. **NATS is investigating the late delivery and will provide a response when this investigation is completed.**
- The issue of ‘adequacy’ in terms of the consultation was raised. The example of North Devon Health Authority was raised as an example of a programme of consultation that had been found to be inadequate and was consequently called in by the Government. HH explained that the TCN consultation had followed and exceeded the guidelines agreed with the CAA on the basis of their CAP 725 guidance on the airspace change process.
- The point was made that it would make more sense to overfly populated areas where there is ambient noise rather than more tranquil, rural areas. HH explained that the government guidance (“Guidance to the civil aviation authority on environmental objectives relating to the exercise of its air navigation functions”, January 2002, Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions) states “Government policy will continue to focus on minimising over-flight of more densely populated areas below 7000ft.” NATS has followed this guidance in the positioning of the holds, the consequence of which is that the positions of the proposed holds are over what are considered tranquil rural areas by their inhabitants.
- The question was asked as to why holds couldn’t be positioned out to sea. HH explained that if holds were placed out to sea, planes would have further to fly

when arriving from the north, west and south. Furthermore, the holds need to be close enough to the airport to enable air traffic control to create an efficient stream or 'sequence' of aircraft for landing during busy periods. An efficient sequence is one where aircraft have a safe spacing between each other, and that also ensures the runway is fully utilised. If the spacing between aircraft is more than it needs to be, fewer aircraft are able to land within a given time period and the airborne queue can get longer. This creates more emissions and exposes communities to more noise because the aircraft fly above them for longer. Holding over the sea would be too far away from the airports to enable air traffic control to efficiently sequence aircraft for landing at either Luton or Stansted. Variations in aircraft flying speeds present increasing problems with aircraft catching up with, or pulling away from, one another as the distance they need to fly to reach the airport increases. This problem is exacerbated where Air Traffic Control have to integrate aircraft coming from different directions into one single sequence for landing. With a hold over the sea, these factors would affect air traffic control's ability to sequence the aircraft efficiently, increasing airborne queuing which would increase both delays and emissions. Holding over the sea has therefore been rejected as an option for the TCN development.

- The point was made that the descriptions of noise levels were not helpful. For example, describing a noise level as being similar to a busy office is ambiguous. KW explained that it is very difficult to quantify sound as people perceive it differently. The categories of equivalent noise presented in the TCN consultation are those used by the CAA when attempting to equate Lmax noise measurements in decibels to 'everyday' noise.
- A request was made for a demonstration of noise levels at certain heights. HH said that standing under the Loral hold would give an indication of the potential noise but stressed that many factors can influence perception of noise including variables such as the weather. NATS organised a session for council officers under the LOREL stack during the development of the proposal. **HH to confirm whether South Cambridgeshire were invited or attended.**
- The point was made that in avoiding built up areas, planes may have to fly further, producing more emissions as a result. KW explained In the TCN proposal, routes below 4000ft have mainly been positioned to avoid flying over sizeable population centres. Between 4000ft and 7000ft, NATS has tried to balance the demands of mitigating noise and reducing fuel burn and emissions. Above 7000ft increasing fuel efficiency and reducing emissions has taken priority. NATS' responsibility is to safely manage aircraft through the skies of the UK. The

TCN proposal aims to carefully balance a range of issues including noise, visual intrusion, air quality and emissions in order to minimise the environmental impact while ensuring safety and providing capacity to meet reasonable forecast growth (as per NATS' license requirements).

- The point was made that noise will increase if larger planes fly into Luton and Stansted. NATS has presented the Lmax noise results based on the worse performing aircraft types in terms of noise that NATS expects to be in use at the airport up to 2015. KW stated that as engine technology improves, planes are becoming quieter, and therefore the worst performing types tend to be aircraft that are already in use.
- KW then explained that the airspace change was being proposed in order to accommodate the growth in the aviation sector and did not take into consideration the proposals for extra runways at airports within the TCN area.
- The question was asked as to why flight paths could not follow main roads where there is already noise. HH explained that main roads tend to link major population areas so this was not possible without increasing the population overflow. In addition the circuits shown for the holding areas represent the widest likely holding pattern and that aircraft would in fact follow a range of smaller circuits depending on their speed. This is because the size of the circuit aircraft take in the hold is designed to take a set amount of time for an aircraft to complete one circuit (generally 4 minutes). Aircraft fly more slowly at lower levels and therefore the size of the 4 minute circuit gets smaller as the height decreases (so that a circuit at a lower level takes the same time as those at a higher level). Furthermore, aircraft leaving the hold often follow truncated circuits. Both these factors mean that the circuit shown should be considered the widest extent of the holding pattern, and so holding aircraft may be seen anywhere within it. Therefore even if one circuit could be defined to follow a road structure, it would not preclude aircraft from flying over the areas within the circuit.
- The point was made that there are three airfields within three miles of each other in one part of the district and that one is used by Mark Jeffries, an aerobatic world champion who often flies up to 10,000ft. He had objected to the airspace change when consulted.
- **The question of how often planes stack at Stansted at present was asked. HH to provide additional figures**
- The issue of noise was then raised. KW talked through heights and decibel levels at each height

- The point was then made that 57dba counted as creating a 'significant community annoyance'. KW made the point that this threshold relates to the Leq noise measurement, not the Lmax noise measurement presented in Part E of the documents. Leq modelling was undertaken for TCN however the resultant 57 dBA noise contours ends well outside the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk region (see Part F and Part G of the consultation document for the presentation of Leq noise contours around Luton and Stansted respectively). Leq represents a measure of average noise across a day, whereas Lmax presents the loudest an aircraft would be as it passes overhead. NATS believes the Lmax values in Part E are a more appropriate metric than Leq to enable non-specialist stakeholders in the Cambridgeshire area to assess the potential noise impact on their locality.
- The question of whether Luton arrivals would fly under the proposed Stansted hold South of Newmarket was raised. HH explained that incoming planes to Luton would fly over the hold, staying above 15,000ft until past Newmarket.
- NATS was then asked if there was a difference in sound levels between a plane in hold at 7,000ft and a plane descending at 4,000ft. KW explained that the Lmax noise tables present a range of potential noise values at each height which take into account factors like the amount of thrust (i.e. whether climbing, descending or level) and the height of the ground above sea level. As a consequence the range of noise values at each height do overlap significantly, which indicates that sound levels of a plane in hold at 7,000ft and a plane descending at 4,000ft may be similar *in some circumstances*.
- HH then explained that the peak times for Luton and Stansted traffic were broadly in line with the rush hour periods.
- The issue of air quality and the potential health implications was then raised. KW stated that it is widely accepted that local air quality is not an issue for aircraft at levels above 3000ft. The route and flight paths maps presented in Part E of the consultation document show that traffic over Cambridgeshire area would not be below 3000ft. Furthermore NATS has undertaken analysis into the affects of these changes at much lower level, near to the airports, which has concluded that these changes would not affect local air quality, even at lower levels.
- The issue of different housing types and noise perception was then raised. One member stated that he hardly noticed overflying planes as he had no chimney whereas a person he knew suffered from a certain amount of intrusion as overflying planes cause his chimney to reverberate.
- The next issue raised related to whether consideration had been given to proposed new developments such as North Stowe. HH explained that some

consideration had been given to proposed housing developments but this could only be done up to a point with so much development in the region and preference had to be given to existing population centres.

- Referring to a map, HH explained that planes could occasionally fly outside of the black lines shown but the majority of flights would be within them.
- One member then said that many people she had spoken to had complained about the amount of jargon in the technical document
- The next question asked was why parish councils were not consulted face to face. JG explained that this was impossible given that TCN covered somewhere in the region of 800 parish councils
- The issue was then raised of the effect on bloodstock in and around Newmarket. The point was made that this very significant as this industry brings a good deal of money and employment to the area. HH said that these are the sort of issues that NATS were seeking to capture in the consultation and, whether appropriate, consideration would be given to mitigating any potential affect before a final proposal is presented to the CAA. If changes are made that significantly affect where aircraft would fly, then a further period of consultation may be required.
- Relating to the consultation process, NATS explained that the final decision would be signed off by the CAA
- A number of additional questions were presented by Cllr Ford. NATS will provide a comprehensive written set of responses. This will be sent to Alison Talkington for onward distribution once compiled.