



The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Act 2008

Application for Development Consent for London Luton Airport Expansion project

Case Ref: TR020001

The Examining Authority's Note of an Unaccompanied Site Inspection

Background

The Examining Authority ('the ExA') undertook an unaccompanied site inspection to support the examination of an application for development consent for the proposed London Luton Airport Expansion project ('the application') on **Tuesday 8 August 2023**.

The ExA carried out its unaccompanied site inspection from publicly accessible land (roads, footpaths and bridleways). No inspections were undertaken on private land, and advance permission to enter land was not required so these inspections could be undertaken on an unaccompanied basis.

The site inspection was undertaken at representative locations in order to consider the noise character of a number of areas that were highlighted in relevant representations as experiencing aircraft noise at distance from the airport. It is noted that noise conditions may vary due to a range of factors including weather conditions or time of day and that the site visit only represents a snapshot of prevailing conditions at the time of the visit. Observations on noise levels are noted to be subjective (i.e. based on the observer's perception of the noise rather than having a scientific basis) and therefore not necessarily representative of other's experience.

Particulars of the Site Visit

The visit was undertaken by: Dr Richard Hunt.

The visit was undertaken by car and on foot. Weather conditions were rainy with low cloud for most of the afternoon, although the rain reduced and then stopped late in the afternoon and in the northernmost extent of the site visit in the late afternoon and evening there were occasional sunny intervals. Temperatures averaged 17 degrees centigrade. The airport was operating in westerly mode.

The inspections commenced at approximately 12:00 and finished at approximately 18:45. An overview of the locations visited is attached at



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Annex A and a route overview map is provided at Annex B. During the site inspection, the Flightradar24 app and the Luton Airport TraVIS website were used to identify which planes were passing overhead at the various locations visited (where internet connectivity allowed).

Annex A: List of locations visited on Tuesday 8 August 2023

Map A.

Stop 1: The site inspection was undertaken by car and commenced at New Greens Avenue in St Albans. Traffic noise was noted to be the prevailing noise source. Frequent noise from flights travelling overhead (overflights) was also observed.

Stop 2: From New Greens Avenue, the ExA travelled to Sandridge, stopping in Belsize Close where noise was noted from aircraft travelling from other London airports at altitude as well as noise from aircraft at lower altitude originating from Luton and passing between Sandridge and Wheathampstead. Distant traffic noise was also noted.

Stop 3: From Belsize Close, the ExA travelled to Heartwood Forest, where the noise character included distant traffic and bird calls. Overflight by aircraft originating from three non-Luton airports were observed as well as one Luton departure.

Stop 4: The ExA returned to the B651 to travel to Wheathampstead, stopping at St Helen's Church of England Church, Wheathampstead. Background noise was relatively low. Noise comprised light traffic, distant aircraft noise and audible noise from aircraft passing between Wheathampstead and Sandridge.

Stop 5: The ExA then travelled west into Harpenden stopping at the eastern end of Cross Lane. Distant plane and traffic noise was audible as well as bird song. Engine noise was noted to include some tonal characteristics (e.g. a whine at a specific frequency) as the aircraft approached Sandridge.

Stop 6: From Cross Lane, the ExA travelled to Oakfield Road. Background noise comprised distant traffic and plane noise and audible noise from aircraft passing to the south of Harpenden, including some tonal content. Higher altitude noise included overflying aircraft travelling to Birmingham. Aircraft noise was observed to increase from the point at which the aircraft crossed the M1 until it reached Sandridge.



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Stop 7: From Oakfield Road, the ExA continued along the B487 to Redbourn, travelling along the A5183 to East Common stopping at the Cricketers Pub. Motorway traffic noise was audible, alongside distant noise from aircraft originating/departing from airports other than Luton, including private jets. Aircraft noise was not audible inside the building.

Stop 8: The ExA then travelled to northwest Harpenden stopping in Falconers Field. Distant aircraft noise including an overflight from Stansted was observed. Two Luton departures were observed. Noise was observed to vary over time dependent on the location of the plane relative to the observer (increasing as the aircraft approached Markyate/Flamstead, then decreasing over the M1 before increasing again as it approached Sandridge).

Stop 9: The ExA travelled to Shaw's Corner at Ayot St Lawrence. The background noise levels were noted to be low however the noise character was noted to include both birdsong and distant aircraft noise. Several aircraft passed overhead, including flights to/from Birmingham, Manchester and Stansted as well as Luton.

Stops 10 and 11: The ExA travelled to Letchworth Garden City stopping at Letchworth Lane and Haselfoot. In both locations road traffic noise was audible alongside distant plane noise. Overflight noise from planes at altitude traveling to Liverpool and from Stansted was noted. Private jets were also noted.

Stops 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20: From Letchworth Garden City the ExA travelled to Sandy, Potton, Wrestlingworth, Hatley St George, East Hatley and Gamlingay. Except for Sandy where traffic noise from the A1 was observed, low background noise and distant plane noise was noted in all locations from higher altitude aircraft passing to airports other than Luton, this included private jet noise. Overflights by planes on descent to Luton were also noted with flights descending to around 7,000feet(ft). Distinct tonal content from aircraft was also noted.

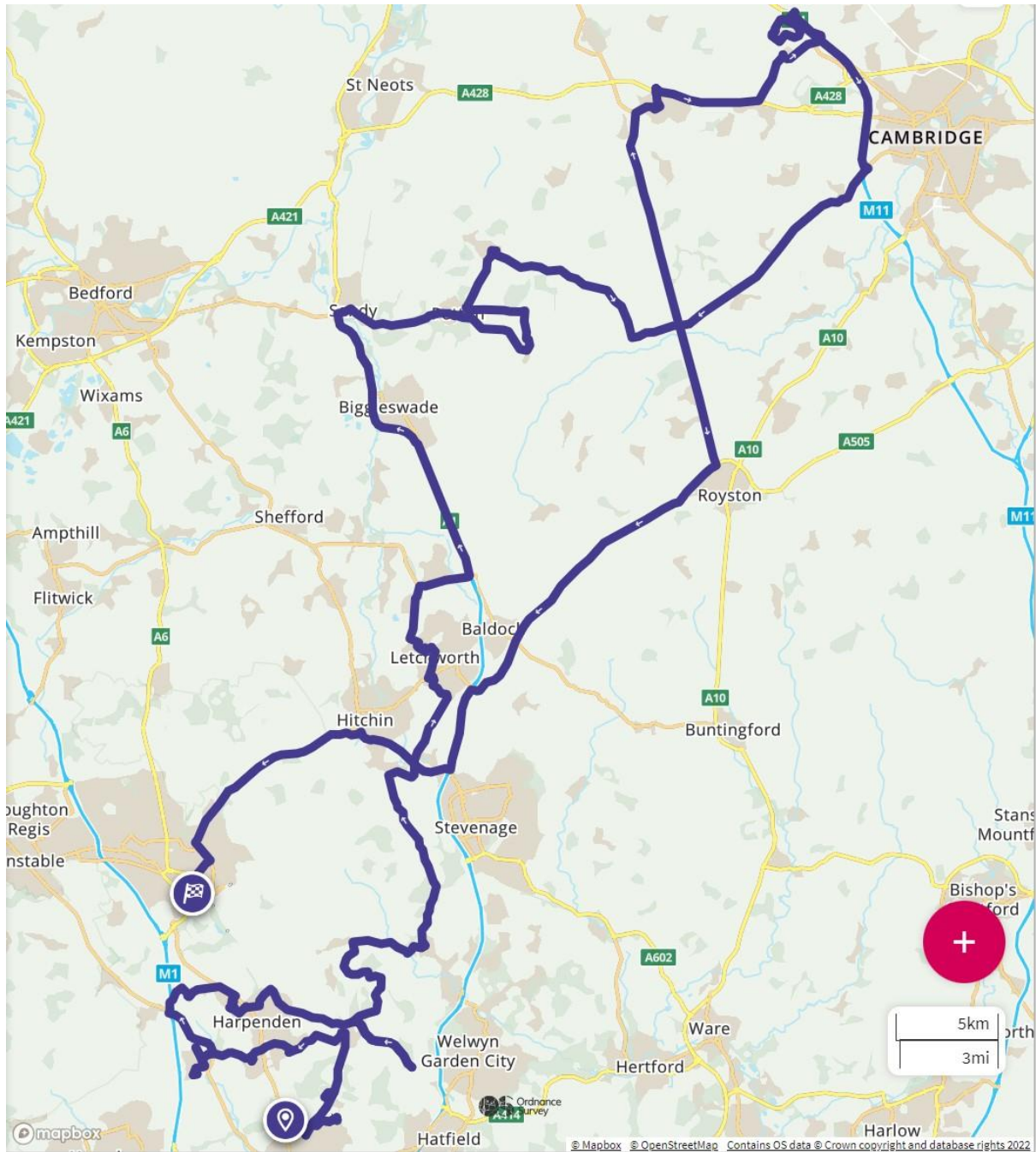
Stops 17 and 18: The ExA travelled to Dry Drayton and Bar Hill where overflying planes were both audible and visible at 9,000ft. Road traffic noise was audible and noticeable in both locations.



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Annex B

Map A



Map data from [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/)