

***** DUE TO ISSUES WITH THE AUDIO AND CLOSE CAPTIONING AT THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY, THE NOTES BELOW ARE A MORE DETAILED VERSION OF THE PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING. PLEASE NOTE THAT WHILE WE HAVE TRIED TO BE AS ACCURATE AS POSSIBLE, THERE MAY BE ERRORS. *****

Richmond Thematic Community Conversation: Heathrow Expansion including third runway

DATE: 7:30pm-9:30pm, 23 July 2026

CHAIR: Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of Richmond Council

SUMMARY OF EVENT

This Community Conversation event was organised by Richmond Council.

AGENDA

19:30 -19:35	Welcome and introduction to the Community Conversation
19:35 -19:45	Presentations providing the background to the consultation process
19:45 -20:10	Presentation and discussion on noise pollution
20:10-20:30	Presentation and discussion on air pollution
20:30-21:20	Open discussion
21:20 - 21:30	Event close

PANEL MEMBERS:

- Cllr Julia Neden-Watts, Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee
- Cllr Phil Giesler, Business and Growth Lead Member
- Munira Wilson MP for Twickenham
- Sarah Olney MP for Richmond Park

- Ruth Cadbury MP for Brentford and Isleworth and Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee
- Paul Beckford, No Third Runway Coalition
- Jamie Fisher, Head of Policy and Strategy, Richmond Council

MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome	
Welcome, purpose and introducing the panel	• The Chair welcomed residents joining in person and online to the Community Conversation on Heathrow expansion plans, including the third runway. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together Richmond Councillors, MPs, action groups, and residents to: ○ Raise awareness about the Airport National Policy Statement consultation which opened on 21 June and closes on 1 September 2026 ○ Hear directly from residents so their views can be incorporated into the Council's submission ○ Provide information which can be used by residents and local organisations in their own individual submissions
2. Opening presentations	
Presentation from Jamie Fisher, Richmond Council's Head of Policy and Strategy, on the background to the consultation	• Heathrow expansion plans were largely stopped in 2020 due to the reduction of flights during the Covid pandemic. In January 2025 the then Chancellor Rachel Reeves, announced that the government was minded to support expansion at Heathrow as part of the Government's growth strategy. Interested parties were invited to submit proposals. A timetable was set out for planning permission for a new runway by 2029 and first flights taking off by 2035. • There are two main activities: the Government is reviewing its draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS) and Heathrow Airport Ltd is developing its planning application. • The HENPS sets the framework for how any planning application would be assessed by the Secretary of State for Transport. It includes a proposed new North-West runway, with the potential for around 260,000 additional flights per year. The Council expressed concern that the HENPS gives significant weight to expansion and may not provide a sufficiently neutral benchmark. • If adopted, it would mean that the need for a third runway is treated as established, making it easier for Heathrow expansion to be approved. • The Government says any expansion must pass four tests on air quality, noise, climate change and economic growth. The HENPS provides more detail on how these tests would be assessed. The

	Council noted that the tests focus on mitigation, offsetting and legal thresholds rather than requiring no harm. • The promoter must show that the scheme is expected to contribute to economic growth at national, regional and local levels. The Government has stated that Heathrow expansion would support jobs, trade, tourism, productivity and connectivity. Speakers noted that this case is contested when social and environmental costs are included, and that some Department for Transport scenarios show negative benefits when these are factored in. The HENPS proposes designating expansion as Critical National Growth Infrastructure. • The Council identified the following concerns: ○ The HENPS gives too much weight to Heathrow expansion and not enough to local impacts, including harm to residents' health, environment and quality of life. ○ The Council wants a better, not bigger Heathrow – including strengthened noise protections, a meaningful ban on night flights, more air quality tests and independent assessment of the environmental and economic case for expansion • The Arora group has submitted a rival proposal for a shorter 2,800-metre third runway instead of the full-length 3,500-metre runway planned by Heathrow Airport Ltd. For the purposes of the HENPS consultation the implications of this are broadly similar to the Heathrow Airport Ltd proposals.
Comments from Ruth Cadbury MP, Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee, on the role of the Committee in scrutinising the HENPS	• The Government has released a draft National Policy Statement and opened a consultation process, which will close on 1 September. A Parliamentary decision on the policy statement is expected by the end of December 2026, with a third runway opening by 2035 under the proposed timetable. • Because this is a formal policy document the Transport Select Committee has been asked to hold an enquiry to scrutinise the policy and make recommendations. The deadline for written evidence closed today. The Committee will be holding public sessions on all aspects of the HENPS (economic and growth case, air quality, climate, noise, pollution, nature, etc.). • There will be 5 or 6 sessions after Parliament resumes and before the Conference recess in October. The final report is expected to be submitted to Government by 27 November. • There will witnesses from the applicants, the aviation sector, local groups, environmental groups, and those making a case for and against.

	• The Committee will consider how effectively the draft HENPS sets out the four tests and the soundness of the evidence. It will be forensic and test the robustness of the Government's evidence and rationale. • The implications of HENPS designation as a 'critical national growth infrastructure' will also be considered. This is a new term. It is unclear whether this means normal considerations can be overridden. • More details can be found on Transport Select Committee's Scrutiny of the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement - Committees - UK Parliament webpage. • The Council has submitted a response to the select committee.
Presentation from Paul Beckford, No Third Runway, on public consultation process and timeline	• There is a window of opportunity with a new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, who had opposed Heathrow expansion as Mayor of Greater Manchester. • The No Third Runway Coalition representative questioned the economic case for expansion, citing estimates of a net economic cost of £62 billion over the operating period and a projected GDP increase of 0.05%. • The consultation timeline was outlined, details are provided in the slides which are available here. • The representative compared the current consultation with the 2018 process, noting that the earlier consultation lasted 16 weeks and included roadshows, regional events and leaflets, and expressed concern that the current process provides less opportunity for engagement. • Once the Transport Select Committee submits its report there is an opportunity for the Government to stop the process. It can withdraw the policy and choose a different route and develop a genuinely national aviation strategy. • There is an opportunity to persuade the Chancellor and the Prime Minister that there is a different course of action for them to take. • Once there has been a Parliamentary vote, Heathrow is free to submit its planning application. • They will be consulting on a planning application in September and October and then preparing it. This is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in late 2027. The planning process will take approximately 10 months with a six-month public enquiry before the final recommendation. • The Secretary of State for Transport will then have 3 to 6 months to make a decision. • There is also an opportunity for a judicial review where campaigners could make a legal challenge.

	Heathrow Ltd will pay for the expansion by borrowing money. It is expected that they will charge the airlines more money for landing to pay for the borrowing and the airlines will in turn pass that on to the travelling public.
<i>The Conversation: questions and comments raised by residents on the opening presentations</i>	
Question about whether the Arora proposal should be considered separately from Heathrow Airport Ltd's scheme, including whether it would have different impacts on Richmond.	The No Third Runway Coalition representative said they did not consider the Arora proposal to be quieter or preferable, citing concerns about the potential loss of homes and limited detail on air quality and noise impacts.
Question about aircraft noise levels in Hampton Hill, including the extent of noise during the day and evening and the legal framework for managing aircraft noise.	Jason Andrews, the Council's Environment Health Pollution Manager, part of the Regulatory Services Partnership, explained that as aircraft noise is not a statutory nuisance under the usual regime, the Council has no powers to enforce noise levels.
Question about the possible implications of nationalising Heathrow.	- The No Third Runway Coalition representative thought this was unlikely as it is estimated that it would cost £40bn to £60bn to nationalise Heathrow. - The representative suggested that nationalisation could make a third runway less likely, referring to Government analysis which they said shows a negative cost-benefit position.
3. Noise pollution	
Presentation on noise pollution by Jamie Fisher, Richmond Council's Head of Policy and Strategy	- Explained that on noise, the HENPS states that the scheme must avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise by limiting overall aircraft noise compared to 2024. - This means noise will be assessed on an airport-wide, rather than a local basis, which the Council is concerned about. - Areas like Richmond might see more noise through more concentrated and the longer duration of flights over this area. - It is more important to assess how often, where and when the flights take place. - On night flights, the HENPS refers to a "night-flight ban" - in practice this is a 6.5 hour period with no scheduled flights. - The key issue is whether the policy protects from sleep disturbance or early morning arrivals. Current runway alternation gives many communities predictable periods without flights overhead.

	The Council is concerned that Heathrow expansion could reduce the duration of those respite periods.
<i>The Conversation: comments and questions raised on noise pollution</i>	
Comment about the use of the term “scheduled” in relation to night flights, and whether delayed flights can still be permitted to land.	The No Third Runway Coalition representative confirmed that this occurs in about one out of every three days. The rules are not enforced properly, and they are not transparent enough.
Comment about recent Department for Transport research on aircraft noise and night flights, and whether health, noise and economic impacts are fully reflected in the appraisal of sustainability.	- The No Third Runway Coalition representative agreed and referred to Government analysis indicating that 900,000 more people could be affected by noise, with 3.4 million people affected in total. They raised concern about entering a planning process before health costs and mitigation measures are more fully understood. - The Chair of Richmond Council’s Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee also raised concerns about the 2024 baseline and potential impacts on health and on Sites of Specific Scientific Interest, including Richmond Park. The Committee Chair noted that the Council intends to raise these issues.
Question about Kew Gardens’ position on Heathrow expansion, including potential aircraft noise impacts on the visitor experience, biodiversity and its status as a World Heritage Site.	- The MP for Richmond Park noted that Kew Gardens and the Royal Parks are independent or arm’s-length bodies that receive Government funding, which may affect how they respond publicly. She also noted that the Royal Parks have previously commented on the general impact of pollution on flora and fauna. ACTION POINT: - Sarah Olney MP agreed to discuss with both organisations on their views.
Question about why Heathrow expansion is being prioritised over other airport capacity options, including whether expansion at Gatwick has been considered.	- Munira Wilson MP for Twickenham pointed out that the Government is already expanding Gatwick, City, Stanstead and Luton, so this is yet another expansion, and will make it hard for the Government to meet its own legally binding net zero commitments. - The Chancellor made this announcement in January last year to send a signal that she was serious about growth, saying it would increase GDP by 0.43% by 2050. This has now been drastically reduced to 0.05% and the Department for Transport’s own analysis suggests that many regions around the country will lose out.

	• The MP questioned the strength of the economic case and highlighted concerns about rising project costs and uncertainty over funding for the surface transport improvements needed to support expansion. • The MP suggested that the decision was influenced by wider political and economic messaging around growth, and said she hoped the Government would reconsider its approach. • A representative of Richmond Heathrow campaign added that there is an alternative which is to stick with the two runways but increase the size of aircraft. This is viable and Heathrow put it to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in its business plan. Larger aircraft may produce more noise, so this would be conditional on making sure this noise can be mitigated. It would cost £10bn against £33bn. You get another 28 million passengers out of Heathrow's 84 million. They noted that this is happening anyway, and their argument is to not go to the next stage which is a third runway.
Question about councils' influence over mitigation proposals, including how respite arrangements are determined and how impacts are distributed across different areas.	• The No Third Runway Coalition representative explained that this is a Heathrow decision dating back to the 1970s. It is their own initiative and there are not any specific laws governing this. • It is also due to changes in wind direction: the preference is for aircraft to take off into the wind for safety reasons. Recently there have been more Easterly winds and these are increasing, which means some areas may be increasingly overflown. • A resident joining online reported that during easterly operations, noise levels in Whitton are already high and that some families experience difficulties, particularly at bedtime. They expressed concern about the prospect of further increases in aircraft noise. • Another resident from Isleworth raised similar concerns, describing frequent aircraft noise due to the area's position between flight paths.
Question about the impact of aircraft noise on disabled residents and people with sensory sensitivities.	• A resident joining online said they were autistic and have ADHD, and described the recent aircraft noise as particularly difficult. They raised concern about the impact of aircraft noise on people with sensory sensitivities. • Ruth Cadbury MP, Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee, said Heathrow operates under the 'westerly preference' 70% of the time, with aircraft landing from the east and taking off west. In parts of Kew, Isleworth and Hounslow Heath, this means planes overhead every 60 to 90 seconds. • For the remaining 30%, Heathrow operates on easterly preference, particularly during summer heatwaves.

	• In summer, aircraft engines are louder and residents are more likely to have windows open, which explains the current noise experienced in affected areas. • Under the former Cranford Agreement, when on easterly operations the aircraft would not take off from the northern runway over the Cranford area, meaning that take-offs are concentrated on routes from the Southern runway. The Cranford Agreement has been ended and Heathrow is planning to carry out works so both runways can be used for take-offs when on easterly operations, which should provide more respite for those affected. However there is some disagreement over how the capital costs of these works will be funded.
Comment about whether mitigation should focus on distributing aircraft noise between areas, given that many residents may be affected at different times of the week.	• The Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee added that the only way to mitigate for communities living near the airport is to alternate.
Question about whether more concentrated flight paths, similar to a previous trial, could be introduced as part of a third runway proposal.	• The No Third Runway Coalition representative said the 2014 trial was cut short and raised concern that new satellite technology can concentrate flights, with the potential for more intense noise impacts for some communities. • A concern was also raised that mental health impacts can be overlooked, particularly where residents feel unable to escape aircraft noise.
Question about whether studies have assessed aircraft altitude during landing and take-off, including whether any local evidence suggests aircraft are flying lower than expected standards.	• The Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee said that standards are set by Heathrow, and when aircraft exceed noise limits (by flying at lower altitudes) they are fined, with fines used to fund local mitigations. • Richmond Council's Lead Member for Business and Growth added planes can alter gradients but there are trade-offs. There are ways for aircraft to land or take off at steeper angles, which reduces noise pollution, but this burns more fuel and is more costly to the airlines.
4. Air quality and climate change	
Presentation from Jamie Fisher, Richmond Council's Head of Policy and Strategy, on air quality and climate change	• On air quality, the test is that the scheme must not cause any new breaches of legal obligations or make existing breaches materially worse. • The Council's view is that this is too narrow. The Government's targets are not based on the World Health Organisation's targets on Air Quality, which the Council has committed to in its Air Quality

	Strategy. We do not think that Heathrow should take the benefit of recent improvements to Air Quality made as a result of this and other measures. • The Council suggested that the assessment should consider whether air quality would worsen for residents, and raised the case for health-based standards as well as legal compliance standards. • On surface access and transport, the sticking point is who pays for it. There is a target that 50% of journeys made to the airport will be via public transport, but Heathrow has in the past indicated that it expects the Government to pay for these improvements. • On climate change, the test is the scheme must not result in an increase in carbon emissions that are significant enough to have a material impact on the UK's legally binding carbon budgets. • Residents are entitled to ask whether the emissions are genuinely compatible with net zero. • The Council is wary of relying on uncertain future technologies or reductions elsewhere in the economy. • Climate impacts should be independently tested.
<i>The Conversation: comments and questions raised on air quality and climate change</i>	
Question about who determines whether an air quality impact is “material”, and how existing breaches are treated in the assessment.	• The No Third Runway Coalition representative explained that the Government decides what is a material breach. The Planning Inspectorate will decide whether Heathrow's plans to mitigate increases in air pollution will cause a material breach or not. • The additional 276,000 aircraft will result in a 55% increase in NOX and 60% increase in PM2.5.
Question about whether there is any connection between Mogden Sewage Treatment Works and Heathrow's third runway proposals.	• The No Third Runway Coalition representative was not aware of any connection. ACTION POINT: • No Third Runway Coalition agreed to speak to the resident afterwards.
Question about recent high temperatures recorded in Twickenham, Heathrow and Kew Gardens, and whether local environmental factors may have contributed.	• The Chair of the Richmond Council's Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee explained these are cited as the hottest areas because these are the sites where reliable air temperatures can be measured. Heathrow's concrete heat sink explains why its temperatures are so high, though it is not clear why Kew Gardens is recording such high temperatures since it is an area with leafy shade.

Question about the role of sustainable aviation fuels in Heathrow's emissions mitigation plans, including whether current assumptions about their use are realistic.	Richmond Council's Lead Member for Business and Growth raised concern about reliance on sustainable aviation fuel, noting that production is not currently at the scale that would be required to offset the emissions associated with expansion.
Question about whether Heathrow expansion is compatible with net zero commitments and whether affected councils could consider legal action.	- The No Third Runway Coalition representative noted that the UK has international climate commitments and suggested that there may be scope for legal challenge in relation to those commitments. - A resident said they had observed frequent aircraft over the Wetlands Centre in Barnes and raised concern about possible impacts on wildlife.
Question about ultrafine particulates from aircraft engines, including how PM0.1 and PM2.5 are monitored, measured and assessed for health impacts.	- A Pollution Manager from the Regulatory Services Partnership explained that PMs are particulate matter made up of fine dust and liquids whose impact depend on the size. PM10s, which you get from construction sites, are quite big. PM2.5s are produced by engines and wood burning stoves. As you get even smaller to Ultra Fine Particulates (UFPs) those particulates travel around the body. Officers are raising questions as part of this process about how they're being considered. It's an emergent pollutant which is a real concern and needs to be considered. - On PM2.5s, the officer said the borough is not currently compliant with UK objectives, while noting that work has been undertaken to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels.
Question about the potential construction and traffic impacts on the M25 and M4 junctions, including possible effects on the environment, air quality, particulate matter and noise.	The No Third Runway Coalition representative said they did not consider that the Government had fully assessed these impacts, and raised concerns about construction traffic, workforce accommodation and wider impacts on local communities.
5. Open forum	
Question about whether the Prime Minister's previous position on Heathrow expansion could influence	The MP for Twickenham said she had written to the Prime Minister referring to previous comments made about Heathrow expansion and encouraging the Government to reconsider. She noted that local MPs continue to look for opportunities to challenge the proposal.

the current consultation and policy process.	• She also noted that since becoming Prime Minister, Andy Burnham has made it clear we have to rebalance UK growth with more growth in the North. All the figures in the HENPS show that net UK growth is negligible.
Question about the political and policy routes available to influence the Heathrow expansion process, including the roles of the GLA, local authorities and campaign groups.	• The Chair, in his capacity as Chair of the GLA's Environment Committee, asked the Mayor last week if he still opposed Heathrow expansion and he said yes. • The Committee is working together to draft a cross-party response to the consultation. • The MP for Richmond Park added that the most useful thing for campaign groups to do is to collect data and make the case. • The MP for Richmond Park said campaign groups could support the process by collecting data and evidence. • The Chair of Richmond Council's Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee said the Council's experience with the Thames Water Teddington Direct River Abstraction project had helped build experience in responding to development consent order processes. The Council is seeking support from Heathrow to meet the officer time required to engage effectively, and will continue to convene meetings with residents.
Question about whether proposals to increase the use of existing runways could affect the current consultation process, including possible implications for flight paths and local impacts.	• The No Third Runway Coalition representative clarified that no application has been submitted regarding existing runways and said that any such application would go to Hillingdon rather than Hounslow. They noted that earlier work on a two-runway airport had been paused because of the third runway application, and that previous route proposals raised concerns about increased noise for some communities.
Question about future travel demand, including whether demand could be met through alternatives to additional airport capacity.	• The MP for Richmond Park said travel remains important for economic, family and social reasons, but argued that the question is how travel demand can best be met. She said she did not consider a third runway at Heathrow to be the best way to meet that demand. • Richmond Council's Lead Member for Business and Growth added that there are alternatives to air travel. For example, in France domestic air travel has been almost eliminated in favour of using trains. • The Chair of the Commons Transport Select Committee pointed out that HS1 and the Channel Tunnel are operating at 50% under capacity. There is lots of scope for additional rail travel. • The Chair of the Richmond Council's Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee added that freight is important: Heathrow has high value freight, but lower volumes

	compared to Felixstowe, for example. This should be considered and feed into an industrial strategy.
Question about whether Richmond Council could consider or support alternative transport proposals to airport expansion, such as improved rail or light transit links between London airports.	• The Chair explained Richmond Council is not a strategic transport authority, and it would not have the funding to undertake such an initiative.
Closing	• Munira Wilson MP thanked the Council for hosting the meeting and thanked the No Third Runway Coalition and the Teddington Action Group for their support. She encouraged residents to remain engaged and submit responses to the consultation, noting that submissions do not need to be long or complicated. She said she would continue to raise objections to expansion and referred to the aim of securing a better, rather than bigger, Heathrow. • Ruth Cadbury MP thanked those who had already submitted written evidence to the Committee. She suggested that when making HENPS submissions, residents should focus on one of the four tests. Heathrow expansion will only go-ahead if all four tests are met and the Committee will be looking at these conditions in its enquiry. • Sarah Olney MP thanked the organisers and encouraged residents and action groups to continue collecting data and evidence to inform their responses to the consultation. • Paul Beckford (No Third Runway Coalition) offered to help anyone with their responses to the consultation and encouraged everyone to tell their families and friends to also respond. • The Chair concluded by reiterating Richmond Council's opposition to Heathrow expansion and its intention to continue challenging the proposal through the consultation and policy process.