

The Harpenden Society

G L Hearn
20 Soho Square
London W1D 3QW

6 March 2012

Dear Mr Hearn,

Luton Airport Development Plan

I am writing on behalf of the Harpenden Society, the town's longstanding civic society with over 1000 members. We are seriously disturbed by the implications of the "Future Luton" Development Plan as recently published online and via the series of exhibitions in the locality.

Overall we believe that the airport site and surrounding infrastructure, however much improved, is totally unsuitable for the development proposed. Unlike the larger operations at Stansted, Gatwick and, of course, Heathrow, the natural constraints surrounding Luton airport mean that it could never deliver the scale and quality of transport access and other facilities required by the envisaged increased number of passengers.

Specifically our concerns are as follows:

1. **Misleading information**

The plan states a projected 57% increase in passenger numbers. Elsewhere a doubling of the current 9.5 million passengers is suggested. Which is the true estimate? Either way the implications for noise and congestion are unacceptable. The claim that the project will create 6,000 jobs has already been reduced to 4,000, a number which still far exceeds what would probably happen. Both the residents' organisation LADACAN, on the basis of a survey of past Luton employment data, and the more extensive survey by ex-government official, Brendon Sewill ("Airport Jobs: false hopes, cruel hoax", 2009), suggest far more modest job creation is likely.

2. **Road congestion:**

Both the A1081 through Harpenden High Street and the B653 through Batford are already heavily congested. In spite of the proposed road development in the immediate area of the airport and its terminal and from the M1, there will inevitably be greater pressure on the A1081 and B653. We are also alarmed to see no mention of improved rail access to the terminal, which is needed irrespective of any expansion.

3. **Aircraft noise:**

Published noise reports from the airport show that even now around 1000 individual noise complaints are made each year (far more last summer when an attempt to "tweak" one of the flight paths made matters worse, so illustrating the near-impossibility of threading aircraft between a series of closely located communities without causing at least some disturbance somewhere). As to Harpenden itself, during broadly easterly winds (in practice from north round to south east) the main departure route westwards brings ex-Luton aircraft immediately over the central/south part of the town, both day and night, and creates a great deal of disturbance to many residents - as witnessed by the many noise complaints logged at the airport. With the wind broadly westerly, the "Dover" route takes the planes round and partly across the south west corner of the town. In addition, anecdotal comment from many suggests massive under-reporting due to 'complaint-fatigue'. Having virtually doubled the number of flights going over would plainly exacerbate the damaging effect of annoyance during the day and sleep-disturbance at night.

4. Conflict of interest

Finally, we do not feel it reasonable that Luton Borough Council at the next planning application step may be able to make a judgement on a development promulgated by its wholly owned subsidiary which, if agreed despite the many objections, is bound to have an impact well beyond the Council's boundaries. The decision should be made by an impartial, disinterested party.

Yours sincerely,

C. L. Marsden
Chairman, The Harpenden Society.