

XR Elders is an affinity group of older people within Extinction Rebellion; an organisation dedicated to persuading governments to act with proper urgency on the climate and ecological crisis. We appear at this inquiry in good faith, respecting its remit and rules.

There are many sound planning reasons for refusing this application, and we deal with some of them in our Proofs of Evidence. We support the evidence of other Rule 6 parties on Climate Change and carbon emissions, and on the unacceptable impact on local communities, but we do not duplicate it.

Our evidence suggests that the pandemic will have a longer term impact than Bristol Airport has admitted. Forecasts of 'Business as usual', after a short-term reversal, cannot be assumed.

As the consequences of climate change become ever more apparent, there is increasing awareness of the need for personal action on reducing carbon emissions. We present evidence that social attitudes to flying are changing because of its carbon burden, and that this will tend to reduce future demand for air travel.

In this changing world, forecasts of likely dates by which the airport may have expanded are very uncertain. The original pre-pandemic forecasts from Bristol Airport were too optimistic, as assessed by the Local Planning Authority and their consultants. More recent forecast revisions are still not credible, as we have shown in our evidence. They have not properly taken into account a range of important factors that will tend to increase ticket price and slow future growth, compared with past trends.

The acknowledged delay to an increase in passenger numbers at Bristol Airport moves the context of any future expansion into a different planning and policy environment. By 2030 the requirements of achieving zero carbon by 2050 are likely to result in further restrictions on the carbon emissions of flying, thereby increasing costs. Previous rates of increase in air travel, stimulated by cheaper flights, will not be repeated. We argue that in the future the relative cost of air travel is likely to increase, resulting in falling demand – particularly in leisure travel.

Potential socio-economic benefits from airport expansion have therefore become much less certain. Meanwhile the dis-benefits, including immediate expansion of parking on the Green Belt and impact on the AONB, remain just as important. We are here to argue that a proposal that was not acceptable in the first place, has become even less acceptable.