



HILLINGDON

LONDON

The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department of Transport
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Ref: ST/rt

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Dear Secretary of State

Heathrow expansion – delivery approach and impacts on Hillingdon

As you will be aware, the London Borough of Hillingdon is the host authority for Heathrow Airport and therefore the borough most directly impacted by the Government's proposals for Heathrow expansion.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate Hillingdon Council's longstanding opposition to, and fundamental concerns about, the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport. For communities in Hillingdon, the potential impacts, including property loss, noise, air quality, and wider disruption, are considerable and understandably sensitive. We recognise that the wider debate about need and justification will continue in other forums. However, we expect the Government to bring forward a coherent, evidence led case, rather than rely on what may be seen as a largely political judgement. Without that, there is a risk of echoing the failures of HS2, situated in the north of the borough, where the desire to advance a major infrastructure scheme took preference over a clear meritorious decision.

More immediately, we were concerned to hear about the proposed approach to delivery, as referenced during the Parliamentary debate on the Heathrow Third Runway on 14 May 2026. It is our understanding that the Government has accepted the position that multiple competing schemes for the delivery of a third runway are to be progressed in parallel, despite the fact that only one can ultimately be taken forward. While we recognise the intention to ensure a robust options process, this approach raises serious concerns for our residents and the Local Authority more widely.

Impacts for Residents

For our residents, the consequences of allowing for multiple DCOs would be severe. They will be required to engage with two separate schemes at the same time, liaise with different promoters regarding potential compulsory purchase of their homes, attend multiple and overlapping consultation events, and navigate conflicting information and offers. By way of illustration, properties in Sipson will be demolished in one scheme, yet remain untouched but highly compromised by noise in another.

There is a real risk that competing developers could end up trying to outdo each other at residents' expense, causing confusion and stress. It is also worth noting that much of the engagement will run concurrently with consultations on the Airports National Policy Statement and the London Plan

which will make it even harder for those trying to meaningfully engage with the process to understand what is happening.

Local Authority Impacts

For the Council, the impact would be equally challenging. Managing a single Development Consent Order (DCO) application for what would be the largest privately financed infrastructure project in Europe is already a highly complex undertaking, particularly within the current demanding and unrealistic timetable.

Running two concurrent DCO processes would place an unsustainable burden on our planning and technical teams, much of which would be abortive given that only one scheme can succeed. This is not an effective use of public resources and would inevitably detract from our ability to serve residents and discharge our wider responsibilities.

Other Groups

Further, hundreds of stakeholder organisations would be forced to duplicate work, from public bodies through to charities, stretching already limited time and resources. They would have to engage with two separate processes, review two sets of documents, and potentially commission duplicate technical responses, all with little clarity on which scheme will proceed. The ability to recharge financial outlay does not extend to the vast majority of groups and organisations needing to engage.

Summary

Taken together, these issues give rise to real concern about how the proposed approach will operate in practice. The progression of two parallel DCO processes risks creating overlap, mixed messaging, and unnecessary complexity for all involved, particularly local communities.

The Airports Commission previously provided a clear and structured way of testing options and identifying a preferred solution before reaching the DCO stage. This helped bring focus and clarity. Moving away from that approach risks exposing communities to the uncertainty of competing proposals at a much later stage in the process.

We would therefore urge the Government to reconsider this approach. At the very least, there should be a clear framework setting out how duplication will be avoided, how communities will be protected from unnecessary harm and confusion, and how the process will remain proportionate and grounded in evidence.

We remain willing to engage constructively, but the current approach raises serious concerns that require immediate ministerial attention. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you or the Aviation Minister, alongside the local MP Rt hon. John McDonnell as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



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