

For the attention of: Ms Leanne Palmer and Ms Joanna Vincent

Appeal against the refusal of North Somerset Council (NSC) to grant planning permission for application reference 18/P/5118/OUT for the development of Bristol Airport to accommodate 12 million passengers per annum.

In all my communications about the potential expansion of Bristol airport, my main concern has always been the congestion of ground transportation and the impact it has on the quality of life of my constituents.

A major survey in 2016 showed that around 32.5% of Bristol airport passengers come from the city of Bristol itself. These passengers are likely to access the airport via the A38 as bus passengers, those parking at the airport or drop off passengers. While some may still access the airport via the A370 through Brockley Combe and Downside or through Barrow Gurney, they do not represent the biggest part of our problem across North Somerset district. The biggest group of passengers who are likely to cause congestion on our local roads, with a particular burden on our smaller villages, are the 67.5% who come from out with our immediate area. Of these, 9.6% come from Gloucestershire, 24.5% from Somerset, 16.9% from Devon and 17.5% from Wales or other areas of England, principally accessed via the M4/M5 or M5 itself.

One of the main problems that we have is that all our major roads, the M5, the A370 and the A38 all run north to south with no major roads running west to east in North Somerset. This means that any traffic coming from the M5, in particular, needs to wind its way through roads never intended for anything other than local traffic volumes. Much of the traffic that affects my constituency of North Somerset will access the airport via junctions 19 or 20 of the M5. I will leave my colleague, John Penrose, MP for Weston-super-Mare to comment on the impact of traffic which accesses the airport via junction 21.

Junction 19 is a notoriously overcrowded junction which connects the A369 with the Portbury Hundred and is used by a large volume of commuter traffic between the much expanded town of Portishead and Bristol. It also serves the busy and successful Royal Portbury Dock. To access Bristol airport from junction 19, most traffic will take the A369 and join the A370 at Ashton Gate. This will take them through Leigh Woods and down Rownham Hill which has become controversial in recent times because of the number of road accidents that have occurred due to surface water. It is a source of friction between some of my constituents and North Somerset Council which may yet end in litigation.

From junction 20 of the M5, traffic will have to travel round the outskirts of Clevedon through the village of Tickenham, which has notoriously narrow (or non-existent) pavements for pedestrians, and past the local primary school which is situated on the main (and only) road through the village. The increasing numbers of motorists who exceed the local speed limit, especially the 20 mph limit at peak school times, has become an increasing concern for the safety of our children. Airport traffic then has to pass through Nailsea reaching the A370 via Backwell where it has to pass two primary schools where there have been increasing safety issues raised by parents about road crossings over the past few years. Traffic then has to pass through a single lane system under the bridge at Nailsea and Backwell station before negotiating the heavily congested area around Blackwell secondary school. It is difficult to imagine why, in any part of the country, there would be a purposeful plan to increase road traffic in an area such as this, especially at a time when we are increasingly conscious of road safety and pollution issues.

By whichever route traffic reaches the A370, it provides problems for local traffic flows. If the traffic comes from the North from the city of Bristol or from junction 19 of the M5, via the A369

and Ashton Gate, it must pass through the villages of Flax Bourton and Fairleigh before reaching the traffic light system at Blackwell, where it will meet traffic coming via Nailsea. A smaller proportion of traffic will pass through Barrow Gurney to reach the A 38, despite the considerable roadworks undertaken in the village to reduce speed and traffic flow.

A large proportion of the A370 traffic will travel through Brockley and up Brockley Combe Road to Downside Road where it will join the A38. This road is used by a large volume of heavy traffic which results in regular damage to the road surface and is unsuitable for a high volume of traffic, especially traffic not used to its steep incline and sharp bends.

None of these problems are the fault of Bristol airport which has a legitimate right to maximise its business, nor the large numbers of taxi drivers who serve the immediate area and beyond and who, understandably, will take small country lanes as an alternative to some of our increasingly congested pinch points, described above. They are simply a result of our topography and the historic decision to choose Lulsgate as the location for Bristol's airport rather than Filton, where Concorde was built, and which had a full-length runway close to both the M4 and M5 and with a railway station adjacent to it.

There remains no realistic prospect of any rail link to Bristol airport from either Temple Meads station in Bristol itself nor any point to the south. The current position of our public finances post pandemic, alone, would make this almost an impossibility without taking into account the fact that the airport is some 1600 feet above the city of Bristol.

While this is mainly about daytime traffic there is the additional issue of the increased traffic at night for the increased number of night flights with additional noise disturbing those on the affected routes.

I would encourage those who are involved in the decision-making about the expansion of the airport to take an extended drive along the roads I have described, especially at peak times. Indeed, I would be happy to escort them myself. I am not against the expansion of the airport in principle but our local road network is already straining at the seams. The idea that we should purposely increase the pressure on the system, at a time when new housing is being built which will increase the pressure further, seems beyond reason. I believe this is the primary reason why the proposed expansion of airport passenger numbers should not go ahead.

Yours sincerely

LIAM FOX

Parliamentary Office of the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP

020 7219 4198

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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