

I am addressing you today as a resident of Chew Magna, as a teacher and as a mother. I think it is important to look at the path that has brought us here today. The inception of Bristol Airport was as a test site during World War 2. Famous for its poor weather conditions, fog in particular, it was used to train pilots to take off and land in difficult conditions. Bristol Airport exists as an accident of history, not as a planned response to a population's increasing desire to travel.

In reality, if you were going to site an airport taking into consideration accessibility and the impact on the surrounding area, it would not be on an inaccessible hill in rural Somerset. It is not a coincidence that Amazon did not choose Lushington Bottom for its logistics centre, but an area of land well served by road connections, bounded by the M4, M5 and M49. It is like the old joke – when an American asked the Cornishman how to get to Truro, the Cornishman replied “Well, I wouldn't start from here”. We are in this position, in a sensible world we “wouldn't start from here”. Bristol Airport is placed slap bang in the middle of productive agricultural land and is surrounded by small villages, country lanes and an A road that has long been replaced by the M5 as a viable route to travel long distances. If you allow the airport's owners to expand to

the extent that they currently hope to, (with no guarantee that before long they will not be asking for even more), you must also have decided therefore, to give the green light to extensive road building, urbanization of a rural community and the destruction of a truly beautiful part of the country. In normal times, Summer airport traffic clogs up the A38 and also the surrounding lanes. Accessibility is a nightmare both for those hoping to travel and those living nearby. Bristol Airport have no plans or motivation to improve public transport, they have agreed to widen a small stretch of the A38, cleverly pushing traffic queues away from the airport but in terms of managing the ensuing chaos of increased passenger numbers there is nothing. No enhanced public transport, no new rail link, nothing. A cynic might point out that Bristol Airport needs cars and LOTS of cars. Bristol Airport and the Ontario Teachers Pension Fund do not make their money from flying airplanes but from parking. Over the last few years the cost of merely stopping momentarily to drop a passenger has risen from nothing to 4 pounds and the space devoted to parking cars has massively increased – and now they want more. There will never be any attempt to encourage public transport by Bristol Airport - cars are

their “Cash Cow”, which brings us to the elephant in the room – Carbon Emissions.

The airport claims that it is “Carbon Neutral”, which if it wasn’t so mendacious would be laughable. The calculation that allows them to make this lofty statement conveniently does not factor in either aircraft or traffic emissions and can only be regarded as “green washing” on a truly industrial scale. The airport’s plan is to drive their profits by making our local community pay the price. We will experience increased pollution, increased carbon emission and worryingly long-term damage educationally to children living under the various flight paths. Studies have shown that aircraft noise has a detrimental effect on children’s cognitive health. Indeed, a study published in The Lancet in 2005 found that, “children living near airports [...] lagged behind their classmates in reading by 2 months for every 5 decibel increase above average noise levels in their surroundings.” The study also associated aircraft noise with “lowered reading comprehension,” even after socio-economic differences were considered. We cannot escape the irony that the Ontario Teachers Pension fund is actively striving to damage the educational wellbeing of our children.

The pandemic has shown us that although we all enjoy foreign travel, it is not as necessary as we believed it to be in the past. Our future should embrace this knowledge so that all of us consider our need to travel by air carefully before doing so. I would love to find myself in a world where saying you are, “popping to Prague” or Budapest or Ibiza for a weekend, would elicit the same reaction from the listener as telling them that you enjoy lighting up a cigarette in a room full of toddlers.

I know that post-pandemic, you will be under enormous pressure to choose short term economic benefits over long-term environmental or social ones. I know that we are being told that by 2040 electric powered aircraft will be in regular service and that by 2050 climate change will have been solved with very little requirement on our part to change. Fairy stories are always appealing being both life-affirming and comforting. Unfortunately, they are not true. For those living in Germany with homes meters underwater and a death toll of 160 and rising and those in North America suffering extremes of heat and subsequent deaths, climate change is very real and not an academic construct. Economic considerations are important, however I have no doubt that when William Wilberforce stood up in parliament and condemned the exploitation

of the powerless by the powerful, many politicians decried his plans to abolish slavery as economic suicide. They were wrong. Sometimes the right decision has to be made even if the cost is short term economic gain.

I believe that you know what has to be done here and I trust that you have the courage to make that choice. I am requesting that you find in favour of the original democratic decision and reject Bristol Airport's appeal, recognizing that the owner's, The Ontario Teachers Pension Fund's quest for ever increasing profits will be paid for by our children, the local community and the planet.

Thank you.