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CABINET
MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC STRATEGY

HEATHROW, FOURTH TERMINAL

Memorandum by the Secretaries of State for Trade
and the Environment

We are about to grant planning permission for a fourth passenger terminal at Heathrow, in accordance with the recommendation of the Inspector, Iain Glidewell QC, whose report of a 93-day public local inquiry into objections to the British Airports Authority's proposal was received in May. The Inspector concluded that overriding national need requires the construction of the fourth terminal.

2. The Inspector also recommended a number of conditions to be attached to the grant of permission, and a number of other actions to be taken by or at the behest of Government. We have reached agreement on the handling of all but two of these recommendations, namely that there should be no more than 260,000 air transport movements (atms) a year at the airport as a whole, and that there should be a total ban on night-time taxi-ing to and from Terminal 4, because of its close proximity to residential areas. The Inspector was of the opinion that all that could be done to mitigate the noise burden for residents of these areas should be done. His main conclusions on the subject of noise from aircraft in flight and on the ground are reproduced in Annex 1.

3. The Secretary of State for the Environment shares the Inspector's great reluctance to grant planning permission in this case at all. However he accepts that pressing national need now leaves little choice. The majority of the Inspector's recommendations about noise pollution have had to be set aside; but he considers that due account must be taken of the Inspector's view that the present levels of noise around Heathrow are "unacceptable in a civilised country, and that everything which can be done to lessen this noise should be done". The Secretary of State for Trade believes that these proposals should be looked at in the light of measures which are already in hand to phase out completely night flights by noisier aircraft by the mid-1980s. Moreover he considers that the application of these restrictions would adversely affect the operation of the new terminal and would be politically unacceptable at a time when the Government is about to announce its conclusions on the third London Airport.

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Constraints on the use of capacity

4. We have to decide whether the principle of imposing a limit on atms is acceptable and, if so, whether the level recommended by the Inspector would be the appropriate one. The Inspector's proposed limitation (260,000 atms) is substantially below Heathrow's runway capacity which is estimated by the BAA to be as high as 278,000 atms based on the current mode of operation of the runways. Before the mid-1980's passenger demand in the London area is likely to exceed the existing capacity of the London area airports. There is therefore an urgent need for additional capacity to be provided in the mid-1980's (before a third London airport can come into operation). To impose a capacity constraint which is substantially below the present capacity of the airports' runways would restrict our ability to use the airport's resources as effectively as possible at a time when the London area airports are likely to be under considerable pressure. One possibility we have discussed is to fix a limit of 275,000 atms at Heathrow. This would be much less restrictive than the Inspector's recommendation. However, the Secretary of State for Trade believes that to impose any constraint at all has three major drawbacks:

- a) it is wrong that a grant of planning permission for one terminal building should be the occasion for restricting use of the airport as a whole;
- b) a higher figure than that recommended by the Inspector will not satisfy local residents but it will establish a dangerous precedent for overall capacity limitations at other designated airports which we have hitherto resisted;
- c) it will be seen by residents in the vicinity of the site of a third London airport as an attempt to force traffic from the existing London airports at a greater rate than would otherwise be the case.

The Secretary of State for the Environment agrees that the limit on atms proposed by the Inspector is too low. However, he considers that it is essential that there should be a limit and, in his view, 275,000 - which is above the currently assessed runway capacity (270,000) - is the appropriate level and could be reviewed as quieter aircraft came into service.

Night-time taxi-ing

5. The Inspector has recommended that no aircraft should be permitted to operate to or from the terminal between the hours of 2300 and 0700 except in cases of delay and emergency. Apart from the general considerations outlined above, the Secretary of State for the Environment believes firmly that this condition should be accepted. Taxi-ing at night would otherwise intensify and prolong the distress and disturbance experienced by residents of Bedfont and Stanwell. The new

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terminal is very much closer to houses than any of the existing three. It would in any event be presentationally bad to set aside the Inspector's recommendation on a point of such deep and obvious concern to him and to the objectors. In view of the small number of landings at night, the need to convey passengers by bus from the aircraft to the terminal would be a minor inconvenience compared with the public outcry risked by extending the area of discontent. The Secretary of State for Trade's view is that, once accepted, such a condition is unlikely to be removed and that the recommendation will place a significant limitation on the use of the new terminal and therefore its contribution to coping with the expected growth of traffic at Heathrow in the 1980's. Moreover there will be practical problems in operating Terminal 4 with restrictions which do not apply to Terminals 1, 2 and 3 and which impose competitive disadvantages on airlines using Terminal 4. He believes that the noise of taxi-ing aircraft at night could be considerably reduced if the following suggestions were adopted:

- a) a restriction on night movements along the taxi-way to the east of the terminal which is closest to local residents (see map at Annex 2). This would be a new restriction not proposed by the local authorities or the Inspector;
 - b) within the overall quotas for night movements at Heathrow a limit of 1400 movements per year and not more than 130 in any month would be applied to the fourth terminal;
 - c) trials to test the extent to which noise can be reduced at night by shutting down one or more engines on an aircraft.
6. The views of the Committee are invited.

J. N.

Department of Trade
28 November 1979

M. H.

EXTRACTS FROM INSPECTOR'S REPORT REGARDING NOISE AT TERMINAL 4

Noise from aircraft in flight: "It is my view that the present levels of such noise around Heathrow are unacceptable in a civilised country, and that everything which can be done to lessen this noise should be done. I find that ... with Terminal 4 the decrease in noise levels which can reasonably be anticipated by 1990 will be less by only 1.5 or 2 points than will be the case if T4 is not built. Nevertheless I find that this effect of T4 in slowing down the improvement even to this limited extent should only be accepted, if at all, because of overriding national necessity." (12.2.3.)

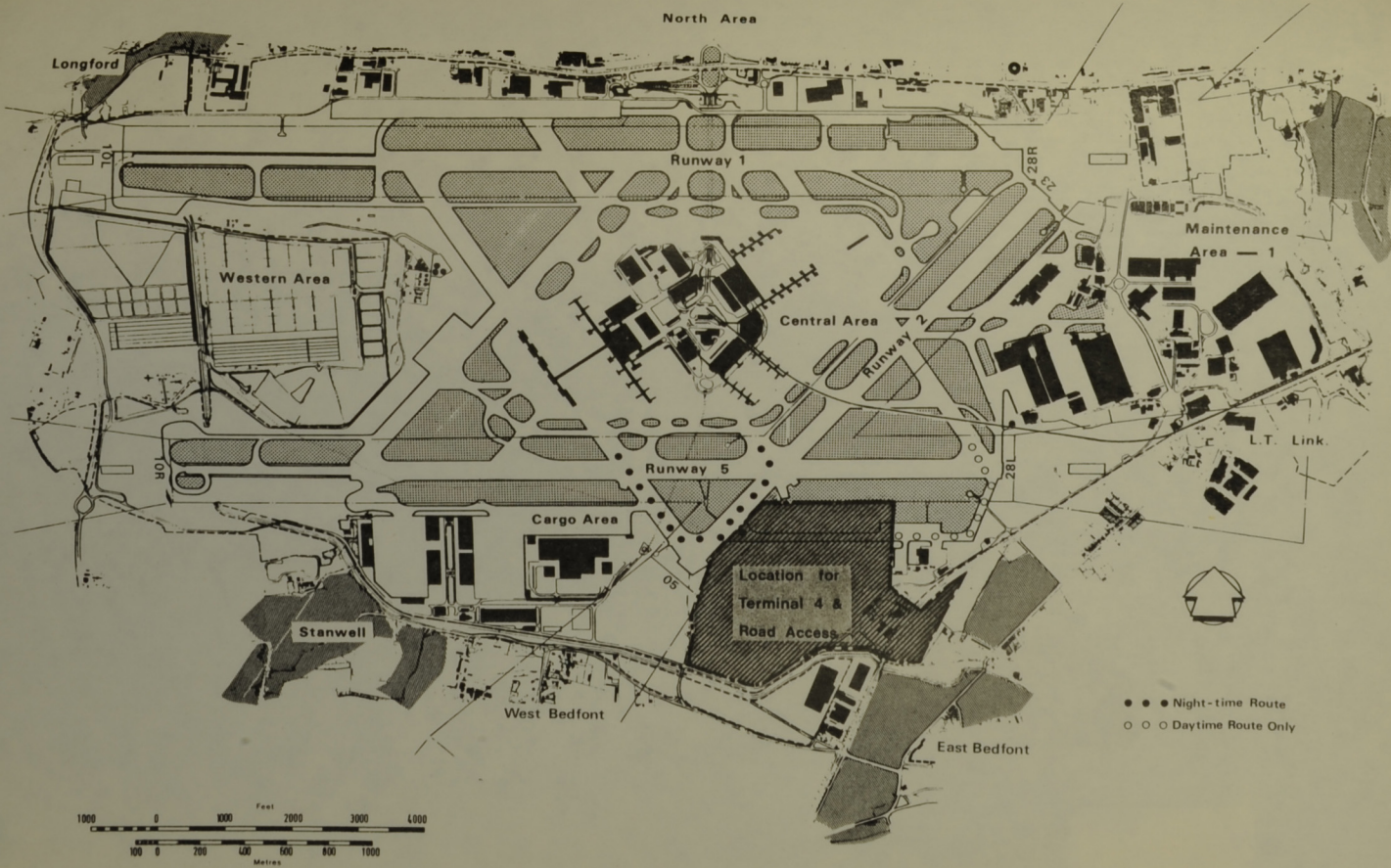
Noise from aircraft on the ground: "The people living in the communities south of the airport are already subjected to considerable levels of noise from the airport ... if T4 is constructed aircraft using it when on the ground would add appreciably to these noise levels especially when taxi-ing to and from the runways; ... this additional noise would, from time to time, be intrusive by day, and a considerable nuisance at night; ... this added burden of noise should not be imposed on the communities unless it is absolutely necessary and ... if it is to be imposed all reasonably practicable steps to lessen the burden should be taken." (12.2.4.) "In my view, it is in the highest degree desirable that the [aircraft] stands should all be on the "airport" side of the building." (5.20.2.)

Taxi-ing: "I thus find that, if T4 is constructed, the noise of taxi-ing aircraft will add substantially to the noise in the "troughs" between take-offs and landings, sometimes by amounts exceeding 10 dBA. In Mr Vulken's words "The noise environment of residents in East Bedfont will be considerably worsened by the effect of Terminal 4." In relation to noise of aircraft taxi-ing ... via the east end of Runway 5, I conclude that he is correct and I reach the same conclusion in relation to the effect of aircraft taxi-ing to 10R on residents in Stanwell. This worsening is patently undesirable, for people who are already subjected to a considerable level of noise ... At night it would in my judgement be a real and considerable annoyance to them." (5.17.9 and 5.17.10)

Night time operations: "Very few scheduled flights are timed to take off or land between these hours [2300 and 0700] ... At present such nuisance as they cause is largely while they are on the approach. After landing they move to the Central Area i.e. away from houses. But this would not be true of T4. If a condition similar to 12(a) [no night time operations at T4] were imposed, it... would mean that the aircraft would have to be parked for the night ... in the Central Area, and the passengers brought to T4 by bus. This is an inconvenience which ... should be accepted in order to spare the inhabitants of East Bedfont from additional noise at night." (13.2.13)

Night noise: "There is evidence that the airline industry attach importance to a facility for some night movements. Nevertheless the effect of noise at night is obviously more noticeable and annoying even than during the daytime. When the Secretary of State for Trade considers his policy for the period after 1981 he will, I am confident, wish to restrict night movements at Heathrow to the absolute minimum. Movements at night related to T4 are more a question of noise of aircraft on the ground." (5.11.4)

HEATHROW AIRPORT, GENERAL ARRANGEMENT - SOURCE: BAA 47



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