

Statement to the Planning Inquiry
Andrew Mills-Baker, resident of Breachwood Green
August 2022

I have asked to speak at the Planning Inquiry as a resident living close to the eastern end of the Luton Airport runway in the village of Breachwood Green. I am speaking on my own behalf, but I believe that my objections to the planning application are shared by the majority of people living in the village.

I support the Airport at its present size, and recognise the economic benefits it brings. However, I object to the further expansion set out in the application on the following grounds. I have restricted my comments to the impact of noise and will leave to others, concerns about other environmental impacts that also concern local residents.

1. Annual passenger numbers at the airport have grown at a much faster rate than was envisaged when the initial planning permission was granted. The 2013 expansion plan assumed that 18 million passengers would not be reached until 2028, but this was reached in 2019. This is the main reason why noise contours established in the original planning permission have been breached.

2. The impact of this rapid growth has meant that assumptions made that aircraft operators would introduce more modern and quieter aircraft have been incorrect. It is clear that the airport operator has permitted passenger growth to run ahead of fleet modernisation, to the detriment of local communities. Moreover, it would appear that some of the current generation of new aircraft, such as the A321 Neo, are not actually operating at significantly quieter levels at Luton. I understand that the airport operator is currently carrying out tests to see whether this is due to the relative short length of the Luton runway. Whilst these new planes are fitted with quieter engines, they are larger and heavier and therefore need more power on takeoff and landing, therefore reducing or even eliminating the benefits from the quieter engines. This is a serious matter as both leading operators at the Airport have placed further orders for this plane for delivery in the coming years.

3. I have read the environmental statement addendum issued by LBC to the public enquiry in July 2022, prepared by the Wood group. I find it confusing in its links to previous noise modelling and it contains minimal responses on the legitimate concerns of the local communities impacted. I remain of the view that the application to increase annual passenger numbers and enlarging the area of the noise contours should have been turned down. Over 900 individuals and organisations, plus adjacent local authorities and MP's, opposed the application based on the increased noise contours and the adverse environmental impact, but our views were ignored.

4. I am disappointed that the revised projections of noise levels, during both the day and the night, do not fall until 2028. In the meanwhile, the mitigation offered by the airport operator is inadequate. The report acknowledges the significant noise impact on those communities adjacent to the airport and offers the supposed benefits of the noise installation scheme. Not only is the £3,000 grant per property far too low, but the number of annual grants made has been very small. Moreover, people do not spend their whole lives indoors with all windows and doors closed, particularly in the summer months. Implicit in enlarging the area of the noise contours is an increase in the actual noise levels in those communities directly adjacent to the airport. The grant scheme is aimed at private households and I understand that no offers of insulation have been made to the community buildings in the village, namely, the junior mixed infant school, the village hall and the preschool.

5. I note that the Wood report explains that the reduction in noise levels will take place as the airlines introduce new planes to their fleets and retire older planes. However, Wood indicate that this information has been obtained from the public record rather than from a specific dialogue with the airlines concerned. The two largest operators at Luton, Wizz Air and easyJet, account for the significant majority of flights. There should have been a specific dialogue with them to confirm their modernisation plans and agree a measurable and binding implementation plan at Luton.

6. Excess noise levels cause stress at any time of day but are a particular concern at night, when sleep can be interrupted. The airport operator has taken minimal action to mitigate against the impact of night flights. I have been disturbed throughout this summer by a large number of commercial passenger flights taking off and landing well after midnight. I accept that there may be operational delays that result in later take offs and landings, but it is clear that the operator has permitted late night movements as part of regular timetables. In addition, the operator continues to permit DHL to operate daily cargo flights that land and takeoff generally between 3am and 5am. These cargo planes are easily the noisiest aircraft that use Luton Airport and, as they regularly disturb my sleep, I am disappointed that these have been allowed to continue. I say this in the knowledge that the main DHL base is at East Midlands Airport and many of the planes landing at Luton then make the extremely short trip up to East Midlands. I can't believe that the economic benefits to the airport outweigh the year round nightly disturbance to the communities near the airport.

In summary, the residents of Breachwood Green get no respite from aircraft noise day or night on any day of the year. Late arrivals and take offs go on until the small hours, followed by cargo flights and then departures start up again at 6 am.

In conclusion, I believe that Luton Borough Council should have rejected the application on the following grounds:

1. The mitigations presented to deal with aircraft noise are inadequate, particularly during the night time.
2. The accuracy of the revised assumptions about fleet modernisation, the key element in noise reduction should be challenged
3. Even if the modelled noise levels are accepted, a plan should be prepared to progressively reduce noise levels each year and certainly well before 2028. This plan should be measurable so that it can be regularly scrutinised by the planning team at Luton Borough Council as well as the Airport Consultative Committee
4. I don't accept that a case has been made to demonstrate that 1 million additional passengers will have a material economic benefit on the local economy. As the Wood report confirms, further expansion will increase the excessive noise nuisance at Breachwood Green. Therefore, growth beyond 18m passengers per year should be delayed until the noise issues are resolved.

I should like to thank the Inspectors for permitting me to address the Inquiry.

Andrew Mills-Baker FCA
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