

My name is Nigel Oxley, I am a local resident of Wheathampstead village. Thank you for allowing me to give my views on the proposed expansion of the airport.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Inquiry Team for agreeing to hold this Public Inquiry, which is most welcome. This will be the first time that the recent Planning Applications approved by Luton Borough will be scrutinised by an independent outside body.

As you are probably aware the airport is owned by Luton Borough Council, so any expansion of the airport benefits them directly by bringing in more revenue. In my opinion Luton Borough Council should not be making important planning decisions on the airport from which they will gain financially. I consider that all the recent applications should have been dealt with by an independent planning body that is not biased in favour of the airport.

I listened in to the Planning Committee meeting when the 19 million people per year application was being presented and decided on. The council members of the Committee were being asked to make a decision on a highly complex and detailed technical application presented by experts, appointed by the applicant. It was obvious that members of the Planning Committee were not experienced enough to take a view or argue against the presentations and most of them just ended up just considering how much extra revenue would be brought into Luton Borough. Hardly a reasoned and objective decision! A large number of objectors to the proposals presented their cases in a very well-reasoned and clear way, but their views were just brushed aside and ignored.

I have lived in Wheathampstead for the last thirty-four years and noise from the airport has grown worse, particularly since 2015 when the new flight paths were introduced and subsequently when the numbers rose rapidly to 18 million passengers per year. When the airport was given planning permission to expand, it was intended that there would be a steady increase in passenger numbers up to eighteen million over a number of years to allow quieter planes to be introduced. This did not happen and the airport expanded rapidly (incentivised by the owners) to the maximum, without bringing in any of the intended mitigations such as introducing quieter planes. Night time noise limits were also knowingly breached for three years running. This was absolutely unforgivable for what was meant to be a responsible airport – how can they ever be trusted again?

Some newer planes, for example the A321neo, were brought in but they are larger than the previous ones and take more passengers, consequently making even more noise. Because the runway at Luton is relatively short, the planes have to accelerate rapidly to take off. This creates a huge roar which is much louder than the last generation of planes, which are smaller and lighter. The roar is easily heard in Wheathampstead, eight miles away. Due to Luton Airport being located on the top of a hill, the noise pollution spreads so much further. This adversely affects a very large number of towns and villages around the airport much more than other comparable airports. I recently visited Breachwood Green. It is a lovely little village but it has the misfortune of being right at the end of Luton Airport runway. When a plane took off the sound was absolutely ear shattering and the pungent smell of

kerosene was overwhelming. How residents can possibly live with this on a regular basis every day and night is too awful to think about.

From my home in Wheathampstead the noise starts before 6.00am in the morning and carries on until after midnight some nights – summer months and public holidays are especially bad. The village is affected more acutely as we get plane noise not only from the take off, but also from both Easterly and Westerly flight operations. Upon take off, the planes turn sharply and both main flightpaths go very close to the village. As there is no NPR on the easterly take offs, many planes fly directly over Wheathampstead. Having to bear this constant noise intrusion has been very damaging to my health and wellbeing. Any attempt to sit out in the garden in the summer is completely spoilt by a constant stream of aircraft flying over from Luton Airport. In addition, I have to sleep with my windows and secondary double glazing shut all year round, despite summer temperatures and I also have to wear ear plugs at night so I can get some sleep.

I have complained many times to Luton Airport about the noise, but nothing changes. I have only received a couple of replies from them in at least four months to any of my complaints. It is very much my view the airport management have no interest in public complaints and they treat complainants with utter disdain.

For some reason, Luton Airport has a very large number of go-arounds. This is where an arriving plane does not, or cannot land and it is directed to fly at a low level in a circle until it can land. Unfortunately, the flight controllers take no account of where the plane is flying and they are directed over local towns and villages at a very low altitude of 3000 feet or less. These planes always fly directly over Wheathampstead and cause a tremendous noise on a regular basis. Despite complaining about this, no action has been taken and the disturbance continues.

From my windows at night, I can clearly see the lights from the airport as they brilliantly illuminate the sky on the horizon. This serious light pollution throughout the night will be causing major damage to the environment, not only to wildlife, but also due to the vast amount of energy that is being expended. More night flights caused by expansion will only make the situation worse.

Another factor affecting life in Wheathampstead is the amount of traffic using the B453, Lower Luton Road. This is a semi-rural road that is very narrow in places and totally unsuitable for large volumes of traffic and heavy vehicles. It is used extensively as a cut through from the A1 and the M25 to get to and from the airport. An increase in passenger numbers plus the additional needs to service the airport will further add to traffic congestion and pollution in the village. Since the last expansion, a new secondary school has been built by the road, making an increase in traffic even more dangerous and the potential for adding more air pollution.

Luton Airport may have come up with a wonderful 'Green Growth Strategy' which is full of well-meaning words, but unfortunately it will have no effect on the people living near the airport or under the flightpaths such as Wheathampstead. Until non-polluting and noiseless aircraft are developed, which is many years off - if ever, a large airport such as Luton is always going to create air and noise pollution.

On past experience I consider Luton Airport will ignore any noise or environmental restrictions imposed on them if an expansion is granted. They have a very poor track record, having broken the night time noise limits for three years running and I have no faith that this will change. I consider the management are incapable of operating the airport as it is at the moment, let alone a large expansion that will hugely increase the passenger and plane numbers. Luton Airport is responsible for making the lives of many residents a misery and any expansion will only exacerbate the problems.

Please could you consider the above points very carefully before you make any recommendations on the expansion plans.

Thank you for listening to me and letting me give my views.

Nigel Oxley