A Future For Biggin Hill Airport
Meeting the Local Demand to Travel

The Biggin Hill Airport Master Plan
December 2005

Introduction
Biggin Hill Airport is proposing to follow Government policy that small airports have an important role to play in meeting local demand and relieving pressure on main airports. The 2003 White Paper ‘The Future of Air Transport’ said that better use should be made of existing runways, the potential of Biggin Hill Airport should not be overlooked and its development is supported subject to relevant environmental considerations.

Air services from Biggin Hill would save time and reduce surface access journeys for local people to more distant airports. Flights would be on generally smaller and more modern aircraft which have a very limited environmental impact on their neighbourhood. The number of flights would be less than existing authorised flight numbers and noise levels specified by Bromley Council, and the Airport is prepared to negotiate reductions.

The proposals are set down in a Master Plan for the airport to cover the next 25 years to 2030. A draft version of the Master Plan was published earlier in 2005 for consultation. Following some 3600 responses, concerns about road traffic and aircraft noise have been studied by independent consultants. The Airport has addressed these concerns in amending the Master Plan from the draft.

Biggin Hill began life as an RAF airfield and civilian flights started in the 1960’s. Since then, the Airport has become an important gateway to London for business visitors and attracted a range of commercial aviation operators, who want it to be modernised and restrictions eased so that they can grow their businesses and increase employment. The Airport’s proud heritage is honoured with the prestigious annual air show. The Master Plan strikes a balance between the economic, social and environmental effects of the proposed limited growth, providing certainty for the continuation of existing operations and safeguards against open-ended growth.

Key Points in the Final Master Plan
The Airport wishes to:
• Stay within the existing noise limits for aircraft using the Airport and within the noise contour boundaries established by Bromley Council in their Unitary Development Plan (UDP).
• Reduce the total number of authorised flights. The Airport is willing to negotiate a reduction in the total number of authorised flights and a ceiling on jet movements.
• Keep to the existing weekday operating hours of 0630 to 2200, but replace restrictions in the first and last hours of the day so that our Airport companies do not lose their customers to operators at other airports, and open at weekends at 0730 until 2200 (currently 0900 to 2000).
• Ensure that the impact on the roads is kept to a minimum by working with local authorities and transport providers on travel planning and improving public transport.
• Establish a Heritage Centre at the Airport, to honour its proud history and to be open to the public with wonderful views of the airfield, a coffee shop and modern displays of airfield history.
• Ensure that flying training can continue at the Airport, attracting young people into an aviation career and providing others with a new leisure pursuit.
• Maintain the Airport’s role in business aviation in competition with other airports in the London area and as a gateway to London for industry executives, media stars and other VIPs.
• Re-introduce a small number of flights for fare-paying passengers to UK and European cities, convenient for social and business journeys for local people and businesses.
• Modernise its buildings and facilities to attract jobs and investment and to provide an efficient, small passenger terminal. The Airport will remain within its existing boundary and no additional land is required.
Land Use
The Airport wants to provide modern and improved facilities for all its users. No changes are required to existing runways, and no land will be used outside the present Airport boundary. The main planned improvements are:

- **South Camp** – redevelopment of its western end to include a Heritage Visitor Centre, restaurant and hotel (requiring planning permission), replacing the old flying club facilities with modern pilot training facilities and two additional hangars (already approved);

- **Passenger Terminal area** (as shown on the illustrative layout) – replacement of the existing passenger terminal buildings with a new terminal of around 3000 square metres, slightly larger than the existing terminal and designed for quick and easy check in and baggage reclaim that adds to the convenience of a local airport for short domestic and European journeys.

Aircraft Noise

Types of modern aircraft to be used for passenger services such as the 70-80 seat BAe 146 or Dash 8 Q400 **create no greater noise** than the business jets that currently use the airport on a daily basis and would be comfortably within the noise limits on individual aircraft at Biggin Hill **already in place**; passenger flights would **not** be scheduled at night.

The Airport wants to do all it can to be a good neighbour and has measures in place to keep noise to a minimum. It wants to do better. As a result of ongoing discussions with the Princess Royal University Hospital, which was recently built under the Airport’s flight path, negotiations are being finalised for future liaison, including the provision of information about over flying aircraft.

The Airport suggests it is unfair on residents that they live near the airport without the real option to use it. Even with passenger services, the Airport is prepared to abide by tighter and more measurable noise controls than already exist and that would provide a better environmental balance. It wants to undertake a comprehensive review of noise restrictions, in conjunction with Bromley Council, to strengthen protection for local residents.
Aircraft Noise
All airports create some degree of noise and concerns among the community are understandable. The Airport accepts it causes disturbance to some people and that it has to operate within acceptable noise limits. The Airport’s consultation showed future noise impacts to be the top concern. The results of the detailed independent noise study compare forecast 2015 noise levels with both the present noise levels and those used by Bromley Council in their Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The study shows how small and barely noticeable any change from the present day would be, and also how much less noise there would be compared with the levels in the Bromley UDP. In particular:

• There would be **little or no perceptible change in the noise climate** for people living in and around Biggin Hill or further away under its flight paths, assessed on the official Government guidelines on aircraft noise.

• The 2015 forecast noise contour which registers ‘low community annoyance’, as set down by Government, covers a geographical area (3.57 sq km), **well within** the maximum noise contour permitted by the Airport’s lease, and **well within** the noise contour used by Bromley Council in their UDP.

• Compared with the present situation, **around 130 additional nearby residents** (approximately 50 households) would become included in the ‘low annoyance’ noise contour (an increase from 523 to 657 people); but the increase in noise would be so small (less than 3 decibels) that, as set down by Government guidance, it may only just be perceptible.

• **Around 100 close neighbours** of the airport (approximately 40 households) who are currently within the ‘low annoyance’ contour would be included in a noise contour registering a level of ‘moderate annoyance’ (an increase from 70 to 170 people); again the increase in noise would be so small (less than 3 decibels) that, according to Government guidance, it may only just be perceptible. The Airport would consider voluntary mitigation measures for these residents most affected, including noise insulation.

• There would be **little or no perceptible change** in the noise climate for hospitals or schools, although occasional individual flights will be heard, generally comparable to passing noisy road traffic. Military aircraft using the Airport (the RAF has been granted Freedom of the Borough) do exceed the civilian aircraft noise levels but are very infrequent visitors and the Airport always aims to publish details of their visits and displays well in advance.

• **No residents** are or would be subject to a noise level of ‘high annoyance’, as set by the Government.

Some of the concerns about aircraft noise relate to aircraft overflying or stacking on their way to Heathrow. Other aircraft north of Bromley are going to London City Airport. These are unrelated to Biggin Hill Airport and outside the Airport’s ability to control, although the concerns are passed on to the Civil Aviation Authority.

The following map gives a comparison of the actual and forecast ‘onset of low community annoyance’ (57dB) noise contour. This shows the area affected **now** by a noise level of 57 decibels averaged over a 16-hour daytime period; the equivalent area **in 2015** with passenger flights; the larger area used by Bromley Council in its UDP. The contour is used by Government to determine the effect of aircraft noise on communities around airports. It enables both the number of noise ‘events’ (i.e. aircraft movements) and the loudness of each event to be taken into consideration. Those inside the 57dB contour are subject to a higher average noise level, and those outside the contour are subject to a lesser average noise level.

So what do these noise levels compare with? Noise contours are averages, but some everyday noise events can be louder and more intrusive, particularly if close, for example: soft whisper = 30dB; normal conversation = 50-60dB; a busy street = 80dB; electric freight train 25m away = 80dB; heavy lorry a few metres away = 95dB; pneumatic drill at 5m = 100dB; baby crying = 110dB; rock concert = 120dB
Transport
The Airport has also had an up-to-date transport assessment independently carried out. Based on 250,000 departing and 250,000 arriving passengers each year forecast by 2015, the likely flight schedule, existing passenger and staff traffic from the Airport, and existing and future non-airport traffic, the findings are:

• The considerable majority of vehicle journeys created by passenger flights would take place outside of peak morning and evening hours, and would not cause significant impact.

• The existing priority junction on the A233 giving access to the passenger terminal would need upgrading to a signalised junction, which the Airport would pay for.

• 10% of air passengers are expected to use public transport, especially a luxury shuttle bus service that would operate between the Airport and Bromley South and East Croydon stations.

• 10% of staff would use public transport on the five existing local bus services serving the Airport, with a further 10% walking or cycling.

• Certain junctions including the A233 Main Road/Salt Box Hill and the A233/A232 Keston Mark would need to be improved anyway to allow for the growth of non-airport traffic – the Airport’s plans would add little additional traffic to these junctions, especially at peak periods.

• Additional airport-related traffic on the A25 through Westerham would be small and would not coincide with peak flows.

• Additional airport-related traffic would be insignificant on the M25 (less than 0.1% of the flow between junctions 3 and 6).

• Air passengers would require about 600 car park spaces, with a further 300 for staff at the terminal – parking can be accommodated in the terminal area, within the Airport boundary.

The Airport will be working with local authorities and transport providers, through its Transport Forum and Surface Access Strategy, on ensuring public transport and alternatives to the car are as attractive as possible to staff and passengers.

Economic and Social Benefits
Biggin Hill Airport continues to be an important business cluster accommodating around 30 companies on site. The Airport’s proposals, supported by the business community, would safeguard existing employment and potentially create several hundred more jobs as passenger numbers grew. Aviation is a modern industry, and the companies based on the Airport could offer jobs ranging from pilots and engineers to passenger handling and security staff. Bromley Council’s Local Strategic Partnership describes the commercial potential of the Biggin Hill area as ‘an issue to be tackled’ and seeks a minimum of obstacles for businesses to develop.

Passenger flights from Biggin Hill would mean local people not having to travel longer distances to main airports for some flights to UK cities and Europe. Imagine the ease of a short journey to Biggin Hill to step onto a flight to Glasgow for business, or for a long weekend break to Paris. With capacity at major airports filling up, Biggin Hill is also well-placed to play a small supporting role for the 2012 Olympics.

<table>
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The airport is proposing to increase operating hours by 17 hours a week.

The Airport is not proposing to increase its weekday opening hours. It is already open between 0630 and 2200 hours but there are restrictions in the first hour and last hour of the day which the Airport’s businesses and their customers are seeking to be eased because they have become costly, unworkable and inefficient, and lose them business. At weekends, the Airport would open at 0730 until 2200 (currently 0900 to 2000), an increase of 7 hours.

Noise from jet aircraft along the approach path will double.

According to an independent noise study any increase in noise from implementing the Master Plan is likely to be only just perceptible and well within the limits set down by Bromley Council. The study shows how small and barely noticeable any change from the present day would be.

Improvements to road access with huge land take from the Green Belt will be required.

An independent transport assessment shows that most air passenger journeys to and from the Airport would take place outside peak road traffic hours. The Airport would pay for improvements to the main entrance, and would contribute to other improvements in proportion to Airport use. Some junctions would be operating at capacity irrespective of the Airport.

Passenger flights should not be allowed because schools or hospitals are close to the Airport’s Public Safety Zone (PSZ).

There are no schools or hospitals within the PSZs. PSZs are areas that extend beyond the ends of runways and are based on a Government appraisal where individual risk is reduced to a tolerable level.

The Airport is ideally suited for training, private flying and business aviation and there is no reason to permit a change of use to permit passenger services.

The Airport is certainly ideal for these uses, which would continue, and it is also ideal for short domestic and European flights where the convenience of a local airport with quick and easy check in and arrivals facilities would reduce time and costs for local people. Commuter airlines are keen to provide services for passengers to and from Biggin Hill and this would promote growth and jobs in the local community, particularly Bromley and Croydon, and make better use of this valuable local asset.

There is no requirement for Biggin Hill Airport to issue a Master Plan.

The Government asked airports to prepare a master plan where the future level of impact might cause concern. The Master Plan shows how the Airport can become a more important economic and employment generator for both its local and regional community, whilst also giving certainty for its users and businesses to develop within a framework that safeguards Bromley residents against open-ended growth (a concern for many who responded).

Next Steps
The Airport’s final Master Plan is not a planning application and proposals for individual developments would be brought forward as and when required. Planning applications offer further opportunity for public scrutiny and involvement.

Thank you for taking the time to read this summary leaflet and for your interest in the future of Biggin Hill Airport.

The full Master Plan is available on the Airport website at www.bigginhillairport.com