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Response to the Aviation Noise Discussion Paper

From

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30 August 2013

Dear Sir

I am writing in response to the Aviation Noise discussion paper. I would request that my response remains confidential.

Chapter Two

How many people are affected by aircraft noise and its impacts on people.

I live in Charlton in the London Borough of Greenwich, population 245,586. (Source: 2011 Census, ONS.) and on certain days, when significant numbers of flights are routed over the Greenwich area, the aircraft noise is very intrusive. This applies to both early morning and daytime flights.

### ***Early morning flights***

Early morning flights (between 4.30 am and 6pm) are disruptive to sleep and often make sleep impossible. This is particularly the case in summer when it is necessary to sleep with windows open.

I have become aware that on some mornings a significant proportion of the c.17 early morning Heathrow arrivals pass over south east London. This causes on-going disturbance to sleep from 4.30 am.

Specifically this summer I noticed particularly high levels of early morning arrivals in August 2013. I checked the Heathrow WebTrack for Wednesday 14 August and found that all of the early morning arrivals approached Heathrow passing over South East London, most passing close to Greenwich and Charlton. This was in accord with my experience on these mornings.

This number of flights in contrast to a chart published previously on the Heathrow website as part of the Early Morning Trials reporting which indicated that the majority of early morning arrivals approach Heathrow from the West. Reading off this chart I estimated that of the c.118 early morning flights per week, pre-trial around 90 of these approached from west of London and 28 through SE London. This would average 4 early morning flights per day through South East London which broadly accorded with my recollection of early morning aircraft noise in the previous year.

I have sought clarification from Heathrow on increases in numbers of early morning flights over Greenwich and Charlton in August 2013, compared with pre-Trial levels but have so far received no response.

I have also noted that the Early Morning Trials report indicates that Heathrow have made the commitment not to continue the early morning trial in its current form. However, it is not clear what “in its current form” means, and, as stated above, I have not been able to obtain from Heathrow any verification that flights over South East London have returned to pre-Trial levels.

### ***Daytime flights***

I have also noticed increased numbers of flights during the day (from 6.00am to 11.00 pm) on certain days. Again, this was particularly noticeable on some days during August 2013. For example, on the evenings of Thursday 15 August and Friday 16 August, I was aware of an aircraft passing every several minutes during periods between 7 pm to 11 pm. This caused a level of noise that could be heard inside the house, but in particular was intrusive in the garden.

### **Chapters Three and Four**

The best way to measure noise.

I note that the UK currently uses the LAeq16h Method which concentrates on the noise made by each individual aircraft, not the number of planes. It assumes annoyance levels will remain the same if the number of aircraft operations are doubled so long as the individual aircraft noise levels are reduced.

This is not my experience. It is both the number of aircraft and the noise that each one makes that contribute to overall levels of disturbance.

In particular, in terms of early morning flights, while it may be possible to get back to sleep after an occasional flight, this is more difficult if there is a succession of early morning flights.

### ***Measurement of noise levels***

The UK argues that it only when noise averages out at 57 decibels or above across the 16 hour period that people start to get annoyed.

This does not reflect my experience. I understand that the noise contour does not exist as far as Greenwich and Charlton, and yet as described above, the aircraft noise I have experience living in Charlton is intrusive, disruptive and causes disturbance and annoyance. When an aircraft passes directly overhead, the noise is particularly intrusive.

### **Chapter Five**

Ways of reducing noise including views on

- less noisy planes;
- aircraft landing and taking off at steeper angles;
- heavier fines for noisy planes;
- the idea of spreading the noise around in order to give everybody some respite;
- night flights
- more money being put into sound insulation.

These options are a step in the right direction, subject to the comments below. However, these have not been placed in the context of reducing noise to an acceptable level and so it is not clear whether these measures alone are sufficient. In terms of night flights, to enable people to have an adequate window for uninterrupted sleep, a call for a ban on night flights would be an appropriate response.

The idea of spreading the noise around to give everyone some respite, needs to be treated with caution. This description of the option implies that everyone is already affected by aircraft noise and therefore needs respite, which is misleading. It would be more accurate to describe this option as spreading the disturbance more widely so larger numbers of people than at present will be affected by aircraft noise

People will have made choices about where to live taking account of the environment including aircraft noise. Some may have chosen specifically to live in an area where aircraft noise has not historically been an issue. They may have paid a significant sum in stamp duty to move there, and may therefore be unable to readily move again. If they suddenly find they are on a flight path (even intermittently) because of a change implemented to flight paths, this would be unfair. It is therefore important that any changes to flight paths are signalled clearly and well in advance so that people can make informed choices before committing to live in a particular area. Given that people on average stay in house for 5 years, but often longer, long lead times need to be given e.g. 10 years, where flight paths and numbers of flights using particular flight paths are to be systematically changed.

The idea that has not been included is that we need to avoid any further increase in the number of flights using Heathrow, and tightly control any increase or expansion of number of flights traversing London to any other airport. This is the fundamental point here.

It is also important that residents in South East London, are made aware that there could be impacts in terms of aircraft noise for them if any further expansion of Heathrow were to take place.

A comment on the consultation process

A final comment is that I do not believe this consultation has been adequately publicised amongst residents of South East London, and this must be taken into account when evaluating the inevitably skewed response rates.

I hope these comments are helpful.

3 September 2013