

Written Representations from Nigel Oxley

I strongly object to the proposed expansion of Luton Airport from 18 million to 32 million passengers per year.

Before mentioning my main objections I would like make you aware of the background of how Luton Airport was allowed to expand so rapidly. without carrying out most of the planning conditons or obligations imposed on them by previous applications.

The airport is owned by Luton Borough Council, so any expansion of the airport benefits them directly by bringing in more revenue. Luton Borough Council should not have been making important planning decisions on the airport from which they will gain financially. All the previous applications should have been dealt with by an independent planning body that is not biased entirely 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 Planning Committee were being asked to make a decision on a highly complex and detailed technical application presented by highly slick consultants, appointed and paid for by the applicant. It was obvious that members of the 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 very much 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 Luton Borough Council gave the airport 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 Luton Borough Council) 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,

Unfortunately, the same applies to Luton Borough Council – As the Local Planning Authority they should have taken enforcement action against the airport. They didn't because, as the land owner and beneficiary, it was not in their interest to do so and it would have meant a loss of income for them. There was a clear conflict of interest and they put their own interests above their responsibilities as the Local Planning Authority.

I will now come on to my technical objections:

Some newer planes, for example the A321neo, were been brought in but they are larger than the previous ones and take more passengers, consequently they make even more noise. Because the runway at Luton is relatively short (2162 Metres) 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.

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. This summer has been particularly awful because of the huge increase in airflights after Covid. 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. Many of the aircraft completely ignore the NPRs (Noise Preferential Route) and fly directly over Wheathampstead and other local towns and villages. 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 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 high summer temperatures and I also have to wear ear plugs at night in order to sleep.

I have complained many times to Luton Airport over a long period about the noise of planes and them being off course. I have only received very few replies from them after many months of complaining. I feel that the airport management have no interest in public complaints and they treat complainants with utter disdain.

Luton Airport has a very large number of go-arounds, where an arriving plane cannot land and is directed to fly at a low level in a circle until there is runway space. Unfortunately, the flight controllers take no account of where the plane is flying and they fly over local towns and villages at a very low altitude of 3000 feet or less. These planes almost invariably fly directly over Wheathampstead, causing a tremendous noise. As a result of expansion there will be even more pressure on the runway, resulting in more go-arounds.

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 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 the proposed large expansion will only exacerbate the situation.

Another factor affecting life in Wheathampstead is the amount of traffic using the B653, 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. It is also used when there are problems on the M1 and much of the traffic diverts to this road. It often has nose to tail traffic when a hold up on the M1 occurs. A large increase in passenger numbers at the airport plus the additional needs to service the airport will further add to traffic congestion and pollution in the village and the Lower Luton Road. 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 has come up with a '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 in 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. No amount of 'Greenwashing' from the airport will change this fact.

Climate change is becoming more and more apparent to all of us and we are constantly being made aware of the many

catastrophic events taking place around the world. It is abundantly clear that we all need to play our part in reducing greenhouse gasses. Aircraft and air travel is a major source of pollution and greenhouse gasses. A massive expansion of Luton Airport flies in the face of government plans to achieve net zero by 2050. Flooding could be another environmental impact that needs to be considered. Vast areas of existing soft landscape are going to be paved over or built on with these proposals. Luton Airport is built on the top of a hill so the rainwater run off naturally feeds into the river Lee. In Wheathampstead we have had incidents of flooding due to the river overflowing, if the river will be taking a huge extra water flow from the airport it is only going to worsen the risk of flooding to the village. To sum up, 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 this is unlikely to 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 local residents a misery and any expansion will only exacerbate these problems.