

HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO LONDON SOUTHEND AIRPORT & ENVIRONS JAAP

1 Introduction

We agree that a JAAP should integrate land use, transport and regeneration proposals with clear mechanisms for delivery. (1.1 page 3) We have not seen clear delivery mechanisms and believe that unless it can be demonstrated that these major objectives can be achieved then the expansion should not be supported. Too often the residents of Rochford have seen visions expressed by the planning authority but in the real world these have been proved to be have been aspirations that have not been achieved or have been reworked and, in some cases, ultimately excluded.

In respect of 1.1 third sub paragraph it states that in formulating development schemes and proposals account should be taken of the Rochford Core Strategy – we have not seen the final Rochford Core strategy and, though Rochford District Councillors and their officials may well know the final shape of that core strategy, we have not had the benefit of that information and this therefore cannot be a meaningful consultation until we are given the whole picture to allow us to weigh the pro's and con's and develop a comprehensive response.

If the JAAP has been informed and modified by the process of Sustainability Appraisal we need to see that prior to finalising our responses to the JAAP (para 1.3).

We cannot help but feel that if consultations were to be effective these documents would be far more accessible than they are both physically and by making the documents more user friendly without the mountains of jargon they contain. We would like to see the timing of these consultations to be issued sequentially to allow us to understand the interface between the various documents, for example the core strategy needs to be finalised so that the public can see the whole picture not just selected parts.

We doubt that our views are seriously considered. If any note was taken of responses why does the 4th sub paragraph of 1.6 clearly states that the Rochford (via the Preferred Options document) supports development of the airport and environs when the Core Strategy has not been finalised.

The above view is compounded by paragraph 1.7 where the clear implication is that this proposal is going ahead no matter what the public say as it does not seek agreement only gives an opportunity to comment with no assurance that our views will be taken on board or at least ruled out by cogent argument.

2 Vision and Objectives.

We would like to see evidence that the development of the airport is in Rochford's interest and that we are not being bounced by Southend into approving this development, this certainly feels to be the case when the vision already adopted by Southend is 'a centre for international air services in South Essex'.

We would like to be appraised of how the development of the airport can be assumed to attract high technology businesses and high value employment to the area.

The second sub paragraph of 2.3 says 'passengers will travel on quiet, fuel efficient planes from a modern terminal building linked to a railway station and with fast road access to the A127'. Whilst the aircraft may indeed be quieter and more efficient no mention is made in this paragraph of the proposed increase in flights which will of course mean more noise and environmental impact than is currently the case. Using simple arithmetic, if the target of 2mppa is to be achieved (using aircraft that seat 150 and a flying time restricted to 06:30 to 23:00 hours) this means 2.21 aircraft per hour. This is far in excess of what is currently the case. On top of this there are proposals to fly freight in and out during night time hours (presumably 23:00 to 06:30). It is disingenuous to imply that the production of a fast road link to the A127 offers efficient travel to and from the airport, the A127 is heavily congested for much of the day.

We are not convinced that there is any desire to limit the number of night flights nor that a noise quota will be an effective method of managing noise pollution. We are aware that flight paths, in certain circumstances, are over Hawkwell and we are therefore being subjected to additional noise and pollution to the current levels, we should surely be looking to reduce current levels further not approving increases.

What evidence is there to suggest that the new business park will be able to attract so called 'environmental technologies'? Why is so much made of enhancing the Saxon Business Park to Rochford and Cherry Orchard by a so called 'green lung', this area is currently undeveloped and is therefore far greener than the industrial estate that is planned even if it does have a cycle path.

It is said the park will provide quality jobs for local people, where is the evidence to sustain that statement and where is the work force currently or how will it be developed? Where and how will the local educational establishments prepare future employees for these so called quality jobs? If the local workforce is not qualified for these high tech jobs we will be importing workers from other areas many of whom will no doubt commute with all the problems that brings. In addition the lack of public transport in the area means more car travel to enable workers to get to these new jobs.

3 Preferred Options:

Issue 1: The paragraph makes it clear that the master-plan is to be enhanced to enable two million passengers per annum (2mppa). The argument is put that enabling larger but more fuel efficient aircraft will lessen the impact. Lessen is a relative word, lessen from what? There is no doubt that 2mppa will result in a vast increase in flights from the current level and that will of course mean massively higher levels of noise and exhaust pollution. The JAAP seeks to suggest that the impact of using more modern aircraft will be less, but less than what – our current levels of pollution or less than has traditionally been the case with a 2mppa load until this generation of aircraft were available. Clearly the surrounding area will suffer a massive and unnecessary increase in both noise and general aircraft pollution.

The last sub paragraph suggests the MRO business will be allowed/encouraged to grow, would this mean the largest aircraft coming to the airport for maintenance, would they be able to take off and land in an un-laden state?

Issue 2: We understand that within the Thames Gateway project, Rochford was seen as the 'green lung' of Southend, this proposal results in Rochford providing most if not all of the land for industrial use providing up to 6,200 jobs by 2021. What is the benefit to Rochford? What guarantee are we given that a reasonable proportion, or indeed any, of these will be taken by residents of Rochford and how will the authorities prevent commuting inwards further exacerbating the almost gridlocked roads at rush hour?

Issue 3: This paragraph hints at recognition of the environmental impact of the JAAP but studiously puts no data on it. More worryingly it makes no proposals and gives no assurances that the adverse impact can be limited or even managed. It states controls on the operation of the airport will have to be considered, surely controls on the operation of the airport are essential. It states that it will ensure the quality of life of residents is maintained (this word implies at current levels), how, precisely, will that be achieved with such a massive increase in flights?

Issue 4: This paragraph accepts that the JAAP will have an impact on transport and movement but is totally devoid of any concrete proposals to minimise or even limit the additional traffic that will arise from the proposals. Modal shifts without severe and central government interventions are, in our opinion, not achievable. It is very worrying that this major issue is limited to a small paragraph and is without concrete proposals that would have impact on traffic volumes.

Issue 5: We are opposed to the whole scale destruction of green belt land to provide space for new industrial sites on the basis of support for the development of an airport that will reduce the quality of life of our residents and, to date, has not had any real environmental impact study published in an accessible format for residents to understand the effects of an airport operating at the proposed levels.

We cannot disagree with the re-use of the land contained in Area (i) as it is brown field, we would prefer that it was used to accommodate some of the additional houses that the district is obliged to absorb.

Areas that are prime agricultural land and should be retained as such.

Area (ii)d This should be retained as land for playing sport – essential in these days of increases in obesity.

London Southend Airport

Introduction

We note that the third sub paragraph states that the local authorities are working to establish a baseline of noise levels for the airport, in our view either the base line is set according to current levels or the authorities must come clean and admit there will be a deleterious impact on local people. Clearly the words used in the final sentence ('controls to mitigate') indicate an acceptance of some deterioration from current levels of pollution.

We are not experts in the operation of airports but do not see a Noise Statement is a sufficiently robust way to manage the operator to control the adverse effect on local residents.

Runway Operation:

We note the passenger flights are to be allowed for over 80% of the day. We note also that freight flights will be additional thus flights could be operating 24 hours per day. We regard this as unacceptable and consider there must be a much longer quiet time when no flights are allowed. In our opinion a ban on all night flights between 22:00 - 07:00 should be imposed.

We note that the routing of aircraft on both take-off and landing should be so organised to reduce noise and environmental impact, reduce it from what level? We recognise weather conditions may have an impact on the direction of take-off and landing and we believe regular and late night use of flight paths over Hawkwell should be disallowed.

Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO)

The paragraph makes no comment on the additional road traffic necessary to service this additional business, they will need supplies etc and the majority of these supplies will no doubt come by road. We would like to have written restrictions on noise from engine testing, especially out of the hours 09:00 – 17:00 from Monday to Friday.

Airport Development Zone A

If a hotel is to be developed it must have restricted car parking to encourage arrival in the area by public transport. If a hotel offers extended parking and/or for the duration of a travellers stay away, passengers will be encouraged to use their cars to travel to the airport adding further traffic to our already congested roads.

Transport within the JAAP

Whilst this paragraph deals only with transport within JAAP it makes no comment or recommendations of the problems already faced by the surrounding road network. It is, in our opinion, indisputable that the opening of Cherry Orchard Way resulted in a very significant increase in the use of the B1013 and Ashingdon Road through Hawkwell for ‘rat runners’ into Southend from the north and west. We believe that this has probably been exacerbated by the use of satellite navigation systems that give this as the shortest route. Further enhancements to this road will have further negative impact on volumes of traffic through our parish.

In summary we are being pushed into accepting a very real reduction in the quality of our life to accommodate the aspirations of Southend where the adverse impact will not be felt. We feel the development of the airport should be allowed only to modest levels where impact on Hawkwell residents would be minimal and that the environmental impact should be properly assessed and published in a format that our residents can understand before proceeding.

Hawkwell Parish Council, 6th April 2009.