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Louise Haigh MP
Secretary of State for Transport
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Wednesday 30th October 2024

January 2025 Government Decision on London Luton Airport Expansion

Dear Secretary of State,

I write to you regarding the Government's upcoming decision on London Luton Airport expansion, expected on the 3 January 2025. **I urge you to reject the plans for expansion.**

I have particular concerns on behalf of my constituents regarding the Swanwick Airspace Improvement Programme – Airspace Deployment 6 (AD6) process, currently in Post Implementation Review.

Luton Rising, the trading name of London Luton Airport Limited, claims that their expansion project has been “shaped by more than 8,000 responses to consultations undertaken in 2018, 2019 and 2022”. However, there was minimal overlap between these consultation windows and the implementation of the AD6 flight path – a path design which constitutes a significant change to how aircraft approach the expanded airport. While the Luton Rising public consultation window concluded on 4 April 2022, the AD6 flight path was only implemented on the 24 February 2022. I'm sure you will agree that a mere 40 days did not constitute an appropriate timescale for my constituents to engage with the Luton Rising consultation and make their voices heard in light of the new and overwhelmingly negative experience of AD6 implementation.

The airspace change has had a detrimental impact on the environment, public health, and quality of life for residents in the St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire area. This is, in significant part, due to failure to adhere to the original flight path proposals. For example, analysis carried out by the Reject Luton Airport Stacking (RELAS) group shows that the vectoring laid out in the original flight path design, one proposed to host 70% of arrivals, has been used for only 3% of air traffic arrivals during the AD6 trial periods. The CB24 area in particular was not consulted on AD6, and yet convoys of often five or six flights at three-minute intervals are not unusual before or around 8am, causing intrusive noise disturbance. These are just two of many concerns that have diminished the quality of life for my constituents, and they are concerns that I have taken up with the CAA during the AD6 Post Implementation Review Process.

I also wish to echo the climate concerns outlined in a letter to you from my colleagues, the Honourable Member for St Albans, and the Honourable Member for Berkhamsted and Harpenden, dated 8 July 2024. Since their letter, new recommendations for the coming year have been published by the Climate Change Committee (CCC). These could not be any clearer: **Stop airport expansion without a UK-wide capacity management framework.**



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This is the second consecutive year that this recommendation has been made by the CCC. In 2023, they stated that “no airport expansions should proceed until a UK-wide capacity management framework is in place to annually assess and, if required, control sector GHG emissions and non-CO2 effects.” The same report recommends that the framework be developed “over the next 12 months and... be operational by the end of 2024.” If the new 2024 report makes the very same recommendation, then this is surely evidence that no such framework has been implemented.

Recently, the Advertising Standards Agency ruled that a Luton Rising claim that if any of their “environmental limits” were missed, the expansion would be “stopped in its tracks” was misleading. These “environmental limits” did not include air traffic movements – which account for 83.7% (or 1,341,235 tonnes CO2e) of LLA’s total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Failing to place limits on GHG emissions is unacceptable if the UK is to meet net zero targets. Moreover, if Luton Rising cannot be trusted to advertise these correctly, nor properly implement flight path changes, they should not be trusted to expand in the sustainable and fair way that must be required if expansion is to go ahead.

Should you be minded to approve expansion to London Luton Airport, you must ensure that one of the conditions of development be that limits on GHG emissions and non-CO2 effects include those generated through air traffic movements, and that these limits are properly monitored and enforced. Appropriate powers to undertake this work must be given to the CAA, and this should include powers to enforce the original AD6 proposal.

I hope that you take the time to consider the above issues in your decision-making and look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Sollom

Member of Parliament for St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire