

MAYOR OF LONDON

John Holland-Kaye

Chief Executive Officer

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Dear Mr. Holland-Kaye,

I am writing in response to the statutory consultation by Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) on its Development Consent Order (DCO) application for expansion. As Mayor of London, it is my duty to represent the interests of all Londoners. I remain resolute in my opposition to the expansion of Heathrow, which will have such severe consequences for communities across London.

HAL estimates that over one million people will be exposed to adverse noise effects – of which half a million will be exposed for the first time. Its analysis finds that legal limits for air pollution will be breached as a result of expansion, as it seeks to accommodate 130,000 additional daily passenger and staff trips without any significant new public transport infrastructure committed. Indeed, in many respects, the consultation simply re-affirms that the third runway will cause extensive damage to the environment and the health and quality of life of hundreds of thousands of Londoners.

This consultation was an opportunity for HAL to show not only that it has listened to the substantial criticisms that I and many others have voiced about expansion, but that it has taken these criticisms seriously. It appears HAL has not taken this opportunity. The consultation material demonstrates that HAL has no credible strategy for preventing – or even managing – the harm expansion will cause. Worse still, the consultation shows that HAL proposes no cap on the growth of the airport, removing a vital safeguard on the scale of development. Instead, it proposes to capitalise on any environmental improvements – including improvements in air quality delivered by the ULEZ and my range of other policies to tackle pollution, or future quieter aircraft technologies – to enable its own unfettered growth.

The “Environmentally Managed Growth” proposal is representative of the inadequate approach being taken by HAL. HAL should take long-term responsibility for managing its impact on the environment; but the detail of its proposal falls far short of the mark. The proposed “envelopes” for traffic and air pollution would in reality allow HAL to increase pollution and traffic over time, and the noise envelope would deny Londoners the full benefit of future technological improvements. Again, this would see HAL exploiting the environmental improvements achieved by others in the name of unfettered growth for the airport. Worst of all, although carbon emissions are also supposed to be controlled within an envelope, HAL has failed to provide any indication of what this might look like.

A statutory DCO consultation is the key opportunity to ensure all those affected fully understand the scope of the scheme and its predicted impacts. Yet many will find the material overwhelming, confusing and opaque. Indeed, despite the volume of consultation material, which runs to tens of thousands of pages, there are key omissions, which means HAL fails to demonstrate the soundness of the modelling and the underpinning assumptions. To present the likely environmental impacts on this basis is to risk misleading the public and statutory consultees, and this goes against both the spirit and the letter of the guidance and legislation. HAL is required to provide enough information to allow those responding to the consultation to develop an informed view of the likely significant

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environmental effects of the development and any associated development, and it has failed to do so. The result is a consultation which is premature, and HAL needs to rectify this by reconsulting once it is in a position to publish a comprehensive and transparent picture of the impacts.

How and when new capacity would be released will materially alter the impacts of the airport. It is therefore unhelpful that HAL has been unclear about the phasing of growth. What is clear, however, is that the phased approach would result in up to 30 years of construction activity at the airport. This would mean generations growing up in the area only ever experiencing the disruption that inevitably comes with development on such a scale. The onus is on HAL to demonstrate that it can undertake construction without blighting local communities and compounding the noise, air quality, and surface access issues of expansion.

Increased operations at Heathrow will have a material impact on the UK's ability to stay within carbon budgets, especially now that the Government has introduced a target of zero carbon by 2050. Even without the impact of international flights, which is excluded from the assessment presented, an expanded Heathrow would account for 30% of London's total carbon emissions. In the context of the climate emergency we face, this scale of emissions, without a credible and transparent plan to reduce them in the future, is simply unacceptable.

Expansion threatens to exacerbate the noise impacts of Heathrow, which already accounts for over a quarter of all aircraft noise in Europe. It is of great concern that HAL is claiming to be consulting on the noise impacts when the actual flight path options will likely only be presented by HAL after the decision on the DCO has been made. There is therefore no guarantee that the actual flight paths will bear any resemblance to what has been presented here. Nor do we have any confidence that the indicative options presented constitute reasonable worst-case scenarios. The only certainty residents have is that HAL is currently substantially understating the actual extent of the noise exposure.

The surface access strategy proposes neither the additional public transport capacity nor the connectivity required to attract people to sustainable modes and then accommodate the resultant flows. It would mean increased crowding on the Piccadilly and Elizabeth lines, undermining the ability of these schemes to support the housing and growth for London which they were designed to do. The proposed road user access charge will not succeed in delivering sufficient mode shift from the south and west when no fast, reliable public transport alternatives are being offered. Any revenue raised from such a charge must go into funding better public transport and not to reducing landing charges or increasing HAL's profits. It is a particular concern that HAL's highway modelling is not yet fit for purpose nor compliant with DfT criteria, calling into question not only the forecast traffic as a result of expansion but also the air quality impacts of that traffic.

In the recent judicial review of the Airports National Policy Statement, the judges described the need for Heathrow to meet legal requirements on air pollution as an absolute requirement, calling it the reddest of red lines. HAL is keen to stress that it intends to operate within the legal limits set in EU law, despite its analysis showing that it will in fact cause at least one new breach of legal limits. However, in its assessment it has taken a very narrow view of the law, ignoring Justice Garnham's principles that compliance should be achieved in the shortest possible time, by means that are likely to succeed and, critically, by a route that reduces exposure. Instead it relies simply on the idea that so long as at least one road elsewhere in London is more polluted than roads around Heathrow, it can continue to pollute.

The environmental damage is not just confined to air pollution or the loss of green spaces. This consultation reveals that HAL proposes to divert, combine and culvert four watercourses into a combined, culverted 'Covered River Corridor' under the new runway. Culverting of rivers can lead to a reduction in natural daylight which may impact water quality and biodiversity as well as increasing upstream and downstream flood risk, putting homes and important ecological sites at risk.

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While the impacts of the airport on the environment are of critical importance, the development of a third runway will also have substantial negative impacts on many other aspects of Londoners' lives. For hundreds of people the third runway will mean the loss of their homes; for others the local housing market will be affected. This is not to mention the loss of green open space that is critical to health and wellbeing, or the potential impact on vital social infrastructure such as schools and healthcare.

Taken together with the environmental impacts, the potential damage to Londoners' health and wellbeing is stark. I have a statutory duty to promote improvements in the health of Londoners and reductions in health inequalities, and to mitigate any detrimental effects of proposed strategies on health and health inequalities. HAL has failed to present the overall impact on health in a coherent and comprehensive manner, potentially misleading Londoners about the true impact on their lives. This is totally unacceptable.

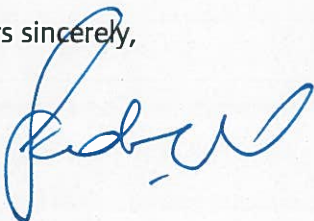
And there is also the matter of trust. Londoners would be forgiven for being sceptical about the claims of HAL. History has shown Londoners that HAL's assurances over the years have meant little. When Terminal 4 opened, there were assurances that would be it, and then along came Terminal 5. When Terminal 5 opened, Londoners were told there'd be no building of a third runway, yet we now find ourselves debating its construction. This flawed consultation is the latest in a long line of attempts to pull the wool over the eyes of Londoners and it is no surprise many simply don't trust HAL. I have seen little attempt by HAL to be honest with Londoners and tackle this serious lack of trust.

Nor does this give me any confidence that HAL won't turn around and seek taxpayer funds for the scheme, despite past assurances to the contrary and Government explicitly ruling this out. HAL is already threatening a significant increase in landing charges. Both would be wholly unacceptable and in breach of the terms of the NPS. Considerable uncertainty remains as to how HAL will be able to raise the funds required for expansion and for mitigation of impacts, including what will be permitted in accordance with the regulatory framework.

Though flawed, this consultation still demonstrates that Heathrow expansion will result in severe environmental, health, and social impacts, and provides no assurance at all that these can or will be addressed. As such, I remain firmly opposed to a scheme which is so diametrically opposed to everything I am doing to improve and secure the health and wellbeing of Londoners.

The work of the Airports Commission showed that the UK doesn't need a third runway at Heathrow. If it does go ahead, Londoners deserve much better than the severely flawed proposals presented here.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

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