**Response to Farnborough Airport consultation on the long-term future of the airport**

**17 October 2023**

I will keep my comments fairy generic as I understand that this is just the first phase of what could be a lengthy statutory process. As I am not a technical aviation expert, I will also limit my comments to a few general points and a summary of the feedback I have received from constituents living within East Hampshire.

**General comments**

Firstly, before I get into the detail of my constituents’ comments, I do understand the rationale for increasing capacity at the airport in order to safeguard jobs in the area and because of the airport’s wider economic benefits to UK PLC, as described in the proposals.

I do, however, remain unconvinced of the case to expand the airport to the levels described in the consultation document. Parts of my constituency are affected by departures from the airport and, because of the current airspace restrictions, meaning that aircraft all have to follow the same departure route rather than continuing to the East of Farnborough, all aircraft depart over East Hampshire. My concern is that with an expansion in the number of permitted flights, both during the week and at weekends/bank holidays, there will be no respite or periods of relief for those of my constituents currently living under the existing departure swathe. This could potentially be exacerbated by permitting heavier aircraft to use the airport as is proposed in the consultation – as we all know, heavier aircraft can often be noisier.

I do also question, given the above, your decision not to hold any drop in consultation events within East Hampshire. Although my constituents are not as directly impacted as those living in Farnborough and the surrounding areas, some areas are regularly overflown. I do think many of the residents would have appreciated the opportunity to meet with the airport management team to better understand what is being proposed and how it might affect them.

Lastly, I would like to better understand your decision not to have any reference to this consultation on the front page of your main Farnborough Airport website. I’m aware that you have set up a separate website for the consultation, but it seems a missed engagement opportunity to have no reference to this consultation on your corporate site (and if you do, it’s extremely well hidden).

It’s also worth pointing out that most constituents who have contacted me about this consultation have been opposed to any further expansion at Farnborough.

**Comments from East Hampshire residents (these are largely quoted verbatim so I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statements that have been made).**

**Capacity and the business case**

* *The requested increase is unnecessary as the airport still has 34% of current capacity un-utilised and it hasn’t made use of any of the additional weekday capacity that was granted in 2011.*
* *Weekday utilisation can be expected to be the most beneficial to the UK economy, being genuine business and industrial activity, particularly when compared to weekend activity, so why the need to increase flights at the weekend?*
* *The focus on weekend travel will have a disproportionate impact on the local community and delivers questionable economic benefits.*
* *The benefits case presented to justify the expansion is disproportionately influenced by the realisation of weekday flights that, on the basis of historical evidence, there is no reason to believe will be achieved.*
* *The airport is already breaking the terms of its licence to operate. This states that movements must be for business purposes, but one look at the aircraft movements at the weekend shows the majority of flights departing on Friday and returning on Sunday evening are from destinations in the Mediterranean.*
* *I do not believe the business case that Farnborough airport is putting forth. Many of the facts and figures presented are unsubstantiated. Shouldn’t there be a limit to what can be done for the sake of ‘growth and profit’? Isn’t people’s well-being and health an imperative too?*
* *The true economic benefits which could flow from the airport’s expansion have been overstated. I would question the number of additional ‘direct jobs’ that would be created locally by 2040.*

***Environment – emissions, noise and air quality***

* *Any outcome which advances the ability of the wealthy and the highly paid of industry to continue to disproportionately emit far more than their fair share of carbon would seem to be utterly out of touch with the government’s 2050 net zero target.*
* *There doesn’t appear to be any reference in the consultation to the impact of the proposed uplift in flights on air quality in the areas surrounding the airport. This would appear to be an oversight.*
* *The larger Bombardier planes that currently use the airport are especially noisy and whine very loudly causing much disruption, particularly at the weekends.*
* *This increase in noise pollution is unacceptable in rural areas where aircraft noise is more noticeable due to ambient noise being much quieter than in urban areas.*
* *Farnborough has not complied with its agreement to monitor noise as per the condition of the previous airspace change.*
* *The airport also claims that it deliberately chooses flight paths over underpopulated areas (such as Colemore and Froxfield) but how is that reconciled with the South Downs National Park’s aim to protect these tranquil places?*
* *Noise and air pollution issues for local residents are already intolerable for many. People have had enough of the smell of aviation fuel in their gardens and the noise of planes overhead.*
* *Clearly there are more than 350 homes affected by noise disturbance. The proposed additions to the sound insulation scheme do not cover a broad enough area.* D*ue to changes in airspace, the narrowing of flight paths means the noise of aircraft is no longer dispersed across a broad corridor, but is concentrated on a relatively small area – this includes Liphook, Bordon and Bentley.*

I also received various general comments on the emissions of private jets.

***Flight paths***

* *The impact of the most recent airspace change has meant that the new route 06 from the North now loops over all of south Farnham and over our garden. The weekends are meant to be for relaxing in the garden and there is almost a constant line of planes in the busy summer/ Sunday evenings. As we are on a hill even when flights are at 3,000ft it is more like 2,000ft above sea level.*
* *Since 2020, pilots climbing out of Farnborough have had to follow a specific flightpath.  This means that whereas before 2020 the noise pollution was more evenly spread over a range of possible paths, all of the noise pollution is now concentrated on just one climb route (this happens to be directly over my address).  This has shown a lack of innovation and imagination which will be carried through to the increased proposed flight numbers and times.  It seems that unlike other forms of planning permission there are no aviation equivalents of S278 for the controlled airspace above us.  Meaning the airport’s soon to be submitted planning application cannot be linked to any requirement to replan the airspace to bring relief to residents on the ground.  This means that if the expansion plans go ahead even more aircraft will pass directly over those affected and the same people will be woken one hour earlier than they currently are, every day of the week.*

***Timing of the consultation***

* *It is concerning that the airport is consulting on this further expansion before the PIR on the previous airspace change has been concluded. There are also concerns that the airport has not carried out the PIR process rigorously enough as per the requirements set out by the CAA.*

**Damian Hinds**

**MP for East Hampshire**