

REPRESENTATION ON MANCHESTER AIRPORT GROUP/STANSTED AIRPORT LIMITED'S PLANNING APPLICATION UTT/18/0460/FUL TO INCREASE STANSTED AIRPORT CAPACITY TO 43 MILLION PASSENGERS PER ANNUM (OR HIGHER)

My representation draws attention to the level of public interest in growth at Stansted Airport. It addresses precedents for the assessment of previous planning applications to raise the throughput capacity at Stansted Airport. These raise concerns about the process and timetable presently established for the determination of planning application UTT/18/0460/FUL.

Attention is also drawn to some of the factors that make the airport a controversial operation and that require rigorous scrutiny before consideration is given to whether a decision can be made by Uttlesford District Council.

Concerns are raised that it is probably beyond the remit of the district council to reach any decision in the middle of 2018 for the raising of passenger and aircraft throughput at Stansted Airport owing to impending national strategic policy statements that will likely make an affirmative decision premature.

Background

Past decisions to raise the capacity of the airport in the early and mid-2000s attracted representations and the engagement of concerned residents in large numbers from well beyond the boundaries of the Uttlesford district. Because it is over ten years since there was an application of this nature, the corporate memory of both officers and elected members at Uttlesford has diminished. Yet the issues of aviation growth remain significant and the impact on residents' lifestyles and health and on the wider environment remain potent.

The Council must not treat the current application more lightly and less thoroughly because of the passage of time. Work must be done to raise awareness to ensure that corners are not cut and important factors are not overlooked in the evaluation of this proposal to raise the capable capacity of the airport significantly above its present limits.

Markers from The Past

The 2006 Generation 1 planning application to raise the passenger capacity above 25 mppa (million passengers per annum) incorporated obligations from the previous 2003 application to raise the cap to 25 mppa. All past agreements and obligations must be reviewed now to determine their current and future relevance.

In particular, an agreement of some 15 years' standing that BAA/STAL (former owners British Airports Authority/Stansted Airport Limited) would not seek to raise the cap on night flights must remain a Council objective and be incorporated in any new agreement in future. It is not good enough to dismiss this as no longer relevant because the Westminster Government owns the process for determining night flight regimes. It is Uttlesford District Council's (UDC) responsibility to defend the interests of its district's residents and those of neighbouring districts from night disturbance caused by aircraft noise. It is more relevant now not to give ground on this undertaking than it was ten-plus years ago, when the

headroom between actual volumes of night flights and the limit on night flights was large. The night flights headroom is no longer large, so UDC must remain vigilant on this matter and seek to achieve stronger commitments from the airport owner than hitherto. There is concern that national government may wish to divert night flights from Heathrow to Stansted in an effort to pacify objectors at the main London airport to an impending third runway. UDC must not show any weakness towards resisting such a move. See further comment below in **National Airports and National Aviation Policy Statements**.

The Generation 1 (35 mppa) approval contained an obligation on BAA/STAL to perform a 35 mppa development impact study before 31st December 2014. The impacts of air noise, ground noise, air quality, traffic flows, transport mode share, employment levels and home locations of airport employees were to be monitored. This study has not yet been carried out owing to the steep decline in airport activity following the last approval. Passenger levels have only just exceeded the 25 mppa cap that was raised to 35 mppa some ten years ago.

The purposes of that study were (i) to determine whether predictions at the time of the last application were borne out in practice, and (ii) to provide empirical evidence that would be valuable in the consideration of any further lifting of the cap above 35 mppa. Because the 2008 throughput levels still largely prevail now in 2018, and it has consequently not yet possible to perform the study, there is a strong argument for judging the current application as significantly premature and not adequately informed for an evaluation and a determination to be made.

Key Factors

- 1. Noise:** Aircraft noise, especially night flight noise. See above in **Markers from The Past**. See also 6 below about Heathrow and National Airports Policy.
- 2. Carbon emissions:** one of the reasons for UDC's refusal of the last application was carbon emissions and the impact on climate change. In the intervening years, this life-threatening, most significant contribution towards global warming from the aviation industry has been enshrined in national and international obligations contained in the Climate Change Act and overseen by the UK Committee for Climate Change (CCC). UDC must not make an affirmative decision on this application without having rigorously addressed this national and international issue through accountable central government channels and in accordance with the Climate Change Act.
- 3. Aircraft movements:** This application has been portrayed as benign with respect to aircraft movements. It is claimed that the airport would not raise aircraft movements above the existing limit of 274,000 per annum. That is a misleading claim. The existing cap is divided into three categories; for passengers, for cargo and for other mainly private take-offs and landings of small aircraft. The application should be thoroughly assessed to achieve transparency of the impact of the proposal to merge the separate categories into a single air traffic movement cap because it would in effect allow small, quieter aircraft movements to be converted into larger and noisier aircraft.

- 4. Real capacity of the proposed changes:** There is opinion that the history of planning applications for airport infrastructure has repeatedly enabled airport throughput in excess of that claimed by the airport-owning applicant. Put another way, the planning authority may have been misled in the past about the actual passenger and air traffic movement capacity achievable by authorised facilities. There is evidence that the current application for additional taxiways and aircraft stands would enable the capability of the airport to rise well above the 43 mppa cap that the applicant claims it wants. 50 mppa, or around twice the current passenger throughput, is said to be a reasonable assessment. UDC must examine the impact of the true capacity of the proposed infrastructure. It must not succumb to further piecemeal proposals that hide the true capability of what is proposed. Incremental increases result in short-term delivery of mitigation measures. Tactical initiatives and the absence of long-term, strategic delivery must not be perpetuated.
- 5. National Infrastructure and National Determination:** Points 1-4 above, and especially 4, demonstrate that this application should be treated as a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP). The true increase in airport capacity that is proposed exceeds the capacity change (+10 mppa) at which the Secretary of State has to declare the application to be a NISP. Only sleight of hand by the applicant has attempted to show that it falls below the threshold. The potential local impact on surface transport infrastructure, together with its impact of national airport and aviation policy justifies its evaluation as a national and regional project that also has significant local impact. It must be assessed at all these levels in a wholly transparent way.
- 6. National Airports and National Aviation Policy Statements:** A National Airports policy statement is expected to pass through its parliamentary process before the summer recess begins in July 2018. This national process is expected to give the green light for a third runway at Heathrow Airport. The policy may contain two factors that are relevant to growth at Stansted Airport. The first relates to the viability of the Heathrow project and how that might be affected negatively by air traffic being siphoned off to other airports in the South-East. If so, the statement may call for constraints in growth at Stansted. The second factor is concessions that may be made at Heathrow by the government to further limit night flights there in order to placate objectors to the third runway. Both of these factors make a decision by Uttlesford District Council in July 2018 to lift the Stansted caps inadvisable and premature. The more wide-ranging National Aviation Policy that is not expected to be published until 2019 is also likely to contain directions that will have an impact at Stansted. There is no urgency beyond Stansted Airport's own narrow commercial interests to change the capping regime at the present time because present throughput is some 10 mppa short of the current cap. Determination of the current application should be delayed until national policy becomes clear. Determination should follow a path that has due regard to emerging national airport and aviation policy. It should not follow a fast-track path of short-term expediency such as that which the Council and the airport owner have drawn up by means of a Planning Policy Agreement (PPA).

7. Stansted Airport North-side Proposals: This application must not be considered in isolation from the proposal in the emerging Uttlesford Local Plan for non-airport-related business development on land at Stansted Airport's North-Side. There will be a cumulative impact on surface access, especially the local and strategic road network. Many of the proposed businesses that would occupy this land adjacent to Bury Lodge Lane, Stansted are likely to be in the logistics and supply industries. These could have a major impact on the demand for night flights. Therefore, in common with the case put in **Markers from The Past** above and in 1. and 6. in this section, a strategic and joined up approach is essential between the Local Plan work and this application to ensure that cumulative impacts are taken into account in assessing mitigation measures.

Planning processes: Transparency and Thoroughness

The Generation 1 (G-1) scoping and application processes to raise the passenger cap from 25 mppa to 35 mppa were conducted in a deliberative and thorough manner, mainly during 2005 and 2006. From January 2005 until November 2006 there were fourteen (14) meetings of the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel (STAAP). Most of these addressed the G-1 proposals, though there was also debate from the start of 2006 about the G-2 additional runways proposals by central government. There were 10 meetings of STAAP before the G-1 application was submitted.

Since the beginning of 2017 to date there have been no more than four (4) meetings of the STAAP, of which only two (2) have addressed in broad terms the current application. None addressed specific issues related to the pending application in the way that took place in 2005/06.

Between May 2006 and November 2006 there were sixteen (16) meetings in public of the Development Control Sub-committee (DCC), the predecessor of today's Planning Committee. The meeting of DCC in 24th May 2006 included a briefing in public with minuted debate on the scope of the application that had been submitted only one month earlier on 26th April 2006.

In July, August and September 2006 the DCC met nine (9) times to consider representations in person about the G-1 application and to consider specific technical topics such as air traffic forecasts, health and climate change. The application was determined – a refusal - by the Planning Committee on 29th November 2006, seven months after the submission date.

The current application UTT/18/0460/FUL was submitted to UDC on Thursday 22nd February 2018 and was (surprisingly for such a significant application) verified on the same day. There has been no meeting in public to date (30th April 2018), some two months later and only one private briefing to the Planning Committee and a few other district councillors on 14th March 2018. A briefing of parish councillors took place on 26th March 2018. Neither of these meetings was considered satisfactory by most of those who attended.

The PPA signed by Manchester Airport Group and Uttlesford District Council timetables a decision by the Planning Committee on 18th July 2018, less than five (5) months after the submission date. One public consultation session on 11th July 2018 has been inserted into the timetable after a public outcry about the published timetable.

A single public consultation session one week before the planned determination date and, by then after an officers' committee report and recommendation on the application will already have been published, demonstrates contempt by the Council for public involvement in the planning process for this significant, strategic expansion proposal at Stansted Airport.

The Council urgently needs to take stock of its programme for evaluation and consideration of planning application UTT/18/0460/FUL. It should urgently demonstrate principles of openness, transparency and involvement between itself and the public by taking account of the process followed in 2005/06 and by embracing the ethos of 12 years ago for refreshing the way this current application is processed. Open dialogue with community groups, community representatives and individuals are essential for such a significant and strategically important proposal by the Manchester Airport Group/Stansted Airport Limited.

Cllr Alan Dean

Member for Stansted North, Uttlesford District Council

49 Recreation Ground, STANSTED CM24 8BD

30th April 2018