

Appeal by BAA Ltd and Stansted Airport Ltd following the refusal by Uttlesford District Council of planning application UTT/0717/06/FUL

Proof of Evidence on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural Essex and Stop Stansted Expansion

Landscape, Visual Impact and Quality of Life

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30 April 2007



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 CPREssex supports the totality of SSE's case. A number of aspects of this joint proof are covered elsewhere in other proofs of evidence. To avoid duplication this document confines itself directly to countryside and landscape matters and their effect on Quality of Life.

1.2 Personal details

1.2.1 My name is John Drake. I appear at the Public Inquiry jointly on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural Essex ('CPREssex'), the Essex branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England ('CPRE'), and Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE').

1.2.2 Lady Suzanne Walker is co-author of this proof of evidence and also appears jointly at the Inquiry on behalf of CPREssex and SSE.

1.3 Qualifications and experience

John Drake

1.3.1 I have a BSc (hons) in chemistry and was subsequently awarded my Associate Membership of the Royal Institute of Chemistry (ARIC). Following time spent in industrial chemical research I worked in technical sales and marketing in manufacturing industry and finally in consultancy, relinquishing my membership of the RIC. Three years ago, following retirement, I joined CPREssex, of which I am a trustee, as a volunteer member. I have no special knowledge in the field of aviation or planning but I do have a love of the English countryside and a strong commitment to help protect it for present and future generations.

Lady Suzanne Walker

1.3.2 I have lived in Uttlesford since 1966. We brought up our family of four children in the district where they all attended local schools. Two of our adult children, with their children, also live in Uttlesford. For nearly 30 years I ran a small riding establishment in Thaxted and although I do not hold any relevant professional qualifications I have spent about ten years working in a voluntary capacity for the CPREssex. I was county vice-chairman and for three years county chairman. I am a Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 Core evidence

2.1.1 Volume 9 of the BAA Environmental Statement 'Landscape and Visual Impact' [CD/12], is inadequate, inaccurate and misleading as to the current state of the landscaping. It is not a reliable document as an assessment of the impact of future development. Our principal criticisms are set out in this proof of evidence.

- 2.1.2 The contribution of the countryside and the value of its tranquillity are increasingly recognised as crucial to our Quality of Life ('QoL'). BAA has already seriously damaged the QoL for many thousands of people through its piecemeal expansion of Stansted. Tranquillity is a major contributor to health and wellbeing and the tranquillity of the countryside around the airport would be further damaged if BAA's proposals were to be approved.
- 2.1.3 The growing problem of light pollution from Stansted means that even when darkness falls there is no escaping the visual impact of the airport and its effect upon the landscape. If the expansion were to be approved, the adverse impact of airport light pollution would be even greater. We draw upon studies by CPRE and the British Astronomical Association in order to illustrate this – an impact that is damaging to enjoyment of the countryside, to tranquillity and to QoL.

3 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT – QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

3.1 Landscape character

- 3.1.1 The original concept of 'an airport in the countryside' is being destroyed by continuous erosion of the rural landscape through airport-related commercial and ancillary development both on-site and off-site. That destruction would accelerate if the application were to be approved.
- 3.1.2 The original Landscape Master Plan ('LMP')¹ for Stansted Airport was the blueprint for delivering the vision of 'an airport in the countryside'. The LMP made a commendable attempt to echo the character of the local landscape, in particular the field systems of small hedgerows and tree-edged enclosures referred to in John Hunter's monograph on field systems in Essex.² It provided for many hectares of tree and shrub planting³ but much of this has now been pared down and destroyed by subsequent development. The appendix to this proof of evidence⁴ includes copies of aerial photographs which demonstrate the progressive loss of landscaping within the airport perimeter.
- 3.1.3 Nature is no respecter of ownership boundaries. In CD/12 BAA has addressed only the landscape within the airport boundary whilst failing to accept the effect its activities have on the character and physical content of adjacent and neighbouring landscape. The omission of land outside the perimeter of the airport when assessing adverse effects on landscape and countryside character is not helpful to the Inspector in his understanding of the full extent of damage to local countryside that would ensue if BAA were permitted to expand Stansted beyond the present cap of 25mppa.
- 3.1.4 BAA has taken insufficient account of the damage to its most important countryside neighbour, Hatfield Forest, which is of national and international importance.⁵ Oliver Rackham, in his introduction to his book on Hatfield Forest said:

¹ Original Landscape Masterplan for Stansted, SSE/18/c Appendix 1.

² Field Systems in Essex, John Hunter, The Essex Society for Archaeology and History.

³ CD/12, para 8.4.1.

⁴ Aerial view: one of three maps is provided at SSE/18/c – Appendix 2. Note: copies of the two remaining maps (for 1980 and 1990) have been delayed and will be circulated separately.

⁵ National Trust Statement of Case, para 4.2.1.

*'Hatfield is of supreme interest in that all the elements of a medieval forest survive: deer, cattle, coppice woods, pollards, scrub, timber trees, grassland and fen. ... As such it is almost certainly unique in England and possibly in the world. ... Hatfield is the only place where one can step back into the Middle Ages to see, with only a small effort of the imagination, what a forest looked like in use.'*⁶

3.2 Landscape: physical damage

- 3.2.1 CD/12 makes frequent reference to the original plantings as though current and future plantings are in addition to those. This is patently not the case. Para 5.2.4 states: 'the proportion of green space to built airport development has inevitably changed.' It would be more accurate to state that it has 'inevitably reduced'. Nowhere is a comparison made between the proportion of landscaping to hard standing and building developments on the airport site. Further loss is taking place at the moment to the west of the terminal building. This is one more illustration of BAA treating 'landscaped areas' as landbanks available at any time for further building or engineering works.
- 3.2.2 The most obvious physical damage is the loss of the green sward outside the terminal building. (We have marked the position of some other examples on the map at SSE/18/c Appendix 3.) This has reduced the effectiveness of the original planting, not only through reduction of bulk but by added stress to what is left through closer contact with damaging traffic movement and pollution.
- 3.2.3 The original LMP included an area of woodland, Pigeon Wood, itself the mere remnants of Pigeon Wood/Greenstreet Spring. This area was presumably a part of the 56 hectares of existing planting referred to in BAA Stansted's letter to Lady Walker of 30 June 2006. As the aerial photographs in our appendix⁷ demonstrate, Pigeon Wood has disappeared without trace.
- 3.2.4 Somewhere along the line BAA seems to have forgotten the importance of the landscape setting in which Stansted stands. The green sward that once helped to achieve the vision of an airport in the countryside has largely been swept away for road access. Elsewhere on the airport site, woods, trees and other areas with potential nature conservation benefit have been pushed aside in the building of yet more surface car parking, roads and isolated glass-clad sheds. It is hard to see how BAA could possibly carry out effective and permanent mitigation of any further development.
- 3.2.5 CD/12 considers landscape impacts as though the only landscape to be affected is that within the airport itself. This is demonstrably nonsense; landscape within the wider countryside does not exist behind an impenetrable wall. It is not possible to *totally* isolate habitats and species (except perhaps by the drastic step of eliminating them) from one another. Pollen, seeds, birds, mammals, insects, all aspects of nature, are not aware of such areas as 'airside' and 'landside'. They do not know whether they are inside or outside the perimeter of the airport. They do not pass through immigration control. For this reason it is disingenuous for BAA to submit a landscape assessment that does not consider in any depth the damaging effect on the surrounding landscape of their current ambitions for expansion.

⁶ 'The Last Forest', Oliver Rackham, Dent, ISBN 0-460-860089-5.

⁷ SSE/18/c Appendix 1.

- 3.2.6 CD/12 has taken little or no account of the damage to adjacent roadside verges, hedges and copses as a result of the existing activity at the airport and the surface access by car, bus and coach that this attracts. The activity of traffic, including increasing numbers of heavy goods vehicles, day and night, within and near the airport, has damaged lanes and verges and has made the reduced areas of planting on the site more vulnerable to traffic effects. The damage caused by the constant passing of vehicular traffic throwing dust, pollutants and litter onto the lateral vegetation is ignored. If the application were to be approved the volume of road traffic would increase proportionately and so also would the collateral damage. SSE's evidence on surface access⁸ highlights the scale of traffic growth that would ensue if this planning application were to be approved.
- 3.2.7 No account appears to have been taken of the impact of vastly more road traffic passing in close proximity to the balancing ponds now that the new A120 road passes so close to them. Some planting has been put in place surrounding the ponds to the south but they are now far closer to heavy road traffic on their northern side. This will cause more harm than previously when there was a large margin of grassland between the ponds and the A120.
- 3.2.8 The Erosion of the Community Report⁹ submitted to UDC in August 2006 provides evidence of the insidious impact that the airport has had upon local communities over the years. It includes graphic accounts of how the airport has also eroded the wider landscape beyond the airport perimeter. Erosion of one large swathe of countryside diminishes that nearby and many examples of this are told in the personal stories brought together in the 'Erosion of the Community' report. Further expansion would mean further erosion.
- 3.2.9 Climate change will bring its own overlay of impacts upon the landscape and upon many aspects of the countryside and its wildlife. If approved, BAA's proposals would result in an extra 200 flights a day and a very substantial increase in annual greenhouse gas emissions stemming from the activities of Stansted Airport. The world's leading scientists tell us that action is urgently required if we are to avoid catastrophic climate damage. Long before then, the damage will be serious enough to transform our countryside and its wildlife. We consider it wholly irresponsible for BAA to be pressing for airport expansion at this time, despite all the warnings from scientists and given all that we now know about the causes and consequences of climate change.

3.3 Loss of tranquillity

- 3.3.1 Tranquillity is not just peace and quiet. It is the quality of calm experienced in the countryside where it is possible to be free from disturbance and where there are few, if any, man-made features or intrusions. Tranquillity can therefore be seen to be a public good and an indicator of environmental quality.¹⁰

⁸ SSE/13/a, SSE/14/a & SSE/15/a.

⁹ CD/205.

¹⁰ Extract from 'Countryside Recreation', Vol 13, Number 1, Spring 2005 [SSE/18/a Appendix 4].

Importance of tranquillity

- 3.3.2 The tranquillity of the countryside is increasingly recognised as crucial to our QoL. In a survey carried out by DEFRA in 2001 and 2002, tranquillity was identified by 58% of respondents as an enjoyable aspect of the countryside and was the most common reason for visiting it.¹¹ A more recent MORI survey (2004) showed that 80% of respondents considered visiting the countryside 'crucial', 'very important' or 'fairly important' to their QoL and 49% quoted 'peace and quiet' as the most important factor.¹² Finding tranquillity in the countryside matters deeply to people. It contributes to mental and physical health, to wellbeing and to QoL.¹³
- 3.3.3 A 2006 opinion poll commissioned by CPRE showed that what people most enjoy and appreciate about the countryside is 'peace and quiet'. Tranquillity and its various manifestations were mentioned by 72% of respondents as one of the things they most enjoyed or appreciated about the countryside. Most people, wherever they live, say rural tranquillity is very important to them and fear it is under threat.¹⁴

Mapping and measuring tranquillity

- 3.3.4 Tranquillity is, by its very nature, qualitative and therefore far harder to measure than (say) the adverse impacts arising in such areas as aircraft noise, air quality and increased traffic, where quantitative data is easier to come by. However, CPRE, working with Northumbria University, has in recent years been pioneering 'tranquillity evaluation' to enable quantification.
- 3.3.5 Briefly explained, tranquillity evaluation uses as its key input a set of some 40 tranquillity parameters developed through a process known as 'Participatory Appraisal'. This involved interviews with a large cross-sectional sample of the population to rank positive and negative impacts upon tranquillity. Thus, the technique has a subjective base but, by modelling the assessments of positive and negative impacts upon tranquillity based on a representative sample of the population, objective yardsticks can be developed.
- 3.3.6 CPRE applied this groundbreaking technique to define, evaluate and map tranquillity and published its initial report in October 2006.¹⁵ CPRE's tranquillity maps show (unsurprisingly) that the least tranquil part of the country is London and the South East. The maps for Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk¹⁶ demonstrate the damage already done by roads, aviation and other factors.
- 3.3.7 The 40+ significant parameters identified in the CPRE/Northumbria University study as being the most important (positive and negative) impacts upon

¹¹ 'Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and to the Environment', DEFRA, 2001/02.

¹² 'Landscapes in Britain', MORI; survey conducted 15-20 January 2004 on quota sample of 2031 adults [SSE/18/a Appendix 5].

¹³ 'A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise' Executive Summary; Pretty et al, Countryside Recreation Vol 13 No 1 Spring 2005.

¹⁴ YouGov poll 27-29 September 2006.

¹⁵ 'Saving Tranquil Places', Campaign to Protect Rural England October 2006 [SSE/18/c Appendix 6].

¹⁶ Tranquillity evaluation news release, 23 October 2006 [SSE/18/c Appendix 7].

tranquillity include visual impacts as well as noise and intrusive impacts.¹⁷ The most negative impacts are shown in the table below:

Table 1
CPRE Tranquillity Mapping Studies: 'What Tranquillity is Not'
Top 8 Negative Impacts

Feature	Rank
Hearing constant noise from cars, lorries and motorbikes	1
Seeing lots of people	2
Seeing urban development	3
Seeing overhead light pollution	4
Hearing lots of people	5
Seeing low-flying aircraft	6
Hearing low-flying aircraft	7
Seeing power lines	8

The impact of airport expansion upon tranquillity

- 3.3.8 The substantial expansion of Stansted Airport that is proposed by BAA would mean further erosion of tranquillity resulting in adverse impacts in most of the above areas. The adverse environmental impacts of an airport are often characterised as being only down to aircraft noise. This is an oversimplification; it is the cumulative effect of many issues that wears people down and causes the erosion of tranquillity. Very obviously the additional 200 flights a day that are proposed by BAA, compared to today's levels, would be seen and heard by many people over a wide area. These negative impacts rank 6 and 7 in the above table. The proposed expansion would also mean many more cars and lorries on local roads during the day and at night. Road traffic ranks number 1 amongst the eight most negative impacts shown in the above table.
- 3.3.9 Light pollution is also a significant negative issue and is ranked 4 above. (We will turn to that subject below in respect of the proposed Stansted development.) The perhaps less obvious impacts of airport expansion, but nonetheless closely related and significant, of 'seeing lots of people', 'seeing urban development' and 'hearing lots of people' (ranked 2, 3 and 5 above). The fact that Stansted is located in a rural setting might have resulted in higher ranking being attached if the 'Participatory Appraisal' which determined the rankings had been carried out locally rather than nationally.
- 3.3.10 We do not find it surprising that so many of the most negative impacts upon tranquillity coincide with the main adverse impacts of airport expansion. Many people have felt for years that airports have especially negative consequences for tranquillity but hitherto it has been only a qualitative feeling based on individual perception. The quantitative work carried out by CPRE and Northumbria University now means that there is some quantitative evidence to underpin the purely qualitative.
- 3.3.11 So far as Stansted is concerned, this evidence is hardly needed. Most people would readily accept that you cannot put 35 million passengers a year through an airport in a largely rural setting and expect to preserve local tranquillity.

¹⁷ Mapping Tranquillity – Defining and Assessing a Valuable Resource; CPRE March 2005.

Growing role in planning

3.3.12 Although tranquillity mapping is a recent development, CPRE and others have been using the concept of tranquillity for a number of years and increasingly the concept is understood and applied in planning decisions. For example:

- In 2003, a Planning Inspector dismissed an appeal against the decision to refuse a proposal for floodlighting in Sheffield on the grounds that the lighting 'would remove any prospect of tranquil darkness which residents should reasonably expect';
- Also in 2003, Dover District Council refused a proposal for change of use from open farmland to aviation facilities because the proposal would 'detract from the area's existing tranquil qualities';
- In 2004, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council rejected a proposal to convert existing farm buildings into business use because the development would have 'a detrimental impact on the tranquil undeveloped character of this part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB')'.

3.3.13 The CAA/NATS¹⁸ is now charged with taking tranquillity into account when making decisions about air traffic management/use of airspace and to have particular regard to the importance of tranquillity in AONBs and National Parks, and may also consider tranquillity as a factor in other locations.

3.3.14 To conclude on the subject of tranquillity, we have cited a number of studies and surveys all pointing to the importance of preserving the tranquillity of the countryside and showing this to be not only important in relation to QoL but also for the health and wellbeing of individuals. We have referred to the progress being made to apply quantification to this most important subject and we have referred to the increasing acceptance of tranquillity in the field of planning.

3.3.15 But even if it was not possible to quantify tranquillity, and we accept there are limitations in that respect, that would not mean that tranquillity has no value. On the contrary, it is highly valued, and 'priceless' does not mean 'worthless'.

3.4 Light pollution

3.4.1 Light pollution has become one the most intrusive threats to our enjoyment of the countryside and its tranquillity at night. This was given prominence by a joint CPRE/British Astronomical Association campaign and report (2003) and subsequently by a 'star-count' survey conducted jointly by CPRE and the Campaign for Dark Skies (CfDS).¹⁹

3.4.2 In the study, by the CPRE and the British Astronomical Association, 1,829 members of the UK public counted the stars. They were asked to focus on the constellation Orion, one of the most easily identified. About 50 stars could be visible to the naked eye within a truly dark sky but just 2% of respondents said they could see more than 30 stars, with 54% saying they saw fewer than 10 stars in Orion - a level that indicates severe light pollution. On all the dates that the online survey took place, the moon was not visible in the evening sky and the maximum number of stars was potentially visible.

¹⁸ Civil Aviation Authority/National Air Traffic Services.

¹⁹ Star-count map (Chart 1) Dec 2006 – Jan 2007 CPRE/Campaign for Dark Skies [SSE/18/a Appendix 8].

- 3.4.3 The results show that light pollution has already (and quite rapidly) become a problem across much of the country with Essex and Hertfordshire, among the worst affected areas. The 'star-count' map²⁰ gives a flavour of this.
- 3.4.4 Satellite data 'maps' published by CPRE show the increase in night blight between 1993 and 2000 in the East of England.²¹ In the absence of light pollution thousands of stars can be seen; light pollution reduces this to a few dozen. These maps show the decline in dark or near-dark skies (the black and dark blue areas of the maps) in the seven years to 2000. The situation is likely to have worsened since then and it would deteriorate further if this application were to be approved.
- 3.4.5 All forms of exterior lighting can cause light pollution which can be defined as every form of artificial light which shines outside the areas it is intended to illuminate, including light which is directed above the horizontal into the night sky, creating the sky glow. Lighting can also cause glare and other nuisance, for example, by shining into bedroom windows. CPRE figures showed that light pollution increased nationally by 24% between 1993 and 2000.
- 3.4.6 In the local area, Stansted Airport is a particularly intrusive light pollution source because of its location in the countryside. As recently as the 1980s it was possible to see the Milky Way clearly from Broxted, where now one sees just an orange glow. A resident of the village wrote in March 1982:

'The quiet is tangible. Walking the lanes at night, I can sense the crops growing. You can hear the stream running its course a quarter of a mile away. The air is so clear that at night you can often see the Milky Way in detail.'

But writing in 2006, she said:

*'Another change is the loss of the bright starry sky. A previous Managing Director of the Airport referred to it as 'a rosy glow' when I said I regretted the loss of starlight. He failed to understand that his 'rosy glow' had destroyed something special.'*²²

- 3.4.7 This is the human side of light pollution and just one aspect of the erosion of local QoL as a result of the expansion of Stansted Airport that has already taken place. The 'rosy glow' does not of course come from the aircraft but mostly from the acres of car parks. If this planning application were to be approved it would mean more car parks, buildings and other new facilities, creating more light pollution, 'rosier' night skies and fewer stars.

Review of BAA's impact assessment

- 3.4.8 BAA identifies in CD/12 a number of aspects of the proposed development where impacts would arise from new lighting. The methodology is built around an assessment of the impacts by comparing the baseline with BAA's predicted 25mppa and 35mppa scenarios. BAA states (para 5.5.2, p5):

'The particular level of impact would be influenced by the following:

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 'Night Blight in the East of England' CPRE, 2003 [SSE/18/c Appendix 9].

²² 'Erosion of the Community' [CD/205].

- *The sensitivity of the landscape feature/character that would be affected by change ...;*

- *The magnitude of change that would occur. This will be determined by the degree of alteration to key features or characteristics of the 25 mppa case.'*

3.4.9 BAA assesses the impact in four categories: 'Substantial', 'Moderate', 'Slight' and 'No Change', using subjective verbal descriptions (Table 3, p7). The category depends on how sensitive to change the landscape is and how big a change from the 25mppa case it would be.

3.4.10 The landscape effect assessments are made from 12 viewpoints outside the airport boundary. BAA's own photographs, taken from these viewpoints at night, illustrate the extent of light pollution.²³

3.4.11 BAA concludes that the impact of light pollution at 35mppa will not be much worse, forgetting that it is already unacceptable, and BAA – or rather its consultants – use(s) some fancy footwork even to arrive at this conclusion:

- The assessment is based on BAA's hypothetical baseline for 25mppa in 2014, not today's reality. We have no real idea of what this hypothetical 25mppa baseline is compared to the situation today, with the airport handling 24mppa, but we suspect it is higher than we would guess;
- Both the above factors will tend to shift the classification towards the lower end of the range (*Slight or No Change*) and the subjective nature of the classifications will allow additional 'flexibility';
- The unsurprising result is a series of predicted incremental changes, in light pollution impacts mostly assessed as 'slight' or 'no change';
- BAA not only ignores the fact that the baseline situation is already highly damaging but also assumes that increments are less serious when it is already highly damaging.

3.4.12 The results of BAA's assessment of 'landscape and visual impacts, including lighting impacts, are reported in Section 11 of ES Vol 9 [CD/12]. We have reviewed BAA's assessment for each of the 12 viewpoints and in each case for the baseline and the 25mppa and 35mppa scenarios [SSE/18/c]. The main themes that emerged are:

- Many of the assessments were inadequate;
- Terms such as 'a marked glow' to describe the baseline case are euphemisms for significant light pollution;
- Clear cases of light nuisance exist;
- Incremental, additive adverse impacts are described in several cases as 'no change';

In short, the concerns we listed in para 3.4.11 above were vindicated.

3.4.13 We very much hope the Inspector will be able to find time to make some night visits to the villages around the airport to obtain a first hand view of the problems

²³ ES Vol 9 [CD/12 Appendix A1, Fig 3 and Fig 10].

today and therefore be better placed to envisage the scale of the cumulative total impact of light pollution if the problem is allowed to get worse.

- 3.4.14 Finally, on the subject of light pollution, we hope to be able to report on some recent magnitude measurements at the Inquiry, if permitted to do so. We are currently awaiting this information and would of course intend to provide other parties with a copy of the information, as soon as it becomes available to us.

3.5 Quality of life (QoL)

- 3.5.1 UDC asked BAA to provide a Quality of Life Assessment ('QoLA') to support its planning application but BAA declined to do so even when this request was included in the Regulation 19 Notice served upon BAA in September 2006 [CD/39]. BAA responded by claiming [CD/22], in effect, that all the information required for a QoLA had been provided in other forms.

- 3.5.2 This is not the case. Levett-Therivel view BAA's refusal, and its explanation for that refusal, as demonstrating that BAA does not understand the nature of a QoLA. Levett-Therivel describe how a QoLA differs from an EIA:

*'QoLA focuses on the benefits and services provided by an area ... Benefits 'look' different from the impacts assessed in EIA: they are related to how people value their neighbourhood, not the things that are in the neighbourhood.'*²⁴

- 3.5.3 The Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England) has developed a QoLA 'toolkit'²⁵ and emphasises the holistic nature of the approach:

'If it [a combination of factors taken together] cannot be substituted (and more rich and complex environmental and social qualities often cannot) this would justify a management aim of resisting any change that would lose the holistic benefit (even if all the separate benefits could be substituted for).'

- 3.5.4 In their report for DEFRA, on wellbeing and sustainable development, researchers from Imperial College and the University of Sheffield summarised the conflict between market behaviour, material measures and sustainable development as follows:

*'As things stand, it seems that what people want, as expressed through their market behaviour, is not conducive to sustainable development. However, people may actually have 'latent' preferences for both environmental and justice-oriented sustainability that are not reflected through the market. When well-being is measured in terms of income, it appears to conflict with sustainable development but fully accounting for all preferences (e.g. for endangered species, clear air, social justice etc.) would reduce the conflict.'*²⁶

²⁴ CD/202, Section 3: 'Environmental Statement for Generation 1: Analysis of Strategic Issues', Levett-Therivel, July 2006, p17-18.

²⁵ Countryside Agency QoLA Toolkit [SSE/18/c Appendix 10].

²⁶ Research on the relationship between well-being and sustainable development, Imperial College London and Centre for Well-being in Public Policy, University of Sheffield, 22 August 2006 [SSE/18/c Appendix 11].

- 3.5.5 In August 2005, the Audit Commission published a set of indicators [CD/146] to help councils assess quality of life in specific local areas. Described as 'a definitive set of indicators' they were agreed with DEFRA and ODPM and:

'... cover aspects of community safety, the environment and other measures that contribute to the development of genuinely sustainable communities as set out in Securing the Future, the Government's recently published Sustainable Development Strategy.'

The Audit Commission's rationale for publishing QoL indicators was explained as follows:

'the importance of qualities of life factors that may not be quantifiable, bringing into our planning and other decision-making what cannot be valued but may be priceless.'

- 3.5.6 It is also worth noting the change made by the Government last year to one of the five 'shared principles of sustainable development, namely, the one relating to economic growth. Prior to March 2006, it referred to

'achieving high and stable levels of economic growth'.

But it now speaks of:

*'building a strong, stable and sustainable economy'*²⁷

Admittedly this is a subtle change but it is symbolic of the increasing emphasis now being placed upon the need for sustainable development.

- 3.5.7 The concept of sustainable development (which is inextricably linked to QoL) was until relatively recently a largely meaningless piece of political rhetoric. But this is changing. The rhetoric is (at last) evolving into concrete policy on sustainable development.

- 3.5.8 The most commonly applied definition of 'sustainable development' is that set out by the World Commission on Environment and Development:

*'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'*²⁸

- 3.5.9 The reason for quoting all of the above is to suggest that the concepts of QoL and sustainable development are no longer simply the territory of idealists. Those days seem to have suddenly gone. The publication of the Stern Report²⁹ marked a major turning point in this respect because it established a clear link between economic and environmental considerations and the latter was given precedence. The Stern Report is not considered here because it is dealt with in other SSE evidence. However Stern's conclusions are of general relevance to QoL and to the concept of sustainable development. The most important point to come out of the Stern Report was the recognition that **the economy depends upon the environment; it is not the other way around**. Put so explicitly, it seems an obvious point but, in the past, developers have been able to secure planning approvals by successfully arguing the opposite.

²⁷ 'Shared UK Principles of Sustainable Development', Defra [CD/91] – relevant extract also at SSE/18/c Appendix 12.

²⁸ 'Our Common Future', 1987 and <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/ares42-187.htm>

²⁹ 'Report of the Stern Review: the economics of climate change', HMT, October 2006 [CD/157].

3.5.10 In this planning application BAA is still playing yesterday's game. It is arguing that the provision of more cheap leisure flights should outweigh QoL and all other environmental considerations whether local or global. This has always been an untenable argument from a moral standpoint. The difference now is that, when all the pros and cons are weighed, it becomes an untenable argument from an economic standpoint and also from a planning standpoint.

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 In sections 3.1 and 3.2 we identified the adverse impacts on landscape character, visual impacts and physical damage to the landscape caused by Stansted Airport over the years. These negative impacts would be exacerbated if further expansion were to be allowed. There is no mitigation that can substitute for what has already been lost and there is no room for mitigation of what would be lost in the future if this application were to be approved. Placing all new car parking underground, for example, would offer some mitigation for the visual impact of the airport and for light pollution but if the airport was allowed to expand as proposed, the scale and range of other adverse impacts – locally and globally – would overwhelm the value of any token concessions.
- 4.1.2 In section 3.3 we explained the importance of tranquillity to human health and wellbeing and commented upon the range of negative impacts upon tranquillity that stem from airport expansion in general (using the methodology developed jointly by CPRE and Northumbria University) and that would be even more pronounced in the case of Stansted, given its countryside setting.
- 4.1.3 In section 3.4 we described the growing problem of light pollution from the airport. This is a very specific impact but it is an important one and it has not received enough recognition in the past. We do not accept BAA's assertion that the additional light pollution would not be too serious. For many the issue is already very serious. It is no consolation to be told that it wouldn't get much worse, especially when BAA is doing the telling.
- 4.1.4 Quality of Life should be at the heart of this inquiry. There is now a global imperative as well as a local imperative for this to be so and there are now sound planning reasons for endorsing this view. We have reached the point locally where further airport expansion would be inconsistent with the need for sustainable development; and we have reached this point in a global context also. The tide of emerging policy is quite rapidly flowing in this direction whereas BAA's application is on the ebb tide.
- 4.1.5 For the reasons we have set out, this application should be refused.