



30 October 2013

Sir Howard Davies  
Airport Commission

By email

Dear Sir,

I agree with your provisional view that some new runway capacity is required in the South East. As you turn your attention to where that additional capacity should be located, I would like to make some observations regarding the possibility of situating it at Heathrow:

**I        Heathrow is in the wrong place:**

Everyone who has studied the matter accepts that Heathrow is in the wrong place. It has expanded in a piecemeal way over the years, in the absence of a comprehensive planning policy for airport capacity.

The prevailing westerly wind in Britain causes aircraft landing at Heathrow to make their approach across the centre of London most of the time (only when the rarer easterly wind blows do they land from the west). The adoption of sites to the north, south and east of the capital as the principal hub for UK air travel would all avoid doing so. The result of Heathrow's current pre-eminence is that aircraft cause noise blight to the largest possible number of people in the most densely populated area of the country. It is now known that this constant noise is not simply an inconvenience that reduces our quality of life - it is responsible for causing physical illness and premature death to the people who suffer it.

In making a full review of the options for the future runway capacity, I suggest that a sort of Benthamite approach should be adopted: the site(s) should be selected to cause unhappiness to the least possible number of people.

Air travel is extremely safe, as a result of the stringent safety checks and procedures that have been adopted. However, it is not, and never can be, completely without risk. Accidents occur, and commercial aircraft do make crash landings (in 2008 an aeroplane suffered fuel supply problems to its engines as it approached Heathrow - it just made it to the perimeter fence, short of the runway). The sheer volume of flights at Heathrow mean that, one day, it is inevitable that an aeroplane will come down over London, and the loss of life and injury will be all the greater, because of the number of people living under the flight path.

## 2 Air freight:

Over 50% of all the air freight into and out of the UK passes through Heathrow. Why would a rational society bring the bulk of its air freight in through the most congested air space in the world, land at the airport with the most highly-prized and expensive passenger landing slots and then transport that freight on the busiest (and most polluted) roads in the country?

I accept that some freight is transported in the baggage holds of passenger aircraft, but no pure freight aircraft should be landing or taking off at Heathrow. West London is not a major manufacturing area or a logical distribution centre. If dedicated air freight flights were relocated to airports in less congested parts of the country, a considerable amount of capacity would be liberated at Heathrow (as well as bringing benefits in efficiency and cost in the distribution of the freight).

## 3 New runways at Heathrow will widen the landing corridor over London, bringing hundreds of thousands more people into noise blight:

Further expansion of Heathrow is only possible with new runways, and additional runways will widen the flight path for landing aircraft. Thus a great number more people in west London would suffer the constant noise of the approaching aeroplanes. Many who have lived for years outside the worst of the noise envelope would have it imposed upon them (and some of us who would, consciously avoided buying houses under the existing approaches).

## 4 To allow further expansion of Heathrow directly contradicts your founding policy:

"Making sure UK airports and airlines are safe, secure and competitive while reducing their impacts on the environment and communities"

safety: Heathrow relies on landing approaches across the densest area of population in the country. One day an accident will occur.

secure: in an age when aircraft have been used as terrorist weapons, why bring more flights across London than is necessary?

impact on the environment: Heathrow already exceeds its air pollution limits. More runways will result in more aeroplanes, greater traffic congestion on the surrounding roads and worse air pollution.

impact on communities: people living in west London have had enough of ever-increasing numbers of flights overhead. The aircraft noise is now known to be damaging their physical health and reducing their life expectancy

I cannot see how your Commission, founded with this remit from the government, could possibly support any further runway expansion at Heathrow.

I look forward to seeing your conclusions on where to locate the additional runway capacity in due course.

Yours faithfully,

