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The Planning Inspectorate

COMMENTS ON CASE (Online Version)

Please note that comments about this case need to be made within the timetable. This can be found in the notification letter sent by the local planning authority or the start date letter. Comments submitted after the deadline may be considered invalid and returned to sender.

Appeal Reference: APP/B0230/V/22/3296455

DETAILS OF THE CASE

Appeal Reference	APP/B0230/V/22/3296455
Application By	LONDON LUTON AIRPORT OPERATIONS LIMITED (LLAOL)
Site Address	London Luton Airport Airport Way Luton LU2 9LY Grid Ref Easting: 511908 Grid Ref Northing: 220942

SENDER DETAILS

Name	MR PETER CROWDER
Address	[redacted]

ABOUT YOUR COMMENTS

In what capacity do you wish to make representations on this case?

- ☐ Applicant
- ☐ Agent
- ☑ Interested Party / Person
- ☐ Land Owner
- ☐ Rule 6 (6)

What kind of representation are you making?

- ☐ Final Comments
- ☐ Proof of Evidence
- ☐ Statement
- ☐ Statement of Common Ground
- ☑ Interested Party/Person Correspondence
- ☐ Other

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE

I strongly oppose this application for further expansion of capacity and relaxation of noise contours at Luton Airport.
I have already submitted objections the Luton Planning Portal for this particular application on multiple occasions every time Luton Airport have submitted a revised application attempting to circumvent the UK planning process - and my comments still stand.
I strongly oppose the further expansion of capacity at Luton Airport. Existing expansion to 18 million passengers is not yet complete, and the promised noise mitigations have not been delivered. Further significant expansion would have very great environmental impacts which are not justified by the claimed economic benefits. The existing cap on passenger numbers was stated in 2013 to be sufficient to underpin the local economy: now Luton Borough Council should diversify the local economy in a genuinely sustainable response to its own declaration of a Climate Crisis.

The proposed increase is unjustified and I strongly oppose it. Planning permission in 2013 set limits on passengers and on the noise footprint. Luton Airport committed to noise mitigations in 2013 which it has not yet delivered: instead it breached its noise contour limits in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Until the Airport shows that it can operate at up to 18 million passengers within its noise limits, further capacity growth is unwarranted.

Capacity at Luton Airport expanded very rapidly between 2013 and 2019, financially incentivised by Luton Rising and Luton Borough Council. This expansion was not properly managed or scrutinised, and failed to deliver the promised noise mitigations to balance growth. The airport operator broke its noise contour planning limits, and rapid growth contributed to serious congestion on local roads, and caused fly parking all around Luton. Releasing too many slots before quieter aircraft had been introduced has led to airlines being able to hold the airport to ransom with the threat of going elsewhere if additional growth is not offered. This is not appropriate justification for further expansion.

People living closest to the airport were hardly able to cope with the incessant noise starting before 6am and going on until the small hours. The only mitigation offered was double glazing for those closest, which required them to keep their windows closed on hot nights in the summer. The Luton Local Plan requires noise reduction before further expansion, but was ignored. The Council set a passenger cap of 18 million per year until 2028 to protect residential amenity. This was also ignored – the airport operator applied for an increase to 19 million and the Council agreed it in 2021. Because of the conflicted position of the Council as owner and financial beneficiary of the airport, this lack of control over the non-permitted development of the airport does not appear to meet the high standards of probity expected under Localism.

Luton Rising has consistently pressed for far greater passenger numbers than is reasonable for Luton Airport given its close proximity to local communities, its compact site, and its location on top of a hill. The business case for this proposed expansion to 32 million passengers is questionable, as are significant amounts of public money spent on investments such as the DART monorail. Luton Rising takes its decisions in secret and as a private company is not publicly accountable, yet the money which the airport generates is public money.

The Committee on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change both strongly recommend urgent measures to reduce demand for air travel. Aviation has been the fastest-growing source of carbon emissions. Its emissions are three times more damaging to the environment because they also lead to contrails which add to warming, and release high-altitude pollutants. Aircraft engines burn huge quantities of kerosene and create ultra-fine particles which damage health. Noise at night also damages health. Traffic emissions damage health. An unstable climate caused by global warming damages people’s well-being. Yet Luton Rising is proposing a 78% increase in airport capacity at Luton.

Encouraging people spend money abroad by taking more and more cheap flights directly harms the UK economy, as well as the climate. Aviation’s contribution to the balance of payments deficit in tourism was £30bn in 2019 – far more than the local beneficial effects claimed for this project. If this proposal succeeds, Luton’s main income would continue to depend on a noisy and polluting industry which is not

environmentally sustainable. It would benefit the local economy far more to be diversified towards developing renewable energy, battery technology and the skills to tackle the carbon footprint and heat loss from older housing stock, for example.

Concreting over the second-largest park in Luton to build a new terminal, extra car parks and aircraft stands is not Green growth – it amounts to destruction of a County Wildlife Site. Wigmore Valley Park was given to local residents as compensation for development and as an open green space to act as a buffer between houses and the runway. Its ancient hedgerows and wild orchids cannot be replaced by sterile farmland.

The Draft Need Case is one-sided and does not present an up-to-date, balanced and properly evidenced case. Much of the information is based on out-of-date strategies which have not been properly reviewed to reflect the post-Brexit, post-COVID economy, nor the clear pressures for more urgent action on Climate Change called for by the IPCC. Much is made of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, a project which is being called into question. Levelling up is a national policy, not just a rebalancing between the airports around London. The Jet Zero consultation results have not yet been published. However, the impacts of the Climate Change Act do not appear to have been taken into account, and there is as yet no comprehensive Planning Statement. Luton Airport is made out to be a centre of tourism and business travel, but at the same time it is admitted that the majority of passengers are visiting friends and family – no doubt migrant workers.

The Draft Need Case proposes to continue to invest in yesterday rather than to invest in tomorrow. The main reason it gives for further expansion is the "jobs and economic value" case. The same case was made in 2013 and it was agreed that capacity expansion to 18 million passengers per annum by 2028 would suffice. By expanding at twice the permitted rate, the Council and Luton Rising secured a huge up-front cash windfall which could have been invested in alleviating poverty in Luton and providing a broader local economic base. Instead, some £500 million was sunk into so-called strategic investments including the DART.

At some point the supporting infrastructure of an area applies a natural limit. In Luton Airport's case, that limit is the transport network. To get to and from the airport from east or west relies on country roads or rat-runs through the housing estates of Luton. Currently only 14% of passengers use public transport. This is far below the aspiration of 40% with no clear indication how or why the predicted modal shift will be achieved. It is certainly not clear why having a monorail instead of a bus to ferry passengers to and from Luton Airport Parkway Station would persuade such large numbers of them to switch to using public transport.

The world is facing a climate crisis, and the UK Government has committed to achieving net zero by 2050. It has not yet addressed the question of how and where carbon reduction will occur, but aviation expansion will need to be considered as part of that. The Jet Zero consultation was based on aspirations that new technology will emerge that significantly reduces emissions from flying. The result of that consultation – and its effects on policy – have not yet been announced, and therefore its statements cannot be regarded as "policy" as the Need Case attempts. Neither is it yet clear whether and when a third runway at Heathrow will be built. What has been made clear is that "levelling up" is not intended to imply spreading aviation passengers between the near-London airports as Luton Rising claims.

'Sustainable Aviation Fuel' is more expensive, and uses biomass which is required for animal feedstocks, so this is not sustainable
The post-Brexit, post-pandemic, climate-crisis world is a different place, with less business travel, less migrant workers and people thinking twice about flying
Luton Airport is very badly located for site expansion – it's on a hill, and every time the infrastructure is extended, huge amounts of earth need to be moved
Luton Airport claimed that the jobs and economic benefits of the expansion in 2013 would sustain the local economy until 2028, by which time it would have mitigated the environmental impacts – it's failed to do that
Luton Rising has borrowed hundreds of millions of pounds from the Council and has to service huge interest payments on the debts – now is not the time to be gambling on an uncertain future

Luton Rising has no firm idea how the £2bn of proposed work to develop the airport will be paid for Much is made of the government's Making Best Use policy for existing runways. If all airports made best use of their runways there would be far more capacity than the demand would support. All major airports are currently trying to cram in as much expansion as they can before policy wakes up to the need for restraint. Luton's case is not attractive by comparison – this project is hugely expensive and comes with a track record of failed promises and broken noise controls. So-called 'Green Controlled Growth' simply repeats the broken promise of the past: having fixed limits past which the airport will not go did not work in 2017, 2018 and 2019 so there's no confidence it will work now.

I oppose relying on expansion of capacity at Luton Airport in order to maximise employment skills, community and social benefits and training opportunities,
because the aviation industry is currently unsustainable, and no new technology which provably makes it sustainable is yet available to the commercial low-cost airlines using Luton. To create a genuinely greener future Luton Rising should promote and develop skills and opportunities in areas that will help to avert the climate crisis, not contribute to making it worse. Luton Council has democratically declared a Climate Emergency. The stance of the Luton Councillors acting in the guise of Luton Rising in continuing to spend hundreds of millions of pounds of public money on airport-related projects and a DCO application to encourage a further £2 billion development of a kerosene-based industry, is fundamentally incompatible with that declaration.

Luton Airport is badly sited for access by public transport. There is no east-west rail link and the north/south link is an already busy commuter line with no fast trains serving just the Airport. The Airport Operator has failed to achieve a meaningful modal shift and still only 14% of passengers use public transport, despite drop-off charges being substantially increased. How people choose to travel to it is not under the control of the Airport, and established patterns are unlikely to change substantially. No evidence has been provided as to why the DART would achieve the targeted modal shift. I oppose further expansion on the grounds that it would encourage additional surface traffic into an already congested local road network, increase pollutants and decrease air quality.

In opposing further expansion. The existing expansion permission, granted in 2013, still has 7 years to run and has not yet delivered on its promised noise mitigations. The Airport and the Council have betrayed the trust placed in them, by breaching the Section 106 Noise Control Agreement and for three years failing to remedy that breach. The breach occurred as a result of rapid growth incentivised by Luton Rising and the Council, and by mismanagement of the rate of slot release by the Airport Operator. Such failures of oversight, regulation and management do not justify further expansion.

The existing Section 106 Agreement requires:
Operation of the Airport within its noise contours and 18 million passenger limit (also a 2019 Noise Action Plan commitment)
Production of a strategy to reduce the noise contours to defined lower limits by 2028
Mitigation of noise through the introduction of modernised less noisy aircraft
None of these things has been achieved, therefore it is inappropriate to expand capacity yet further.

In opposing further capacity expansion I oppose the further construction which would facilitate it, and which itself would add to local emissions and and increased carbon footprint through the use of significant quantities of cement.

The overall effects on the environment, taking account of the aircraft emissions in flight, would be significant and detrimental.

I oppose any further expansion of capacity at this airport at least until all the existing limits and commitments have provably been met.