

At the first Open-Floor Hearing, in the evening of Thursday, 10th August, several references, in opposition to the proposed expansion of Luton airport, were made about inconsiderate parking by passengers flying from Luton airport who leave their vehicles outside local residents' homes, sometimes for up to two weeks. They then take a taxi to and from the airport and this is cheaper than using the airport parking facilities. This cannot be right nor acceptable and will only get worse unless the airport authorities take some action to stop it. The comments were made by residents of Luton, but I wish to report that this inconsiderate and selfish parking is also occurring in Harpenden, and I have heard a number of people in different parts of the town tell me about it. It means that residents cannot park outside their own homes, and this adds to congestion in the streets and roads. One person told me that they reported to the police that a car had been outside their house for a number of days and the police checked it out and told them that it had come from Manchester! The occupants were flying out on holiday from Luton airport. This will only get worse if any expansion is allowed. It will also get worse if the airport authority continues to increase the costs of airport parking. I understand that there is a website that passengers can access that lists the names of streets which are convenient for leaving a car and then getting a taxi to the airport. What is the airport authority going to do about this anti-social behaviour, which also increases traffic congestion, caused by its customers? They are happy to take their money but not accept nor pay for the consequences.

I would also like to add the following points please:

Transport - Roads:

Question: What independent, detailed and extensive traffic surveys have been completed on all local roads (including the B653 and Harpenden High Street) as well as the M1? All we read about is "traffic and transport modelling", and it is well known that models are prone to incorrect and weak assumptions and can be flawed. They contain mathematics that you would need a PhD to understand. We need meaningful traffic surveys that show the results in a simple format that a layman can easily understand.

There is no consideration of passengers coming from the East and the West where there are no railways and they have no choice but to rely on the use of vehicles on local roads which sat-navs direct them onto.

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5.01 Chapter 18: Traffic and Transportation**

18.7.7 The B653 to the south of Luton provides a link to Harpenden and an alternative route to the A1(M) at Junction 4. This route is only attractive for car travel to and from a limited area which is confined to Harpenden, villages along the B653 and parts of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.

Question: Where is the evidence for this critical assumption? What about passengers from Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon, and even as far away as Chelmsford and Colchester? The B653 is no more than a country road, and already takes a lot of airport traffic to the detriment of the local population. There is also the Katherine Warington Secondary School adjacent to the B653, in Harpenden, which generates a lot of traffic at peak times, and some pupils come from Luton.

Question: When will full, detailed and extensive traffic surveys of the B653 be undertaken, especially during the high season? I urge the members of the Examining Authority to undertake a site visit and drive along the B653 from the airport to Wheathampstead and beyond at peak times. Also visit Harpenden town centre and study the traffic at peak times.

18.7.33 From the transport modelling work undertaken, which includes M1 Junction 10, it is evident that: a) in the design year of 2039, in the 'Do Minimum' scenario, some form of motorway capacity improvement **would be helpful** in accommodating forecast background growth in the peak periods; and b) **there is a need** to consider the inclusion of such an improvement in the transport modelling to ensure that solutions for M1 Junction 10 and Airport Way are reasonably future proofed.

Question: How vague and weak is that?! So what is the solution? Details please. This proposal cannot be approved on the basis of such flimsy comments.

18.7.34 As such, and for modelling purposes only, it was deemed sensible to assume that the section of the M1 motorway between junctions 9 and 10 operates with an improved capacity that includes hard shoulder running. It is considered that hard shoulder running is the most likely scheme to improve motorway capacity should any scheme be considered by National Highways in the future.

18.7.35 This does not imply that there is an approved scheme for widening of the M1, or that hard shoulder running, or any other capacity improvement is programmed to be delivered.

Question: How can this be when the Government is cancelling the Dynamic Hard Shoulder to All Lane Running Conversions for Junctions 10 to 13 of the M1? What is the alternative? Without extra capacity on the M1, the whole scheme is a non-starter! Even the Labour Party have called on the Government to reinstate the hard shoulder on existing smart motorways, and they might be the Government within the next 15 months.

Transport – Rail:

Thameslink trains are packed out now – you only have to see the trains arriving at Harpenden station on weekday mornings and at weekends. There is limited space for luggage on these trains. If the Luton Airport Express is not running or is having delays, then the DART system will mean even more overcrowding on Thameslink - it is not sustainable. If the whole rail system is down, which does happen, I have commuted daily on Thameslink for over 30 years, there will be mayhem and it will be someone else's problem, not the airport's.

Question: What are the Contingency Plans if the whole rail system is down, or there are severe delays?

18.7.21 In May 2021, EMR introduced a new half-hourly service, running non-stop between Luton Airport Parkway and St Pancras International stations. To the north the trains call at Luton, Bedford, Wellingborough, and Corby.

This means: a) the trains are not adapted to carry excessive amounts of luggage, b) there is the risk of being delayed if the train gets stuck between the Midlands and Luton, and c) trains into London are likely to be busy when they reach Luton Airport Parkway.

Each DART train has the capacity to carry up to 170 passengers. But, 32 million passengers per annum is about 90,000 per day on a straight average, but surely there must be around 150,000 per day in the peak summer season, which would be over 6,000 per hour?

Question: How can the DART and the rail system cope? Where is the evidence to prove that it can? What are the plans for passenger overflows?

18.9.36 For southbound journeys, the existing loading on trains can be expected to be lower on the Thameslink service.

Question: Where is the evidence for this? Surely, it is reasonable to expect that a family returning from holiday, with children and luggage, will take the first southbound train that arrives, whether it is the Luton Airport Express or Thameslink, especially if there are a lot of passengers waiting? After all, the Luton Airport Express only runs 2 trains per hour. How would Thameslink cope with the potential influx of such a large number of passengers?

Best wishes.

John.

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Harpenden

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