

Bristol Airport Ltd Appeal to Planning Inspectorate

This appeal should be dismissed for several reasons:

1. The proposal to expand Bristol Airport ignores the threat of climate change and is contrary to the commitments to reduce carbon emissions which have been endorsed by North Somerset Council, regional local authorities and national government. Bristol Airport's pledge to make their buildings carbon neutral sounds laudable, but ignores the large increase in CO2 emissions by way of the proposed large increase in flights and also traffic movements to and from the airport.
2. There is no current national policy against which this application could be determined. Several regional airports have proposals to expand, which would result in a large increase of pollution and carbon emissions. There should be a total moratorium of all airport expansion until there is a coherent national policy, taking account of climate change.
3. The airport still has a 15% 'headroom' for growth relative to its pre-Covid19 passenger numbers before reaching its currently agreed limit of 10 mppa. Even this level of increase assumes more holiday flights (since over 60% of flights are for recreational purposes abroad). This assumption must be questioned particularly given the total uncertainties of travel patterns in the post-Covid era. Foreign holidays will be getting more expensive and it is likely that frequent flyers will be taxed. Many businesses are reducing travel and routinely using online conferencing.
4. The attempt to make Bristol the dominant or sole airport for the south-west and Wales (at the expense of Cardiff and Exeter) will mean more road traffic and longer journeys. The claim that BA expansion will reduce road traffic to Heathrow needs to be challenged. Long-haul flights and minority destinations will still require travel to Heathrow and passengers can travel there by bus. The proposed expansion will not have a net effect of reducing travel by private vehicles.
5. The further expansion of the Silver Zone parking into the Green Belt is unacceptable with damaging consequences for wildlife habitat (e.g. bats SAC) and landscape. The airport has a strong vested interest in increasing parking capacity as it makes about a third of its profit from car parking. This results in unambitious targets for improving public transport.
6. The proposed large increase in flights would have a major impact of increased noise nuisance and air pollution. This would have a real negative impact on the quality of life of local residents both by way of sleep deprivation at night and inability to enjoy any tranquillity in their gardens during the day. The greater frequency of flights will also result in aircraft turning at lower altitudes, hence exacerbating the noise factor.

Bristol Airport will reach (and exceed) the limits of what could be considered sustainable development at 10 mppa. North Somerset's Core Strategy is based on the fundamental principle of keeping within environmental limits. In recent years, the urgency of responding to the climate emergency has come into focus both locally and nationally. This must be the critical material consideration. North Somerset Council has taken the right decision to refuse this application and that decision should be supported by the Planning Inspectorate.

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