

c/o AirportWatch
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9 September 2013

Sir Howard Davies
Airports Commission
6th Floor, Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Sir Howard

You have received some 50 proposals either for the long term expansion of existing UK airports or for the building of new airports, covering various locations in the south east as well as Birmingham, Cardiff, the Bristol Channel and elsewhere.

Our firm view is that, having regard to the Department for Transport forecasts and the capacity that already exists, there is no need for any new runways anywhere in the UK, and that it would threaten our ability, as a country, to deliver on our climate change commitments, if any new runways were to be permitted.

By comparison, the industry view appears to be that the UK airports market needs one new runway over the next 25 or so years and it is needed in the south east. The divide between both sides of the argument is therefore less than one might be led to believe from the reports which appear in the media.

Given the scale of costs involved in developing a new runway, including the related surface access infrastructure, it is highly unlikely that there will be a business case for the development of any more than one new runway in the UK before about 2040. We will, of course, do our utmost to prevent even one new runway from being built.

In the meantime, as a result of the open invitation to all and sundry to submit their proposals for expanding the UK's airport capacity in the long term to the Commission by 19 July 2013, a Pandora's Box has been opened. The situation has been exacerbated because almost all those who have made submissions have sought the maximum publicity for their proposals.

The victims of this dismal state of affairs are the long suffering communities who live in the vicinity of our existing airports and those who live near the sites being proposed for a new airport. Many communities are currently threatened by the prospect of their homes and local environment being bulldozed or becoming subject to intolerable levels of aircraft noise, air pollution, road traffic and other airport-related impacts.

If, despite our best efforts to persuade you otherwise, you ultimately conclude that there is a need for additional airport capacity in the UK, we understand you will publish a shortlist of airport development options around the end of this year. That will bring relief to those communities whose local airports are not shortlisted but it will greatly increase the blight, anxiety and uncertainty for those who are on the shortlist.

It seems to us entirely reasonable for the promoter of an airport development proposal to be required to meet the cost of the property blight caused by his proposal. Such a requirement would provide at least some safety net for local communities threatened by the prospect of major airport expansion. This would also be a test of the seriousness of the proposal and reduce the risk of highly speculative proposals being shortlisted.

Arrangements to address generalised blight were introduced following the publication of the 2003 Air Transport White Paper but these arrangements proved to be too little too late. The evidence from the official Land Registry statistics clearly showed that airport-related blight (a) extended far beyond the area within the projected 66 dBA leq_{16} noise contour and (b) started as soon as the shortlisted options were published in July 2002.

We therefore urge you to make it a pre-condition for being shortlisted for the promoter of a development proposal to undertake to introduce fair and reasonable arrangements to address the problem of generalised blight arising from their proposal(s) within three months of being shortlisted and to operate such arrangements for a minimum period of two years. By fair and reasonable we would envisage all homeowners within the projected 54 dBA leq_{16} noise contour being entitled to the unblighted value of their home - independently assessed - together with reasonable removal expenses.

If there is any aspect of the above which requires clarification we would be happy to discuss this further with you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Birch, Bristol FoE



Jon Fuller, No Estuary Airport



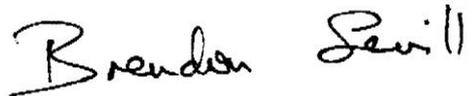
Andrew Lambourne, HALE (Luton)



Adam McCusker, Birmingham FoE



Peter Sanders, SSE (Stansted)



Brendon Sewill, GACC (Gatwick)



John Stewart, HACAN (Heathrow)