

Stop Heathrow Expansion (SHE) submission to the Davies Commission

Plans to build more runways or extend existing runways at Heathrow Airport are undeliverable.

When Sir Howard Davies ruled out the proposal for an entirely new airport in the Thames Estuary he said, “We need to focus on solutions which are deliverable, affordable and set the right balance for the future.” The proposals at Heathrow fail on every count.

People living to the north of the airport have had their homes and communities under threat on previous occasions; the most recent period was from 2002 until 2010 when every aspect of expansion was explored and the flaws exposed. The negatives far outweighed any possible predicted benefit. Then, after further pressure from Heathrow’s foreign owners, residents were put under threat yet again in 2012. The case for Heathrow expansion is even weaker this time with existing infrastructure overloaded and needing a major overhaul; crises in the housing and health sectors; climate change targets looming; terrorism an increasing threat; communications technology improving; austerity cuts to many public services. **The true cost to the British taxpayer also needs to be thoroughly examined this time.**

We hope that by placing expansion plans under the scrutiny of one committee the British public will see a clearer picture of why there should not be, and will never be, further expansion at Heathrow.

SHE is convinced that building a new runway or extending an existing runway at Heathrow is not in the best interest of the country. The idea that a former airfield can push its boundaries into local communities without constraint is a very old one. London and the surrounding area have developed considerably over the decades and it cannot be considered appropriate to destroy or damage vast inhabited areas for the primary benefit of one private company.

There is no plan to close Heathrow and no companies have announced that they will close down if Heathrow does not expand. On the contrary, many businesses will be forced to close or move if it goes ahead.

Thousands of people have had to live with the blight caused by the repeated demands for expansion from Heathrow’s owners. One impact has been to reduce investment in services for residents. For example, people living in the Heathrow Villages have insufficient medical provision (no doctor,

dentist or pharmacy in four out of five villages) with many people having to access health services in other boroughs. The villages have no library and no public community buildings. Private companies want to build hotels but not one wants to build affordable leisure facilities. Professional people, such as GPs and senior teachers, are reluctant to build a business or career in an area that may have no future. It is not acceptable to blight an area in this way for so long. People need to feel safe to make decisions about the future without living under threat.

The Commission should totally rule out expansion at Heathrow - now and forever.

SHE appreciates that the Commission has already examined many aspects of expansion at Heathrow through specific reports, consultation and visits so we are not proposing in this submission to raise issues that have no doubt been covered in depth by specialists in their own areas of expertise. For example, the London Borough of Hillingdon has submitted a document that details many of our own concerns so we are not intending to repeat that report. However, as a group that has been created out of the communities that would be destroyed or severely damaged by two of the three options under consideration, we feel we must draw attention to several areas that have not yet been covered fully or that we believe have not had their impact truly understood.

1. Health and Health Services

The most glaring omission from the Airports Commission Consultation Document (Nov 2014) is a proper assessment of the impact of Heathrow expansion on health.

The absence of such an assessment was pointed out before the Commission held its Consultation event at the Park Inn Hotel near Heathrow in December 2014. This was pointed out to the Commission prior to and during the event. No one was invited to speak specifically on health despite the afternoon session featuring three business representatives who largely repeated points already raised.

Recent enquiries indicate that neither the Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) nor the Hillingdon NHS Foundation Trust have been asked for their input. HealthWatch Hillingdon will be making a submission after being contacted by members of the public and SHE.

Sadly, it seems unlikely that anyone senior at the CCG or Hillingdon NHS Trust has even read the consultation document as they appear unaware of its significance or are perhaps too busy dealing with the current problems to think about the future. Richard Sumray, Chairman of Hillingdon NHS Foundation Trust has commented, “When the decision is made we’ve got 10 years to look at it”.

It is worth looking at how much it will cost the government (ie taxpayers) to ensure health provision near Heathrow can cope with the additional influx of workers, air travellers and road users.

As of December 2014, Hillingdon NHS Foundation Trust had a deficit of £1.6m. Their Accident and Emergency department, which would be the nearest for an incident at Heathrow, recorded its busiest month to date in December 2014. In fact, the figures for every month since last July show an increase in emergency admissions. So even without expansion and yet more people, the hospital is struggling to cope with the upward trend. Note that passengers needing hospital treatment while at the Heathrow are taken to Hillingdon Hospital, as are inmates at the Detention Centres, which exist locally because of the airport.

Targets cannot be met. The London Ambulance Service should not be treating people in the vehicle when they need hospital attention. Yet, despite financial penalties imposed on the hospital by the CCG for delays, 15% of patients were not transferred from vehicle car park to A&E within 30 minutes. (Dec 2014)

The Greater London Authority (GLA) has just reported that Hillingdon Borough has had the greatest increase in population of all the London boroughs since 1939, with an increase of around 130,000 people (82%). A large proportion of those have been housed in the southern wards, which is the most densely populated. These are the areas in the borough that will be most affected by Heathrow expansion.

Health services are already unable to cope. Members of our committee are fully aware of crumbling services. For example, a patient desperately needing a CT scan had to wait several days as an in-patient then found herself in a queue behind a Heathrow transfer passenger who had only waited a few hours.

Problems are not exclusive to Hillingdon. Services around West London are coping with cuts, forcing many people to seek their treatment or blood tests outside of their local area. For example, patients living in Heathrow

Villages ward having to have blood tests at Ashford Hospital, dental treatment in Hounslow and seeing specialists at St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey. This knock-on effect will certainly be more apparent to people in other areas when the first flood of people looking for work arrives.

The impact on health should be a major concern. No amount of projected financial benefit should detract from the damage caused to the health of those forced to live with Heathrow expansion.

We are aware that the Commission has numerous advisors who can assist with examination of the research evidence that shows the detrimental impact of noise and air pollution on health. Our representative at the Commission event and the Hillingdon Borough submission have listed some figures but even these do not show those who have not been diagnosed or are being treated for an airport-related illness not featured in the list. **People living under threat of losing their homes have asked us to mention the impact on mental health and stress-related conditions.**

Fundamentally, it should be a basic human right to breathe without the fear that the air in your lungs is shortening your life. People currently living near Heathrow cannot do that.

It is important that the damage caused by particulates generated by increases in road traffic, which includes the planned increase in freight vehicles, is examined. It is not acceptable that children should be expected to live, play and learn in an environment that is known to damage their developing lungs.

2. Housing

For many people living in and around the proposed area for Heathrow expansion, one of their biggest worries will relate to their home.

SHE is campaigning to stop both options to expand Heathrow and wants to see an end to the airports owners' demands for a bigger and bigger site and more flights to increase their profits. It is implausible that the primary concern of a foreign-owned company is the well-being of British residents or the UK economy.

SHE believes that what will be lost, such as communities, Green Belt land and heritage, is too precious to wantonly destroy. We do not believe that money will compensate the country for what it will lose but the Davies

Commission should insist that the money required to rehouse displaced people is adequate for them to live in a comparable property.

Just before the Commission's event at Heathrow in December, HAL announced it would offer to buy 3,750 properties. However, as at 3rd February 2015 it has not announced how much money is being ring-fenced from the budget to buy the homes. **The cost of buying these homes and the cost to the taxpayer of replacing schools and maintaining roads must be factored into calculations before a recommendation is made.**

Heathrow Hub is promoting its proposal by stating that fewer homes will need to be demolished and therefore compensation could be greater but this is little comfort to people who find that their home has been "saved" from demolition but is uninhabitable due to the increase in noise and pollution. Blight will have a huge impact on these areas.

Neither Heathrow nor Heathrow Hub can reveal the exact position of the boundaries or flight paths. This increases the uncertainty for residents.

The following are points that SHE asks the Commission to consider:

- HAL's current "**compensation**" package for displaced residents is extremely flawed. Problems include:

Insufficient funds allocated to buy all affected properties.

Incorrect date (2012) for calculating a pre-blight price.

Calculations indicate displaced people cannot buy a comparable property within a reasonable distance of their current home/job.

Residents may be forced to sell when housing market is rising.

No provision or support is offered for people who will lose jobs or their support network as a result of being forced from their home.

Tenants are not included in the package.

Landlords are not included but if that changes it could result in tenants losing their homes and property speculation.

People who live and work in premises they do not own get nothing.

The time lived in the area is not factored into calculations.

Older/elderly people who have lived in the area for more than 40 years get no special consideration for their housing needs.

Using a percentage to calculate compensation means that **owners of smaller properties have few options** and are unlikely to find anything comparable.

Some residents in the 783 properties identified by the Commission as being demolished first, will need to stay locally even though their community will be gone. HAL suggests they buy the homes that people in neighbouring areas have sold to HAL because they cannot live with the extra noise and pollution. Once soundproofed, these homes will be sold at market value. This proposal is clearly ridiculous.

- London has a housing crisis. Demand for homes exceeds supply and the population is increasing. At the last count, **London had 22,279 homeless families** (2012/13 Department of Communities and Local Government).
- The London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) has a target of 425 new homes in the borough each year (likely to be flats not houses) but this figure will not meet demand. **LBH has absolutely no plans to provide additional housing to accommodate people displaced by a third runway.** There is no support planned to assist displaced residents, homeowners or tenants, to find homes.
- There are **approx 9,000 households** waiting for social housing in LBH. The majority of its social housing has two bedrooms or less.
- Surrounding boroughs have a similar housing shortage and none are making provision for people displaced by a third runway. **Spelthorne Council**, for example, has identified a shortage of housing in its borough and noted that it has limited sites for building as more than 40% of the borough is Green Belt or water.
- If Heathrow expansion is approved, all surrounding boroughs must build 5,000 homes, in addition to current targets. **Boroughs that support Heathrow expansion must be compelled to shoulder the biggest burden for providing appropriate housing for people displaced by the development.**
- Many displaced people, especially local workers, need to live within the M25. If people are forced to move out of the area due to lack of suitable housing, compensation and support must be given.
- The London Plan makes no provision for the thousands of households that would be displaced by developments needed for Heathrow expansion.
- The Green Belt, the vital lungs of London, is increasingly under threat due to housing need. Roads will also need to be built to cope with traffic.
- **We have been told that a fourth will be needed by 2050, so that**

location must be considered now. The Airports Commission already says that up to 70,800 new homes might be needed for a third runway. Providing these homes will be more than “challenging” for the local authorities. If the Commission recommends expansion at Heathrow it must examine where all this development can be built.

Its proposal must be future-proof.

- **West London is already over developed.** West Drayton, Uxbridge, Southall and Park Royal are all witnessing major building schemes that involve high-density housing at premium prices. There is limited land to provide facilities like schools, supermarkets and health care.
- HAL (then called BAA) **bought 238 domestic properties** in Harmondsworth and Sipson in 2010/11, even though it had not submitted a planning application, which was the intended trigger for house purchases. HAL’s strategy of replacing long-standing owner-occupiers with tenants on time-limited leases inevitably breaks down communities. If HAL buys more homes not due for immediate demolition and then cannot sell them on the open market to families, will they be sold to landlords or added to HAL’s rental portfolio to provide an additional income? **We ask the Davies Commission to consider whether a recommendation in favour of Heathrow would permit a private (foreign-owned) company to create a substantial property and land portfolio under the pretext of expanding its business for the public good?**
- Should **air passengers pay an increase in tax** to fund HAL’s growing property portfolio? Likewise, should UK taxpayers subsidise a project for the benefit of a privately-owned foreign company that appears to be diversifying into buying and letting properties close to the UK capital.
- Any mitigation scheme must ensure that money paid to property owners is used for the intended purpose and a standard must be set. Otherwise there is a risk that tenants and, potentially, new owners will live in sub-standard housing while landlords and past owners retain the funds.
- HAL claims to have up to £700m for mitigation. The Davies Commission should examine which properties have benefitted from previous and current schemes. SHE has examples of how people living close to runways and under flightpaths have been told they do not qualify for full payment or anything at all.
- HAL calculates **noise nuisance** in a way that excludes many people severely impacted by noise from mitigation measures. Periods of intense noise are cancelled out by essential respite periods.
- **Outside areas**, including gardens and public spaces, cannot be

satisfactorily protected from noise and pollution. Outbuildings that are not used for education do not qualify for mitigation. Provision of Adobe huts to schools has HAL has become a joke.

- The Commission must consider that if it recommends further expansion at Heathrow it will have a **dramatic impact on the housing and rental situation** over a very wide area. This could significantly alter the housing prospects of displaced people in 2018/19 when Heathrow says it will start buying homes under its scheme, which already looks inadequate in 2015.
- Displaced people should not be expected to relocate to areas which **continue to be under threat, either from a fourth runway, new flightpaths or increased flooding risk.**

SAFETY

This issue of safety is downplayed in the Airports Commission Consultation Document. The exact wording is used for all three options, including the one at Gatwick. It says the proposal “is not considered to present **any significant** safety or security risks and is considered **adequate** to deliver an increase in ATM (air traffic movements) capacity of...”. In Heathrow’s case flight capacity could increase from 480,000 to 740,000 to start with. Davies believes a further runway in the south east will be needed by 2050 and has not ruled out Heathrow for a fourth runway.

Considering the massive capacity of an expanded Heathrow, SHE believes that people living near the airport would be at greater risk than they are today and this should be a major factor in the decision NOT to recommend Heathrow for expansion.

Security and Terrorism:

On 8th January 2015, the head of MI5 Andrew Parker warned that a strike on the United Kingdom was highly likely. In a rare public speech at MI5 headquarters, Director General Parker said seasoned al Qaeda militants in Syria aimed to “cause large-scale loss of life, often by attacking transport systems or iconic targets” in the West. His message was that it is becoming increasingly difficult to thwart terrorists and it was a case of WHEN not IF a major attack would occur.

Heathrow has been a target for terrorists in the past because even the threat of attack can cause massive disruption and maximum worldwide publicity at an airport than is significantly busier than any other UK airport. Jock Lowe, Heathrow Hub, believes that air passengers continue to buy tickets

regardless of crashes in the news. He may be right but it is unfair to subject people living near airports and flightpaths to the daily increased risk. Other countries are more appreciative of the dangers posed by aircraft flying over its capital and government buildings.

Our security chiefs can only react to the cruel creativity of those who want to end lives and destroy infrastructure. Security checks involving liquids, toiletries and tweezers, shoes, belts and even underwear all stem from previous attempts and attacks.

It has been reported that new explosives being developed by terrorists could avoid detection by current methods. Producing and providing new security measures and extra checks at departure gates will cost yet more money.

Overloading one UK airport (close to the capital city) with the majority of the country's flights would make it an extremely attractive target.

Risk posed by flightpaths over densely-populated areas:

On top of the terrorist threat, the Commission should consider aircraft faults, maintenance failures and human error. Increasing the number of aircraft flying over densely-populated areas around Heathrow and our capital is taking chances based on a past safety record.

The crash of a 777 just inside the Heathrow boundary in January 2008 could have killed hundreds of people. No one had prepared for the possibility of a new aircraft crashing because no one expected an aircraft to suddenly lose power in both engines (later discovered to be a design fault).

Former Transport Secretary Justine Greening MP has already told the Commission, **“we cannot beat the odds forever”**.

Danger posed during flight – such as drones:

In December 2014 it was revealed that earlier that year a device, believed to be a drone, came within 20ft (6m) of a plane landing at Heathrow. The Airbus A320 was at 700ft (213m) when its pilot saw a small black object near the aircraft, the UK Airprox (aircraft proximity) Board said.

The UK Airprox Board reported a similar incident when an object, believed to be a quadcopter, came within 82ft (25m) of an AT72 coming into land at Southend Airport on 30th May. It assessed the risk of collision as “high”.

Drones may be flown deliberately close to aircraft to get aerial photographs

but the operators are never traced. Problems with enforcement may prevent any new laws introduced to protect UK airspace.

Birmingham University has warned that the use of drones in the UK will rise over the next 20 years, raising “significant safety, security and privacy concerns”. The Airline Pilots’ Association (BALPA) has demanded better protection for the public against the risks.

Air Traffic Control:

It is accepted that UK air traffic control and flightpaths need a major overhaul. This is currently being examined but we do not know the outcome. What we do know is that there are numerous “near misses” and “aborted landings” or “go arounds”.

Jobs:

Predictions about future jobs created by expansion seem to have little foundation. If one of the main drivers for expansion is the creation of jobs, it is reasonable to expect a detailed analysis of the reliability of these figures.

For example, we would like to know how many people work within Heathrow now compared with before Terminal 5 was built? Also, which jobs outside the airport are considered directly linked to the airport and therefore would not exist without it? With rapid improvements in efficiency and technology is it appropriate to quote job figures for 2050?

Quality of Life:

SHE finds it astonishing that positive impacts of the airport (seen as transport connections and jobs) and the negative impacts (noise and congestion) will balance each other out. We would question whether the impact on health alone could possibly justify any increase in jobs.

The Commission’s comment that “Expansion at Heathrow is likely to result in improvements in quality of life at national level, due to improved connectivity and its attendant economic and social benefits” is small comfort to the thousands of people – and future generations – who will suffer as a result of expansion.

We urge the Commission to reconsider some of the assumptions made so far.

Stop Heathrow Expansion