

24 / 01/ 2024: STATEMENT TO LONDON CITY AIRPORT INQUIRY

I am opposed to the proposed alterations to the operation of London City Airport on two grounds: noise pollution for residents of East and Southeast London, and the contribution of aviation to the unfolding climate and ecological emergency.

I have lived in the same house in London Borough of Waltham Forest since 1984. In my garden, I often notice the small planes that are banking upwards from, or descending towards Newham. I am frequently aware of how many more of them there are as the years go by, and have often felt sympathy for anyone who lives much closer to the airport than I do. I used to live alongside a scrap metal yard in Ponders End that was not allowed to operate at weekends, and have a friend who lives close to Southampton Airport, where garden conversations from late afternoon into early evening are punctuated by the sound of overhead business flights. So I know how important it is, for mental and physical wellbeing, to have lengthy gaps in noise levels. For that reason, I strongly support the London Borough of Newham's rejection of the Airport's application to increase passenger numbers and have longer operating hours, both earlier in the morning and in the current weekend respite period.

Reading some of the other statements that have been lodged with this appeal inquiry, I am in agreement with Sir Stephen Timms' comment that "the 24 hour weekend pause was part of the deal for the airport being sited in a residential area at all, in the 1980's planning stage." This is a statement that holds even more weight now that there is so much more housing close by. I was astonished to learn that the Airport had appealed the council planning decision, when 92.5% of the 588 public comments on the original planning application had opposed it.

Along with writing a statement in the hope that the Airport's appeal will be rejected, I intend to come along in person to present my statement to the inquiry, to show that the issues raised mean enough to me to make extra efforts to express my views. Freedom from noise pollution is very important. Even more important is our right to a liveable planet in the coming decades.

The Mayor of London has a target to make London a net zero carbon city by 2030 – only six years away. As his office has put it, "limiting growth of aviation is a crucial action for achieving the mayor's climate ambitions." It is pie in the sky for City Airport to rely on speculative technological advances in aviation fuel, carbon capture and other such remedies that may never materialise, to claim that its plan for extra passengers, mostly on leisure flights, and longer distance destinations, are somehow environmentally sustainable.

There is no model of an environmentally safe future that can possibly include extra aviation. Although I know aviation makes a much smaller contribution to total fossil fuel use than (for example) agriculture or domestic heating, it is surely a much easier sector of the economy to cut back on, not increase, since there are already alternative and greener means of public transport. None of us have an inalienable right to holiday in far distant places, or to hold work meetings face to face, especially when so many

meetings are increasingly done by video link. We should have an inalienable right to clean air and water, and weather that is neither too hot, cold, wet, or windy for human and animal life to survive. Metal boxes flying through the sky, guzzling fossil fuels, add nothing to our right to those things.

The unfolding climate catastrophe is not something remote in our future: it is already devastating lives in many parts of the world. At a very local level, the pavement drains in my street in Walthamstow frequently overflow because of increasing rainfall. Summer temperatures here have hit 40 degrees C. Grassland on Wanstead Flats has been destroyed by summer fires. Houses in Thurrock have been engulfed by wildfires. Every single decision by national and local government surely needs to prioritise its environmental impact, including making every effort to reduce, not expand aviation.

I believe that the first duty of all sectors of government is to look after us. I don't feel protected by many of the decisions made by national and local government. London Borough of Newham's rejection of the City Airport's planning application, as outlined in its opening statement to the appeal inquiry, does not make mention of our climate and ecological emergency, but its prioritising of the welfare of local residents over the airport desire to unreasonably expand its business model is comforting. I wholeheartedly encourage this inquiry to uphold the council's objection to the proposed increase in passenger numbers and longer operating hours.