

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Future Luton LLAL consultation
London Luton airport Ltd

Our Ref: LLAL/2018Pre_con
Your Ref:

By Email to:
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Dear Cllr Malcolm

North Hertfordshire District Council Response to LLAL Future Luton: Making Best Use of our Runway: Non-Statutory Consultation June 2018.

North Hertfordshire District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above June 2018 Non-Statutory Consultation Document and on the two supporting Sift Reports. However, it does express its extreme disappointment in the strongest possible terms that no prior notification or briefing was undertaken with ourselves or Hertfordshire County Council as the authorities directly impacted by the proposals and indeed the preferred option.

The Council recognises the national policy position regarding the expansion of airports, and the likely economic benefits to the sub-regional economy, including to North Hertfordshire, with the potential expansion of London Luton Airport. However, due to the lack of any detailed evidence base the Council reserves its position in respect of commenting more fully on Green Belt, landscape, transport, environmental and noise issues until the next stage of the consultation when more detailed information will be available.

National Policy

The Council is aware of the Government's Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) published in June 2018 and its commitment to the increase of airport facilities. While this has effect in relation to the delivery of a new north-west runway at Heathrow Airport and any associated provision of new or reconfigured terminal capacity, the Airports NPS is clear that it does not have effect in relation to other applications, but its contents will be important and relevant in considering any such applications, particularly where it relates to London or the South East of England. Particularly where the statement also recognised "that the development of airports can have positive and negative impacts, including on noise levels" and that "any proposals should be judged on their individual merits by the

relevant planning authority, taking careful account of all relevant considerations, particularly economic and environmental impacts”.

It is also noted that there is no mention in the consultation documents of the UK’s legally binding commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Change Act. Central Government have also committed to publish a new Aviation Strategy in 2019. This will need to include a plan to limit UK aviation emissions to the level assumed when the fifth carbon budget was set (i.e. around 2005 levels by 2050). No references are made to the work conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers for the Airport Commission examining the relationship between aviation and quality of life.

Clear references to all relevant central government policies should be made within the consultation documents.

Local Policy and Consideration of Options

As a result of sifts one and two, the top three most preferred options (1a, 1b and 1c) are for new development to the north-side of the existing runway and include a large scale extension of Luton airport east of the Luton Borough boundary, into North Hertfordshire. This raises a number of Development Plan policy and cross boundary issues that need to be addressed.

The proposed development within North Hertfordshire comprises earthworks, part of a large car park, the significant majority of a relocated Wigmore Valley Park and a potential link road bisecting the two. The large scale nature of the development is likely to have a significant adverse effect upon landscape character and visual amenity within the District as well as significant traffic, noise and air quality impact issues.

Whilst reference is made in the sift reports to the options being assessed in broad conformity with national and local town planning policies, the Council would expect a detailed and fully justified assessment of land-use policy implications of the proposals against Development Plan policies for Luton Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council to be undertaken.

There are a number of policies within the adopted Luton Local Plan where an expansion of the airport could broadly accord with policy subject to satisfactory long-term mitigation arrangements and others that would be contrary to policy, insofar as they relate to employment, transport and environmental impacts. This is particularly relevant in relation to Century Park and Wigmore Valley Park.

In terms of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the relevant land within the District is presently designated as Green Belt under the saved policies of the District Plan 2nd Review with Alterations and is proposed to be retained as Green Belt within the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031. No policy provisions are made within the current or the emerging Local Plan to address, or otherwise facilitate, the (potential) future expansion of Luton airport. The policies defer the consideration of the principle of development within the Green Belt to national policy, as now set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework. It would be for LLAL to demonstrate the likely impacts of the proposal on the Green Belt and how it would seek to address the harms as

well as demonstrate exceptional circumstances for inappropriate development, such as the car park and link road.

It is understood that a new area of park is proposed to compensate for the loss of the existing green space at Wigmore Valley Park. At this stage there is concern for the location, nature, function and management responsibilities of the new park that need to be addressed based on an understanding of local needs. The concept diagram appears to show the proposed park as a finger of isolated green space, extending into the open countryside, and remote from the urban edge and the communities that it should serve. The Park will fundamentally change the character of the existing agricultural land, and whether or not this is an appropriate change requires assessment based on an understanding of landscape character, and its sensitivity and ability to accommodate the proposed change without causing unacceptable harm, including its impact within the Green Belt. The appropriateness of any proposals for a relocated Wigmore Valley Park would be contingent upon:

- The scale of any ancillary facilities;
- The extent of any engineering operations; and
- The impact upon openness.

The proposed Park lies in close proximity to a site allocated for housing, on the eastern edge of Luton, within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Proposed Submission Version. How the Park relates to the new housing layout and benefits the new communities is a key consideration. How the Park relates to the conservation and enhancement of important strategic green infrastructure assets, such as the Chiltern Way, Lilley Bottom Valley, Putteridge Bury Estate and the Chilterns AONB, as identified within the North Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategies is also a key consideration.

Your consultants have stated previously that the Park will be of regional significance, no evidence has been provided to show how this view has changed over time, as such the impact of visitors upon the surrounding roads and villages must be fully considered and justified. The Park cannot solely rely upon Luton as its access point as in reality this will simply not be the case.

Of particular concern is the management and on-going maintenance arrangements of the Park, further detailed information would be required to enable the Council to comment on, consider or participate in any discussions regarding such issues. However, the Council will not expect to have any liability placed upon it or the residents of North Hertfordshire with regard the Park.

In summary, there is currently insufficient information to make any assessment against detailed (Development Management) policies of either authority's plan including, but not necessarily limited to, those dealing with transport, air quality, noise and design (See comments in relation to managing these impacts under a number of sub-headings below). Significant additional information will be required to enable the Council to provide a full and comprehensive response to any future application.

Managing the Impacts

Road Traffic, Surface Access and Cargo

Road Traffic & surface Access

While the Council notes the relatively high level surface access objectives set out in the consultation, the Council is concerned at the significant amount of information missing from this consultation in terms of supporting the objectives in relation to transport baseline data, traffic and associated environmental impacts on North Hertfordshire.

The consultation document implies that much of the growth is expected to come from North London and from the Cambridge area. The Council is concerned that this is going to place an additional road traffic burden on the East-West routes through North Hertfordshire to Luton airport. There appears to have been no consideration of the capacity of, or need to improve or supplement, the existing east-west routes, especially the A602-A505 route through Hitchin.

It appears that the current data that is being used is out-dated and does not take into account Hertfordshire County Council's COMET modelling, which has been used to understand growth in movement terms across the county. The Model also takes into consideration the anticipated growth in North Hertfordshire as identified within its emerging Local Plan to 2031 (i.e. some 14,200 homes and a further 2,200 homes to the East of Luton to accommodate Luton's housing needs.) Similarly it is not clear what modelling data has been used to assess the anticipated growth across Central Bedfordshire.

No detail has been provided about the extent of the area around Luton airport that will be subject to a micro-simulation model. This makes it difficult for the Council to comment on or understand the adequacy/capacity of the proposal across the highway network.

The Council would expect specific detailed assessments to be undertaken of the A505 into Hitchin and the A505/A602 through Hitchin towards its junction at the A1(M) and Stevenage, as part of the micro-simulation model and the wider traffic modelling assessments.

It is unclear whether the road traffic distribution graphic shown on page 60 of the consultation document includes all road traffic to Luton (i.e. public transport, cars, heavy and light goods vehicles etc.) or whether it is passenger specific. Nor is there data provided for how staff will travel to work. The use of sustainable transport modes to help deliver modal shift objectives needs to be examined in a comprehensive way as part of the transport modelling process and should identify potential passenger transport improvements with innovative approaches to infrastructure and not just focus on highway improvements.

More information will need to be provided in order to address these concerns. The Council is currently working under the Duty to Co-operate with Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council regarding longer-term strategic infrastructure requirements arising from future growth within these areas and would wish to be included in any future workshops/discussions on

transport matters relating to the airport, in particular to likely impacts on the A505 and the A602 corridor.

Cargo

The consultation document describes the airport as having only a 'small cargo centre' and states that there were 21,199 tonnes of cargo through the airport in 2017. There is no supporting detail provided advising how the volumes of cargo handled by Luton airport have changed since 2007, nor is there a reference to what is the predicted change in cargo volumes for the period 2018 – 2050.

Not only is the Council concerned about the likely increase in air freight but also the amount of cargo being delivered by road. The Council would expect the following information to be provided for the expansion proposals to be meaningfully considered:

- What if any limits are being placed on the growth of cargo movements during the period to 2050;
- How cargo is currently delivered to and from Luton airport, as page 60 of the consultation document shows the road traffic distribution to and from Luton airport, but there is no indication as to whether that includes movement of cargo either by HGV's or LGV's and if so what proportion of it is HGV or LGV traffic.

Some measureable commitment from LLAL to reduce the amount of cargo being delivered to, or from the airport by road would be welcomed. Alongside which there should be a measureable commitment to improving the efficiency and reducing the emission of air pollutants from those deliveries that still need to be made by road vehicles.

Air Quality

Although assessments have been made of each Option in terms of the adverse impacts of air pollution there has been no indication of the geographical area over which the impacts have been assessed. It is the Council's view that this should have been specified within the Sift Reports by the identification of 'red-lines' on plans for each environmental impact that was assessed and should be addressed.

Nor has consideration been given of the impact of the proposed expansion on the local air quality in North Hertfordshire, in particular the two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Hitchin. This is despite the fact that the AQMAs are located along roads that are directly linked to the third busiest route of road traffic access to Luton as identified on page 60 of the consultation document. The impact of the proposed expansion on these AQMA will need to be assessed.

In terms of the proposals to measure the impact of the development on air quality, the Council would expect air quality monitoring to:

- coincide with each period of stepped growth (as referenced in page 22) up to and including the peak period of operation;

- account for the cumulative impact of the airport expansion plans, along with other relevant committed developments and Local Plan identified developments, for example New Century Park in Luton and the proposed East of Luton housing site in North Hertfordshire;
- be run for the key areas of North Hertfordshire; and
- be founded on sufficiently detailed road traffic growth modelling.

Noise, Vibration and Dust

Although the Council notes the recognition within the consultation document regarding the need to undertake further work to understand associated noise impacts and welcomes the opportunity to be involved in a 'Noise Envelope Design Group' as referenced in the document, the Council expresses its concern regarding the lack of detail provided on the noise monitoring methodology and the affects of noise on the noise sensitive locations. This lack of information makes it difficult for the Council to comment on any of the proposed options and outlines its issues of concern below:

Noise and Vibration

There are four noise emission issues that need to be addressed in respect of the site preparation, construction and operation of the airport for the coming years:

- Airborne aircraft noise
- Ground noise
- Road traffic noise
- Construction noise

Airborne noise

The permitted capacity of Luton Airport (LTN) is currently 18 million passengers per annum (mppa). It is estimated that the existing runway has the potential capacity of up to 36-38mppa. The plan is to expand LTN to achieve this growth. It is understood that this will lead to a considerable increase in air movements which will have an impact on the local communities. The extent of which at this time is unknown.

The Sift states 'there is the prospect that the level of impact will be reduced through changes in aircraft type, further improvements in aircraft technology, management of night time flights and other mitigation/compensation measures.' Although this may be the case it is not quantified or justified. Evidence of how for example, the changes in aircraft type affected the previous planning application, detailing the aspirations within the application and the actual changes in aircraft type over the life of the application.

It is therefore essential that the following measures should be considered in respect of aircraft noise for example:

- Providing incentives for airlines to adopt quieter aircraft
- Imposing penalties on aircraft that breach 'noise criteria', especially at 'night time'
- Providing an appropriate noise insulation scheme

- Considering the 'permitted' flight times
- Working with the National Air Traffic Services to ensure that future flight paths are designed to minimise noise disturbance.
- To follow Government Policy on aircraft noise.

It is to be noted this is not an exhaustive list.

Ground noise

On site ground noise associated with taxiing and manoeuvring of aircraft on the ground, airport equipment and engine testing and parking facilities have the potential to impact on nearby residential areas.

The documents suggest that the taxi-routes will be shortened and aircraft will spend less time idling as they queue for a stand with the proposed layout. While this may benefit a reduction in the noise escape off site if the same number of aircraft were to use the airport. However, more aircraft is likely to increase the amount of noise. There is very little detail in the documents in order for the Council to comment on the potential noise impact.

Road traffic noise

Road noise (not on the airport site) associated with people travelling to and from the airport has not been considered in the Sift reports. There will be an increase in road traffic to/from Luton as the increase in numbers of people who fly to/from this location increases. It is expected that the public will continue to use the road transport links currently in place to travel to/from the airport including, but not exclusively to the A505 and A602 through Hitchin off the A1(M). This should be considered.

Construction noise

There will inevitably be noise and vibration created during the site preparation. There is no detail as to how long these works would take to complete. Options 1a-1c will generate noise and vibration to the east of the existing terminal. Substantial earthworks will be required to level the ground. This could have an impact on NHDC residents. However the location and extent of this is not clear and the Council would expect a construction noise and vibration mitigation scheme to be prepared and consulted upon.

Noise from HGV traffic could also affect local residents. The Sift states 'substantial levels of HGV movements are anticipated during the site preparation and construction works phase. The level of impacts will be dependant on the haul route'. NHDC would require that the local village/hamlet routes through North Hertfordshire are not used and should be considered as part of a construction environmental management plan to which the Council is consulted on.

Dust

There will be an impact in respect of dust particularly during the site preparation and construction phase of the development. Appropriate measures must be implemented to minimise the impact on the local community. This should also be addressed via a construction environmental management plan.

Earthworks

Options 1a, 1b and 1c include a substantial area and volume of earthworks within North Hertfordshire, which would use earth excavated from within the site, to create a development platform that is level with the existing airport. While it is recognised that there is a desire to limit the impact on the highway network by using material excavated from within the site, it is not clear where this material will be excavated from or details provided in terms of the phasing of the development. It is the Council's concern that construction phase traffic on local roads will be unavoidable and not insignificant, even with significant on-site sourcing of materials. Therefore, in addition to the commitment on page 53 for a Construction Environmental Management Plan, there will need to be a commitment for a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). As a minimum requirement, that CTMP should include the prohibition of all airport construction traffic from travelling to or from Luton via the local AQMAs, whether in Luton or North Hertfordshire.

There has been no mention in the consultation document of the likelihood that much of the on-site material could be obtained from a former landfill site and as such there has been no reference to the need to consider measures to mitigate the environmental impact of its disturbance, its storage, its treatment, its transport, its re-use or its disposal. This is something that should be recognised and addressed as part of the process.

Landscape impacts

The Council is particularly concerned regarding the landscape impacts of the north-side development options and the associated earthworks. Luton Airport is on an elevated position in the landscape. It is partially screened from views within North Hertfordshire by the existing landform and vegetation. Changes to the profile of the landform to accommodate the changes in level, the increase in the number of buildings and any mitigation measures required will have an impact on the landscape and on views.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is proposed and should be used to inform the form and layout of the proposed development and its wider setting. It should include onsite and offsite landscape mitigation measures and enhancements to ensure that adverse landscape and visual effects are avoided and reduced as far as possible. It should be based on the current landscape character assessment for North Hertfordshire. The cumulative effects of the proposed development including any visual and landscape impacts on changes to the local highway network/sustainable transport measures to accommodate increased numbers of people travelling to the airport, any development at Century Park and the site allocated for housing on the eastern edge of Luton within north Hertfordshire should be assessed.

The following concerns should also be addressed in terms of the proposed earthworks: The impact of the earthworks upon the distinct landform features of the plateau and steep incised dry valleys.

- The prominence and height of the platform and built structures relative to the surrounding landscape.

- The treatment of the platform edges and how they relate to the existing natural topography.
- Until the LVIA is carried out it is not possible for the Council to formally comment on the significance of the proposals and whether the mitigation measures will be beneficial.

Current Planning Application

Reference is made to the current planning permission that was granted in 2014 for development to enable the expansion of airport capacity to 18m ppa from its previous capacity of 9m ppa. This permission contains a complex series of mitigation measures contained within conditions of the planning permission and S106 Obligation. It includes regular monitoring of noise impacts, assumptions on fleet modernisation (newer aircraft less noise); night flight limitations and payments to local residents to provide noise insulation measures in their homes.

The modelling and assumption of the mitigation measures was based on a trajectory of increasing airport capacity towards 18m ppa by 2027/28. It now appears that this level of capacity will, or even has occurred much earlier than 2027. The 2013 S106 fund was an allocation of approx. £100,000 per annum to local residents based on a fund for an expansion to 18 ppa by 2027/28 and significant fleet modernisation. It is the Council's concern that if the 2013 assumptions and trajectory have been proved to significantly under estimate the growth of the airport then the associated mitigation (including payments to local residents) would be inadequate. If the new proposal is granted as an NSIP, then mitigation needs to be more effective and more collaborative with neighbouring local authorities.

Condition 10 of the 2014 permission reads as follows

At no time shall the passenger throughput of the airport exceed 18 million passengers in any twelve month period. From the date of this permission the applicant shall every quarter report in writing to the Local Planning Authority the moving annual total numbers of passengers through the airport (arrivals plus departures). The report shall be made no later than 28 days after the end of each quarter to which the data relates.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise proper control over the development, in the interests of securing a satisfactory operation of the development and to safeguard the amenities of the surrounding area. To accord with the objectives of Policy LP1 of the Luton Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Health

The Council welcomes reference to a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be conducted for the proposed development and requests that this assessment would accurately identify and take account of the impact of the airport expansion on North Hertfordshire's residents. In addition to the socio-economic determinants such as employment and income, as stated in the document an HIA should also identify the following determinants such as:

- physical environment (air and water quality, housing and transit),
- other social and economic factors (education, family an social support and community safety, clinical care (access to and quality of care)and
- health behaviours.

It is also expected that a HIA would address air quality issues, the impact of the Wigmore Park relocation, the impact of noise from increase air and surface traffic.

Phasing

The consultation document refers to managing the growth of the airport in line with passenger demand. More detail is required as to how and when the phasing of mitigations will come forward in relation to actual passenger numbers/growth This concern is raised given the previous application and the faster than planned for increase in passenger numbers. There is also the need to make phasing of growth contingent/conditional upon, not just passenger growth, but also on managing environmental constraints, surface access, including passenger, employee and construction access to and from the airport during the construction phases, as well as other infrastructure impacts. This would be consistent with the commitments made within the consultation document to sustainability and sustainable development and would be expected to be considered and evidenced as part of the Sustainability Strategy under preparation for the airport expansion proposal.

Finally, the Council notes the reference to LLAL's Community Funding Programme which has been used to deliver projects directly within Luton and while this initiative is welcomed, the Council would expect that part of this funding is made available to support community groups outside of Luton, particularly in North Hertfordshire where some of our western communities will be substantially affected by noise and environmental impacts of the airport and its expansion proposals.

In summary and notwithstanding the concerns and comments raised in relation to the non-statutory consultation which the Council would expect to see addressed as part of the on-going process, the Council would welcome the opportunity to be fully engaged and involved with any working groups to enable it to provide a full and comprehensive response to any future application.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr David Levett
Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise & Transport