

If expansion is needed there must be a realistic chance that the demand for extra flights can be established. It is not enough to assume that historic trends will continue in future. Such predictions are no better than the predicted Covid deaths that never happened. History is full of trends that are reversed and fashions that become unfashionable. Personal experience shows that it is now much better to take the train to Scotland rather than flying from Luton – it is cheaper, less stressful and more convenient in every way. Customer surveys would surely establish that flying is not always the best way to travel. Perhaps the golden age of cheap flights is over.

Even if continuing, increasing demand can be established it is wrong to expand Luton Airport when other London airports are more suited to provide extra flights. The contours of the land around Luton Airport mean that additional runways are incredibly expensive, if not practically impossible. Single runway airports are limited.

Air travel must be one of the most polluting forms of transport. Not only does it create noise pollution but also light pollution and poisoning effects of kerosene discharges. In our garden, we have noticed a significant decrease in lichen growth which we can only attribute to kerosene as we smell it frequently enough. It may be that the severe decline in the growth of field mushrooms and other fungi is aggravated by kerosene pollution. The ominous glow from Luton now lights up the evening sky as Luton Airport moves ever closer to our village shading out the view of stars and the Milky Way. Our friends from London no longer remark on the beauty of the night sky over Preston and further expansion can only further degrade the quality of life near the airport. But noise pollution must be the most serious threat. The Applicant is proposing a 76% increase in night flights – a time when restorative sleep is important. While two hours of quiet time at night are proposed it is inevitable that these quiet hours will be spoiled by delayed flights arriving or departing later than scheduled. Flights at 3am are not unusual now and are most intrusive. With 45 flights/hour it is perhaps inevitable that a tight timetable will overrun and spoil the proposed quiet time. Following recent expansion the noise in our village is most intrusive. A number of residents selling their houses have reported that purchasers who were initially keen have been put off by the noise and above all by the threat of greatly increased ever present noise. Over the past 20 years or so we have opened our garden to the public and up to 500 visitors at a time used to remark on the peace and quiet experienced. We doubt whether it is worthwhile to open in future and many people will be deprived of the simple pleasure of a peaceful garden – not just local residents. We understand that the Applicant is relying on the introduction of so called quieter planes. In recent years such reliance has proved optimistic and misplaced. We are advised that the A321 (neos) while technically quieter do not exhibit any discernible difference for a lay listener not equipped with sophisticated technology.

When we lived in Essex we were close to R.A.F. Wethersfield. During a period of intensive use by the U.S.A.F. the noise from aircraft literally drove a local farmer round the bend. He went so far as to shoot our dog – and that was not the only or isolated example of the damage to his mental health caused by aircraft noise. Of course, military aircraft are different to civilian air craft and the noise concerned was intense, localised and for only a few months but there can be little doubt that increased noise on a more or less continuous basis will pose a severe threat to many people in the vicinity of Luton Airport. Current noise levels are quite sufficient to make conversation difficult – greatly increased and almost continuous noise will be unbearable for those who gain no benefit from the development – only a lower quality of life and a threat to their mental health.

Today, we are obsessed by net zero and carbon emissions. As a highly polluting industry aviation must be under close scrutiny to reduce, if not eliminate, carbon emissions. Measures to offset carbon emissions are inadequate and merely obscure the problem rather than providing a solution. It is not good enough to rely on a hope that future technological development will solve the problem. That puts things in the wrong order. The solution should be proven and established before making the problem of carbon emissions even worse.

Inevitably, greatly increased access to Luton Airport is part of the proposal. The A505 will remain a principal access route without any improvements proposed. At present, this road is frequently overloaded and lanes through our village become a 'rat-run' to avoid congestion. Increased use of the 'rat-run' is inevitable and speeding traffic on narrow lanes will add to the number of dangerous incidents experienced in our village. Doubling the traffic probably quadruples the danger.

Just as there are no improvements proposed to the A505 there is virtually no mitigation proposed for the many negative impacts of this development. There is noise mitigation for a select few who live on top of the Airport but even this only amounts to some insulation which condemns those residents to a life behind closed windows and closed doors without the benefit of fresh air. There must be very significant benefits to a large number of people to try and balance the significant damage caused to the quality of life of a large number of people living in the wider area around Luton Airport. Of course there will be a short term benefit for construction industries and business related to the Airport, but the great expansion anticipated by this proposal will have to be realised if there is to be any chance that the benefits will balance the damages. There are many reasons to doubt this will happen as already mentioned. Therefore the question that must be asked is should a hope of benefits to come justify the certain damages caused. Even then should not the potential benefits greatly exceed the damages in order to justify this large scale development. Enough is enough.