HARPENDEN TOWN COUNCIL

CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY

19 May 2022

Dear Holly Dutton, Planning Inspectorate

Harpenden Town Council response to London Luton Airport Inquiry – Ref 3296455

I am writing to you on behalf of Harpenden Town Council in response to the current public inquiry in relation to the above case for London Luton Airport Operations Ltd.

We continue to believe that the plans are inappropriate and should not be taken forward, for the reasons that we set out in our response to the London Luton Airport consultation in December 2019 and again in August 2020, when responding to other expansion consultations.

Background

Harpenden is a town of some 30,000 residents situated, at its nearest point, about 4 miles from the runway of Luton Airport and from the centre of the Town about 6 miles away. The flightpaths for a significant proportion of take offs, in both West wind and East wind scenarios, are over, or near, Harpenden. This means that there is already significant aircraft noise over and close to Harpenden throughout the day, continuing during night-time also.

The Town Council objects to the plans to increase the passenger capacity at Luton Airport from 18million ppa to 19million ppa. As set out above, the airport is already having a negative impact on our Town and this expansion will make the situation significantly worse.

Given the unprecedented challenges that we have faced in 2020 and pre-existing Government and public interest in environmental issues (Climate Emergency) we continue to have doubts as to whether the projected future growth and use of the Airport will, in fact, materialise or be allowed to materialise.

Our objection is based on three key aspects, which are the Air traffic noise, carbon emissions and the impact on the existing transport network.

Air traffic noise

Air traffic noise already seriously blights residents in Harpenden. We receive regular complaints and examples from our residents that evidence the negative impact that the flight paths and traffic levels already have. Concerns are the frequent low overflying aircraft disturbing residents' enjoyment of their gardens for sitting out or hobbies in spring to autumn and the night-time aircraft that disturb sleep.

There are currently very few new generation aircraft, which were reported to be quieter and have lower emissions, operating out of the airport, however these have proven to not be as effective as first hoped. Whilst we understand that there will be incentives for airlines to bring new aircraft into operation in the future, we believe it will take many years to make a noticeable impact.

Carbon emissions

The carbon emission growth that will arise from this expansion directly conflicts with local and national priorities of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

We are concerned that the local air quality will be severely affected, resulting in an increase in long term health problems such as chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer and heart disease.

We have previously raised concerns that there has been a lack of consideration to an Air Quality Environmental Impact Assessment, which is needed to understand the current impact on the environment and the predicted impact because of the increased capacity.

Whilst air quality has been referenced in your latest documents, there still appears to be a lack of detailed information on this matter and we believe that this consultation is flawed without it.

Existing transport network

We are concerned about the impact that the increased number of passengers travelling to the airport each year will have on Harpenden.

The M1 around Junction 10 already appears to be close to capacity, despite a recent expansion and the local train services are currently not fit for purpose.

We understand that there will be sustainable transport plans put in place that encourage people to use more sustainable options, but these targets still appear to be highly aspirational.

An increased capacity of Luton Airport has the potential to have a significant negative impact on our Town and for that reason the Town Council strongly objects to the proposals that have been put forward.

Yours sincerely

Carl Cheevers Town Clerk, Harpenden Town Council