WinACC
Think globally, start locally

Main Campus, University of Winchester, Winchester SO22 4NR
01962 827083 contactus@winacc.org.uk www.winacc.org.uk

Planning Casework Unit
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Citygate
Gallowgate
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 4WH
PCU@communities.gov.uk

10 April 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Planning application for Southampton Airport runway extension - Eastleigh Borough Council F/19/86707

Please halt any further steps on Eastleigh Borough Council's decision to approve a runway extension at Southampton airport made on 9 April 2021.

You have halted Leeds/Bradford airport by an Article 31 holding direction to give yourself time to consider whether to call in the proposals for the West Yorkshire airport. Southampton Airport must be considered alongside Leeds/Bradford airport.

There is no doubt that the expansion will bring harm to the climate and to the reputation of Her Majesty's government, as well as to local people.

The Environmental Statement that accompanied the planning application states that the proposal would result in an additional 370ktonnes of CO_2 a year. The increase in emissions is incompatible with the Climate Change Act target to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

As you know, the UK Climate Change Committee sixth carbon budget report recommended that there should be no net increase in airport capacity. They said that aviation emissions should be included in the UK's carbon accounts, starting from the sixth carbon budget. Because aviation emissions have been 'allowed for' in the UK's carbon budgets but not been formally included, emissions from flying have risen without any penalties to the industry, and 2018 (the latest year for which data is available) recorded the highest ever level of CO_2 from civil aircraft using UK airports.

Arguments about the airport itself becoming carbon neutral are irrelevant greenwash – it's the aircraft using the airport which are the problem.

COP26 may well be the last chance for global leaders to agree effective action to prevent global heating reaching deadly levels. It would be a tragedy if the Government failed to demonstrate leadership and failed to set an international example.

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It is essential that the UK Government does not permit any increase in the number of flights, the number of passengers, and the miles flown. Lower carbon fuels and electric planes capable of carrying significant numbers of passengers are decades away.

The economic arguments for expansion are weak. First, because the impact of global heating on the economy is so much greater than the impact of the airport closure. Second, because new, and potentially more, jobs would be created if the location were used for another purpose – for example, a distribution depot for freight arriving by train at the immediately adjacent station, responding to the changes in shopping resulting from lockdown. Thirdly, because the airport's arguments for the economic importance of a longer runway do not reflect changes resulting from COVID in holiday travel and in airlines, let alone the longer-term impact of public concern, and legislation, in response to the climate crisis.

WinACC (Winchester Action on Climate Change) is a district wide charitable company that has been arguing for evidence-based action to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute so much to climate change for over ten years. Winchester is adjacent to Eastleigh and aircraft from the airport fly over Winchester District.

Yours faithfully

Chris Holloway

Christine Holloway

Chair

07779 283451