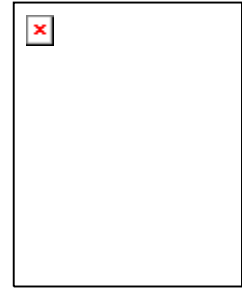


DR. CAROLINE LUCAS
Green Party

for the South East of England



Planning Services
Rushmoor Borough Council
Farnborough Road
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December 7th 2005

Dear Planning Committee

Re: planning application 05/00640/FUL

In 2003 the Department for Transport issued consultation papers concerning the future development of air transport in the United Kingdom (South East England). A key objective of this exercise was to "ensure that the long-term development of aviation is sustainable...striking a balance between the social and economic benefits of air travel and the environmental effects of any development." Furthermore, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's *18th Report on Transport and the Environment*, asserts " ...an unquestioning attitude toward future growth in air travel, and an acceptance that the projected demand for additional facilities must be met, are incompatible with the aims of sustainable development."

This emphasis on sustainable aviation is the basis of my objection to the proposals from TAG Aviation to increase weekend flight capacity at Farnborough Airport. The proposal is rooted in a position that favours expansion yet this is environmentally and economically unsustainable - the advantages of the growth of the aviation industry have long been exaggerated and the social and environmental costs ignored.

Air traffic worldwide is forecast to almost double in the next 15 years. Government figures indicate that UK air passenger numbers are set to increase from 180 million per annum today to around 400 million in 20 years time. If the "predict and provide" model were applied to that level of demand, the resulting increase of 240 million passengers would require the equivalent of 4 new airports the size of Heathrow or 8 new airports the size of Gatwick. By 2020 the forecasts indicate that demand will be rising by about 15 million a year, equivalent to a new Gatwick every 2 years.

Clearly, it would be impossible politically, environmentally and socially to respond to that level of demand. The projections only serve to demonstrate the nonsense of assuming the possibility of continuing exponential growth. In the case of Farnborough Airport, I am concerned that this application is the first of many steps towards further expansion. Approving the application would establish a worrying precedent and show utter disregard for the impact on the local population -

both in the short term and in the longer term, as the true extent of TAG's expansion agenda is revealed. Assertions by TAG Aviation that this application is just about shifting capacity to the weekend are, I believe, a deliberate attempt to conceal their real intentions regarding the expansion of the airport. Equally, their claims that fuel deliveries, shift work and so forth will not be affected by the proposed changes are unrealistic - if doubling the number of weekend flights is going to have such a limited impact on the airport's operations, I fail to see why they are proposing an increase in the first place.

The disadvantages associated with the growth of aviation are well known and so I will not repeat them at length here. Briefly:

- **Pollution** - Aviation is the most highly polluting transport mode on earth. This includes noise pollution (with associated health costs in lost sleep, damage to children's education etc) and air pollution (including CO₂, Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Monoxide). The problems may be felt only in a localised area (though in the case of air pollution, this must be questionable), but the associated costs are borne more generally e.g. through the health service and the education system. Pollution from aviation constitutes a major hidden cost to the economy, which is born not by the industry but by society as a whole.
- **Climate change** - Aviation is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases. We need to manage demand for air travel, rather than pursuing the current predict-and-provide approach, an approach that has been discredited for car travel.

There is a contradiction within Government policy. The Government's desire to cater for demand is at odds with its stated commitment to tackle climate change. The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, at the University of East Anglia, has calculated that, if the aviation industry grows as predicted, all householders, motorists and businesses will have to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions to zero in order to meet the Government's climate change target of a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. A report published by the centre in September 2005 concluded that even if aviation's current growth is halved, the rest of the economy would still have to make cuts far beyond the Government's 60% target.

- **Fuel availability** - Fuel availability is certain to decline considerably over the next 30 years, with petroleum production set to peak around 2010. Unless the air transport sector can appropriate a rapidly increasing proportion of declining world oil production, its growth cannot proceed as the industry expects. At the very least, the real cost of fuel will increase dramatically.
- **Economic issues** - Airlines pay no duty or VAT on aviation fuel, which distorts competition between aviation and other modes of transport. The cost to HM Treasury in lost revenue from VAT alone is £1.8 billion. If the fuel was taxed at the same rate as, for example, unleaded petrol, the income from the tax would amount to another £5 billion a year. Through externalising costs and escaping taxation, the Government artificially subsidises the growth of the aviation sector.

Claims made by TAG Aviation that aviation is of benefit to the economy are extremely questionable. Many of the arguments are based on the simplistic assumption that airports generate wealth, whereas in reality airport expansion is only driven by consumer choice. If the price of air travel reflected its true costs to society, and if it paid its way through taxation as other modes must, then it would not appear to be such good value, and demand would fail. As the world comes to grips with the ever-increasing threat of climate change, it is more than likely that the aviation industry will have to come to terms with a drop in demand, probably in conjunction with a "polluter pays" tax regime, pulling the rug out from beneath their self-predicted growth patterns.

Over the next 30 years a substantial proportion of the projected growth in air travel will come from wealthier people flying abroad on increased numbers of weekend breaks. Only 20% of flights are made for business purposes, and this figure is not expected to change - yet this is the market at which TAG Aviation is aiming its current proposals. In addition, Britons spend £17.7 billion a year on holidays abroad, compared to only £9.1 billion spent by visitors to the UK. In other words, the UK suffers from a tourism deficit of £8.6 billion a year - a deficit which can only be exacerbated by increasing the opportunity to travel abroad. To put it simply - aviation is bad for the national the regional economy.

It is often claimed that the UK is losing out to its European "competitors" because other cities are building more runways than this country. However, not all the runways at leading airports like Charles de Gaulle in Paris and Schipol in Amsterdam are in use at the same time - for example, Amsterdam generally only operates from 2 of its 5 five runways at any one time, and the decision to build the fifth runway was partly based on the need to give relief to residents under existing flight paths. Additionally, if EU-wide measures such as the emission charge were introduced effectively, the demand at *all* EU airports would be reduced. This would significantly lessen the competitive pressure on individual airports to expand - negating the argument that it is necessary to expand for competitive purposes, an argument TAG Aviation make in their planning application information.

One of the most compelling arguments against the proposed planning application is that it overrules a planning condition that is already in place ie " no more than 28,00 aircraft movements per annum shall take place of which no more than 2,500 movements shall be at weekends or bank holidays" This condition was imposed for very good and clear reasons and was designed, in part at least, to protect local residents from some of the worst impacts of the airport. In particular noise disturbance is a matter of enormous concern for the densely populated communities surrounding the airport.

EU members have adopted the 1999 World Health Organisation recommendations that the welfare of communities must be put first when creating transport policy. Noise is not just irritating; it is a serious health risk too. According to considerable evidence, including a study published in the Lancet in 2004, adults who are repeatedly disturbed by noise suffer sleep loss, fatigue, hypertension and accidents from concentration failure, especially if they are carrying out complex tasks.

Children in schools or homes under flight paths can chronically under-perform. A study at Schipol airport showed higher than average levels of poor reading comprehension due to aircraft noise exposure. Another study undertaken at Munich airport revealed that long-term memory and reading deficits in children were eliminated when Munich airport closed, but emerged in children near the new airport. Worryingly, stress responses, such as increased blood pressure and higher levels of adrenaline when at rest, were also revealed when comparison was made with children not exposed to chronic aircraft noise. So, the noise issue must be addressed, given the proximity of homes to the airport. Health impact assessments as well as Environmental Impact Assessments ought to be carried out before any kind of development is approved.

I have been contacted by a number of people living close to Farnborough airport who are incredibly anxious about the impact of any changes to the flights patterns will have on their quality of life. I am urging you, on their behalf, to reject TAG Aviation's planning proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.