



UK Health
Security
Agency

Environmental Hazards and Emergencies Department
Seaton House, City Link
London Road
Nottingham, NG2 4LA

nsipconsultations@ukhsa.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/ukhsa

Your Ref: TR020001

The Examining Authority
The Planning Inspectorate.
National Infrastructure Planning.
Temple Quay House,
2 The Square,
Bristol, BS1 6PN,

5th February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

**Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
London Luton Airport Expansion DCO, Statement of Common Ground,
PINS Reference TR020001**

Please note that we request views from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the response provided below is sent on behalf of both UKHSA and OHID

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) confirm to the Examining Authority (ExA) that we have worked with the Promoter on the preparation of the SoCG and that the latest version sent (Revision 2) to us reflects our position. We set out below (see Appendix A) our position statement on health monitoring for the development.

Yours faithfully

On behalf of UK Health Security Agency
nsipconsultations@ukhsa.gov.uk

Please mark any correspondence for the attention of National Infrastructure Planning Administration

Appendix A

UK Health Security Agency position statement on health monitoring for London Luton Airport expansion

In its Registration of Interest **RR-1546**, UKHSA noted that:

“Given the scale of the adverse impacts attributable to noise, the uncertainties associated with the Applicant’s key mitigation strategy (noise insulation), and the ineffectiveness of this mitigation on noise exposure outdoors, UKHSA recommends that a commitment for monitoring the health and quality of life of local communities is made if the Application is granted. The scale of such monitoring, such as via social surveys, can be designed to be proportionate to the scale of negative environmental impacts and the predicted economic benefits.”

In **REP4-219**, UKHSA provided additional information on what specific, proportionate monitoring could be undertaken to enable understanding of impacts on health and quality of life for affected communities and how this could be used to inform future mitigation requirements.

This issue was discussed further at ISH8 on 29 November 2023, and UKHSA provided additional written information (**REP6-147**) on:

- *two HS2 conditions related to health monitoring*
- *a suggested form of drafting for a potential health monitoring requirement.*

In **REP7-117** UKHSA clarified what role UKHSA and OHID could take if monitoring is requested.

As requested by the ExA (ISH8 Action 20), a meeting was held on 18 December 2023 between the Applicant and UKHSA to discuss the possibility of an agreed approach to health monitoring. Despite further discussion, both the UKHSA and the Applicant’s positions remained unchanged and it was not possible to reach an agreed position on this issue.

The following sets out UKHSA’s position on this matter, followed by additional commentary to the Applicant’s Position Statement on Health Monitoring (**REP7-075**).

Summary of UKHSA position

Reg 26(1) of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) states that: *“if planning permission or subsequent consent is to be granted, consider whether it is appropriate to impose monitoring measures.”*

“Monitoring” is not defined, other than the interpretation in Reg 2:

“monitoring measure” means a provision requiring the monitoring of any significant adverse effects on the environment of proposed development including any measures contained in—

- a) a condition imposed on the grant of planning permission; or*
- b) a planning obligation.*

Reg 26(3b) stipulates that “*the type of parameters to be monitored and the duration of the monitoring are proportionate to the nature, location and size of the proposed development and the significance of its effects on the environment.*”

Specific and proportionate monitoring can add significant value to the EIA process, in particular to the regulator, the developer and local communities. Environmental Impact Assessment are often based on a large number of assumptions, and often decisions are made based on weak or insufficient evidence. When the predicted scale of adverse effects is significant, monitoring can provide valuable insight and feedback on a) whether the proposed mitigation is having the desired effect; b) whether mitigation strategies need to be adjusted or refined (for example to mitigate any arising inequalities due to local socio-demographic and socio-economic factors); and c) use this data to inform future developments. In a recent response to a national consultation on the EIA Regulations¹, the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)² emphasised the need for a renewed focus on monitoring in EIA.

UKHSA is of the view that for the London Luton Airport Expansion Project, a targeted Quality of Life (QoL) monitoring campaign is proportionate and necessary for the following principal reasons:

1. The potential negative impacts and effects from airport activities on the QoL for local communities is well recognised and was extensively considered within the Health Impact Analysis for the Airports National Policy Statement and supporting appendices³. The Airports National Policy Statement (Para 5.68) states that development consent should not be granted unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that the proposals will meet the following aims for the effective management and control of noise, within the context of Government policy on sustainable development:

- Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise;
- Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise; and
- Where possible, contribute to improvements to health and quality of life

2. The impacts on QoL from the proposed construction and operational activities at Luton airport were recently considered within the planning approval to increase passenger numbers to 19 mppa. The decision noted the proposal would cause moderate harm to the quality of life of people in the area around Luton Airport (2023 Planning application - [Called-in decision: London Luton Airport, Airport Way, Luton \(ref: 3296455 - 13 October 2023\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#))

3. The Environmental Statement identifies adverse effects and proposed mitigation covering various scenarios of future growth to 32 mppa by 2043. By the nature of these various scenarios and projecting 20 years ahead there are limits to the ability to fully identify impacts, effects, the success of mitigation or the need for further mitigation measures. The proposed QoL monitoring would be invaluable in understanding the impacts from the airport, success

¹ IEMA response to: Defra’s Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations: Post Implementation Review- Impact Evaluation Survey. April 2022

² IEMA is the professional body for everyone working in environment and sustainability, and an authoritative voice on Environmental Impact Assessment.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-impact-analysis-for-the-proposed-airports-national-policy-statement>

of mitigation and the production of an evidence base to assist the airport to adjust mitigation or activities over the next 20 years.

4. Throughout the stages of the application process, UKHSA has consistently highlighted the lack of good quality evidence on whether noise insulation is effective at mitigating adverse impacts on health and quality of life. A 2015 review on aircraft noise effects on health commissioned by the UK Airports Commission⁴ states (p.17):

“In terms of mitigation, very little is understood in terms of how monetary payments or respite from exposure might influence the associations between aircraft noise and health. The health-benefits associated with many of these activities should not be assumed and need to be empirically tested. The impact of any mitigation scheme would ideally be evaluated to assess efficacy and cost-effectiveness.”

And for noise insulation in schools (p.24):

“It is important that any insulation programme for schools is fully-funded and managed over the decades Such a large-scale insulation plan of schools should also be evaluated empirically to ensure its effectiveness.”

UKHSA does not dispute the need of noise insulation in high noise exposure areas for protecting residents when indoors. However, the lack of evidence makes it particularly important to monitor its effectiveness and potential for unintended consequences, such as worsening indoor air quality, increased risk of overheating and widening inequalities due to social or economic factors.

Monitoring should be proportionate, and we have previously suggested a periodic approach of between 3-to-5-year cycles and linked to key milestones within the airport expansion programme. The proposed approach should follow sound epidemiological principles to provide quantitative and qualitative analysis of the health and wellbeing effects on the community experiencing changes to their usual environment due to the Scheme, but it would additionally add to the wider evidence base. The proposed advisory board would need to consider proportionality when agreeing study design based on best practice.

Relevance of monitoring to national noise policy

Whilst aviation noise policy in England is complex and has undergone a number of changes over the past decade⁵, the general principle is that central government sets high level objectives, and it is up to airports to demonstrate how they meet those objectives. An example of this is the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)⁶, where airport operators are the Competent Authority responsible for setting and monitoring progress of Noise Action Plans.

In a Parliamentary Question tabled on 14 December 2023 to ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of London Luton Airport's Community Noise Monitoring Programme, the government responded:⁷

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/airports-commission-final-report-noise>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aviation-noise-policy-statement/overarching-aviation-noise-policy>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/2238/contents/made>

⁷ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-14/7138#>

“The Government does not set noise controls at London Luton Airport, as these are set by Luton Borough Council. We will be assessing the airport’s Noise Action Plan for 2024-2028 as per statutory requirements.

The Government encourages all airports to be transparent with communities about their noise impacts. Effective noise monitoring, both by mobile and fixed monitoring equipment, plays a key role in helping to understand such impacts. The Government also expects airports to help local communities understand these noise impacts and the performance against relevant targets.”

UKHSA is of the view that QoL monitoring would play an important role in *“being transparent with communities about their noise impacts”* and to *“help local communities understand these noise impacts and the performance against relevant targets.”*

Terminology

In its Position Statement **REP7-075** the Applicant makes multiple references to *“complex, long-term epidemiological studies”*. This type of terminology is not helpful within this context – one can argue that aircraft noise modelling is highly complex, and yet was extensively used to inform the EIA.

As noted in previous responses, government and industry-funded studies with similar methodologies to the type of monitoring proposed by UKHSA are currently taking place in England. Relevant specialist expertise exists in the public and private sectors and in academia in the UK to successfully deliver such monitoring.

Remedial Actions

In its Position Statement **REP7-075** the Applicant argues that: *“There is no clear scope for remedial action to reduce the effects of noise on quality of life for communities around London Luton Airport. As described above, all practicable measures have been adopted to reduce noise impacts resulting from the Proposed Development.”*

UKHSA disagrees with this conclusion. Monitoring can help inform, refine and evaluate aspects of mitigation such as the eligibility criteria for noise insulation beyond a simple averaged noise metric, the prioritisation of the noise insulation rollout considering socio-demographic factors, the impact of noise insulation on indoor environmental quality and whether building occupants are using alternative ventilation strategies properly, and the effectiveness of other mitigation measures such as community investment fund. The findings can also inform the evidence base for key decisions on future growth linked to the Green Controlled Growth programme.

Relying on national studies

In its Position Statement **REP7-075**, the Applicant states that: *“National studies provide data based on large sample sizes and are representative of the national population, so can be used reliably to inform noise mitigation policy and guidance.”*

Whilst nationally representative surveys are useful to inform national policy principles and guidance, they may not be best suited to detect and investigate the health effects of Luton airport expansion on its local population. Furthermore, by definition, national studies are not designed to deliver the aims and objectives of a monitoring campaign for EIA purposes.

UKHSA is not aware of any existing plans or commitments for relevant national studies to take place during the proposed Luton expansion.

Sample size

In its Position Statement **REP7-075**, the Applicant argues that: *“The sample size within the areas affected by aircraft noise from London Luton Airport would be small for a health impacts study, which would reduce the likelihood of conclusive results.”*

In its Registration of Interest, UKHSA noted that by 2043 (Phase 2b) there will be

- ~38,000 people exposed to daytime aviation noise levels above 51dB LAeq,0700-2300 (~50% of whom are due to the Proposed Development (PD)); and
- ~63,000 people exposed to night-time aviation noise levels where adverse effects are known to occur (~46% of whom are due to the PD).

Furthermore, according to **REP7-072**, approximately 8,000 properties may be eligible for noise insulation. UKHSA considers these to be sufficiently large sample size for a monitoring campaign.