

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 13 AUGUST 2002**

Present:- Councillor A J Ketteridge – Chairman  
Councillors E C Abrahams, Mrs C A Bayley, W F Bowker, Mrs C A Cant, Mrs M A Caton, R P Chambers, R A E Clifford, R J Copping, Mrs D Cornell, A Dean, Mrs C M Dean, Mrs C D Down, Mrs S Flack, M A Gayler, Mrs E J Godwin, R D Green, D W Gregory, M A Hibbs, D M Jones, P G F Lewis, Mrs C M Little, Mrs J I Loughlin, R A Merrion, D M Miller, R J O'Neill, A R Row, Mrs S V Schneider, G Sell, R C Smith, R W L Stone, A C Streeter, A R Thawley, R B Tyler and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E C Forbes, F Chandley, A Forrow, J Mitchell and P J Snow.

**C37 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to this Extraordinary Meeting which he said was the fourth to be held this year. Five people had indicated that they wished to address the meeting and he invited each of them to speak in turn.

**C38 QUESTION AND STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Before the commencement of the meeting, a question was asked and statements were made by the following persons:

Mrs Jackie Deane  
Mr Jim Mann  
Mr Simon Latham  
Mr Simon Cooke  
Mr Norman Mead

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their contributions to the meeting and said that the Council would take the question asked and the statements made into consideration in finalising its response to the Government.

**C39 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J F Cheetham, R C Dean, Mrs J E Menell and D J Morson.

Councillor Gregory declared an interest in the next item as an employee of Airport Cars.

**GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS ON AVIATION AND HOUSING**

The Chief Executive presented a report containing background information on recent Government announcements on aviation and housing and suggesting a way in which the Council might respond to the consultation papers on aviation. She said that two separate strategic issues would need to be addressed. The first concerned the Government's statement that an additional 200,000 houses would be required in the South East. Four areas for development had been highlighted including the London-Stansted-Cambridge area. The recent announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister had been of a fairly broad nature and it was impossible to assess the impact on Uttlesford at the present time.

The present requirement for housing numbers set out in the regional planning guidance approved by the Secretary of State in March last year would be delivered by the draft new Local Plan, together with those in other local plans for Essex. However, the next critical stage would be the publication in the Autumn of an issues consultation document by the East of England Local Government Conference which was expected to reflect the recent Government announcement. Draft proposals would then be prepared by February next year for new regional planning guidance for the East of England for subsequent submission to the Government. Further reports on future housing policy would be made to Members as appropriate.

The second strategic issue to be considered at this meeting concerned proposals for future growth at Stansted Airport. The Department for Transport (DoT) had published on 23 July a series of national consultation papers on the future of air transport in the UK. The volume dealing with the South East set out a number of options for responding to additional pressures for air transport over the next thirty years. In relation to Stansted, options were for one, two or three additional runways. All options considered in the document assumed the maximum use of the existing runway. This could raise the level of use at Stansted to approximately 35 million passengers per annum (mppa). Options for one or more additional runways assumed a much higher level of passenger use.

The issues raised in the document were both complex and far-reaching and were potentially of great significance for the Uttlesford district. Members were referred to the figures in the annexe to the report and to the Government's conclusion that no action to cater for demand for additional airport capacity in the South East was not an option. Members were also reminded of the resolution adopted at the Council meeting in February this year. This had expressed strong opposition to a second runway at Stansted Airport but, at that stage, no question of a third or fourth runway had been considered. The Council had also agreed that a district wide referendum would take place on aspects of future development at Stansted Airport and this would take place during September. A further Extraordinary Meeting of the Council was suggested in November to finalise the Council's response to the consultation document.

In response to the Chief Executive's introduction, Councillor Clifford said that it was important that every household in Uttlesford should be sent the questionnaire issued by the Department for Transport to selected households

in the area. The Chief Executive said that officers would arrange for this to happen if it was so decided at this meeting.

The Chairman opened the debate by stating that he was not opposed to air travel in principle and that the district benefited to some degree from the presence of Stansted Airport. However, he deplored the timing of the Government's announcement during the Parliamentary recess and at a time when local authorities had few scheduled meetings.

Feelings were running high at the moment as demonstrated at the public meeting at Stansted the previous evening. The district had been subjected to a number of government initiatives in recent weeks and it was important for the Council to be in a position to respond to these quickly, if necessary before formal consultation arrangements were initiated. He said the view that only the Government could decide strategic planning issues was a fallacy but that, as a result, local authority freedoms were being gradually eroded. The Government did not understand the nature of the countryside and he called upon Councillors of all political parties to unite in defending the rural environment in Uttlesford.

The Chairman then called upon the Group Leaders, in turn, to set out their view of what the Council's response to these proposals should be.

Councillor Chambers, Leader of the Conservative Group, referred to the catastrophic effect these proposals would have upon the environment in Uttlesford. He said there was a danger that large parts of the district would be buried under concrete and that the district would become a virtual suburb of London.

He hoped that the Council would agree unanimously to use every means at its disposal to confront and fight against these proposals. The Group Leaders were united and had agreed the wording of a motion to be put to this meeting.

Councillor Chambers confirmed that the proposed referendum on development at Stansted Airport would be carried out as soon as possible of all electors of the district. The Council would continue to seek as many allies as possible, with the help of the local MP Sir Alan Haselhurst, to lobby in support of its opposition to major expansion at Stansted Airport. He hoped that this united opposition would also extend to any proposals for major housing development in the district over and above what was envisaged in the agreed Local Plan.

Councillor Chambers then proposed the following Motion which was duly seconded:

"Council notes recent Government proposals on the future of air transport in the UK and housing in the South East of England and expresses its initial deep concern that the proposals could be fundamentally damaging to communities and the quality of life of individual people and families in the Uttlesford District and beyond its boundaries.

Council acknowledges that currently there are benefits and disadvantages from Stansted Airport's operation but will not accept expansion on a scale that destroys or could lead to the destruction of villages and quality of life.

Council acknowledges the need for housing that can be afforded by all local people and will encourage solutions that do not ruin the rural aspects of the district.

Council resolves:

- 1 To analyse critically the recent Government statement and consultation papers on the future of air transport in the UK and to consider principally the long-term quality of life of the residents of Uttlesford district when making its response to Government.
- 2 To authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders and the Chief Finance Officer, to allocate sufficient resources, including the commissioning of external advice and expertise, where appropriate, to compile a robust response for submission to the Council on 18 November 2002 and to support media and lobbying activity.
- 3 To work with other local authorities, local and national action groups and individuals to oppose the aviation proposals as they stand and to promote alternative and more acceptable proposals from both a local standpoint and from regional and national standpoints.
- 4 To request its Stansted Airport Advisory Panel to consider the proposals urgently by meeting as often as necessary with a view to advising the Council's Environment and Transport Committee on the content of the Council's response as soon as possible within the Government's consultation period.
- 5 To urge central Government to conclude its consideration of these matters quickly and to this Council's satisfaction so that the blight that has been imposed on many people and their homes in recent weeks can be removed.
- 6 To seek the support of legislators, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament for truly sustainable solutions by means of public statements, by lobbying (including at national party conferences in the autumn) and through regular briefings.
- 7 To invite Secretary of State Alistair Darling, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott and Gwyneth Dunwoody, Chairman of the Transport Select Sub-Committee for a short stay in Uttlesford to see its present qualities, to witness the impact of Stansted Airport today and to learn at first hand the feelings of local people.
- 8 To confirm its previous decision to hold a referendum on the future development of Stansted Airport.
- 9 To inform and consult its residents – including holding Member-led public meetings – about the issues involved and to enable each

household to obtain a copy of the Department for Transport's consultation questionnaires on the aviation paper.

- 10 To conduct this debate in an all party, non-party political manner and to issue future press and media statements on an all party basis.
- 11 To call another Extraordinary Council Meeting on Monday 18 November 2002 to approve the formal response of the Council to Government."

Councillor A Dean, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, spoke about the public meeting held in Stansted the previous evening. He said that the meeting had been attended by 500 people with another 300 listening from outside. The mood at the meeting had been one of anger and disbelief and people were looking to this Council for leadership in the campaign to stop major expansion at Stansted Airport.

The campaign had to be conducted on an all-party basis to ensure that the Council did not fail its residents and let down future generations. It was important to use every part of the legitimate democratic process but if the Government was prepared to disregard the views of local people it would face one of the largest environmental protest campaigns seen in the UK.

Councillor Mrs Caton, Leader of the Independent Group, spoke in support of the motion. She said that the Government's announcements on housing and airport expansion had come as a bombshell and she hoped that all groups and parties in the district would join together to fight the proposals. It was important to produce a reasoned response to the Government's consultation process and this would involve challenging many of the figures and assumptions included in the consultation paper.

Councillor Green, Leader of the Labour Group, agreed that it would be undemocratic of the Government to impose extra airport capacity and housing development on the district without local consent. He said that Stansted Airport had contributed a great deal to the local area and the airport management could not be blamed for proposals emanating from Government Departments.

Councillor Gayler said that he had stood outside the meeting last night and was heartened that so many had attended. A strong contribution from the community was needed to convince the Government that these proposals were wrong. The communities of Great Hallingbury and Thaxted were well aware of the impact of aircraft noise and pollution now but this effect would spread to other communities in the district if these proposals were to be realised.

He was opposed to extra housing developments being placed in the South East and said that more investment and housing was needed in the north and other regions of the country. The Council must lobby as many Government Ministers and MPs as possible in support of its arguments and should make clear that it would not concede another runway at Stansted and would not roll over on the current application. Page 5

Councillor O'Neill agreed with the terms of the Motion and trusted that it would be adopted unanimously. It was important to establish and maintain all party co-operation in order to address the nature of the Government's proposals.

The Council must realise that the proposal for three new runways at Stansted was the only option that would meet the Government's stated targets. This level of expansion would mean that Stansted would be larger than Heathrow.

Second, the Department for Transport's consultation paper was dishonest in saying that three new runways would affect only 28,000 people in Uttlesford and provide 93,000 extra jobs. Experience from Holland and elsewhere demonstrated that the surrounding area would suffer the effects of blight.

If these proposals proceeded, Stansted would be a major hub airport in the UK and urban development would extend as far as London. The only sensible alternative to major expansion at Stansted was the option to build a purpose built airport at Cliffe. The Council should work for an interim solution to be found until an airport at Cliffe was ready for operation. The Council should work equally hard, but separately, to oppose additional housing development and should treat each matter on its own demerits.

Councillor Mrs Godwin said that it was inhuman to expect people to live in the vicinity of a four runway hub airport. The Council must be prepared to challenge the figures used to justify these proposals. Cheap air travel was effectively subsidised because there was no tax on aviation fuel. There was enough employment in this area already and people in London visited Uttlesford for the environmental quality of the area. The Council must lobby with common sense and logic and produce its own response to the consultation documents in a way that would be obvious to the country as a whole.

Councillor Wilcock quoted from a postcard he had received from Essex County Council referring to the real countryside to be found in the rural areas of the county. To maintain that environment it was important that the airport should not expand beyond its present limit of 15mppa. The assumptions of growth used to justify the provision of extra airport capacity must be challenged. To do this it would be necessary to look at other options for travel within the UK.

He said that development of an airport at Cliffe would cause environmental concerns as well. We should not oppose development here at the expense of other parts of the country and the Council must get its message across to other regions as well. The Council must consider mounting a legal challenge to Government if all other methods of opposition were unsuccessful.

Councillor Sell referred to the ratchet effect of development at Stansted over the years. One of his predecessors as a Stansted Councillor had campaigned in the 1970s and early 1980s to contain passenger throughput to 2mppa and 4mppa. Many people came to Uttlesford for a better quality of life and this would be seriously eroded by further development. He was particularly concerned about effects on the health of the local population, particularly children. There were said to be 750,000 empty houses in the UK, many of

these in the Deputy Prime Minister's own constituency. Other solutions should be found for the shortage of housing capacity.

The Chairman referred to an election campaign leaflet from 1979 which referred to a limit of 1m ppa at Stansted and this increased the need to beware of the incremental shift referred to by Councillor Sell.

Councillor Mrs Loughlin said that she agreed with the sentiments expressed by Mrs Godwin earlier in the meeting except for her suggestion that emotion must be kept out of the arguments to be used by the Council. A decision on airport capacity should not be made on economic grounds alone; environmental costs must be addressed as well. Representatives of the Airport authorities should be invited to explain why these concerns should be overridden.

Councillor Mrs Flack said she was delighted that the Council was united on both of these issues. She was concerned that the constant rise in house prices had put much of the local housing market out of the reach of ordinary residents. There was no justification for these proposals which were undemocratic and unwarranted and she urged members of the public to attend a meeting of the County Council called to debate these matters on 10 September.

Councillor Smith said that the demonstration of unity shown at this meeting was the most positive step taken by the Council for a very long time. Ways must be found of working with East Herts District Council in particular as Bishop's Stortford would be badly affected by these proposals. He urged Sir Alan Haselhurst to resign his position as Deputy Speaker to concentrate on the fight against airport and housing expansion in the area.

He insisted that major expansion at Stansted had been planned for many years and the position and height of the existing control tower demonstrated that this was so. The Government needed to develop airport facilities at Stansted in the way that was proposed because it had made a mess of airport development elsewhere in the South East.

Councillor Copping said that the nature of democratic debate meant that some challenge was needed to the consensus so far achieved at this meeting. He felt that the Motion was not appropriate and that the Council was being duped into participating in a consultation process that the Government would choose to ignore. Events in the past had demonstrated that the Council and local pressure groups had achieved little or nothing in preventing expansion.

It was necessary for the Council to be more assertive as desperate remedies were needed to enable the Council's case to have a chance of success. Accordingly, he moved the following amendment which was duly seconded:

"Council resolves to oppose, by any means necessary,

- (a) All attempts to expand Stansted Airport beyond the permissions already allowed; and

- (b) All development plans suggested or deposited which, by their size, will detrimentally affect the well-being and quality of life of present and future residents of the district.”

Councillor Clifford, who had seconded the amendment, said that he was in sympathy with the sentiment expressed in the original Motion but could not agree with the text. It was important to communicate the Council's view in a brief manner as brevity would maximise the impact. A shorter and more aggressive policy was needed to make clear the Council's opposition to the various expansion proposals.

Councillor Jones declared his interest in this matter as Chairman of Governors of Takeley School. He said that the Government's figures did not add up and should be challenged. Much of the demand for air travel originated from outside the South East and, in consequence, it seemed that extra airport capacity should be provided in the north of England or elsewhere outside the South East region.

Councillor Hibbs said that it was important to explain to local people the dramatic impact these proposals would be likely to have on areas of the district not affected by aircraft movements now. The location of the airport was considered to be convenient to many local people but this would only continue to be the case for those not affected by aircraft noise. Many more communities would be directly affected as a result of the proposed expansion plans. The Council must also be careful to rebut the arguments that would be made on employment levels in the district. There was minimal unemployment now but this could become a significant problem if a new town were to be built in the district.

Councillor Mrs Dean spoke about the likely impact of the proposals on the village of Elsenham. Homes and businesses would be lost as well as Elsenham Wood, a site of Special Scientific Interest. This could not be easily replaced. It was likely that a further link road from the M11 would be required to the north of Elsenham. The effect of all this would be to cause further human misery and a reduction in the quality of life. It was important for the Council to measure these effects against the added prosperity of the airport itself.

Councillor Streeter said that he had never heard Great Hallingbury referred to so often in the Council Chamber. As long ago as 1964 the former Dunmow RDC had called a Special Meeting to discuss plans for a four runway airport. This showed that the Government had always intended to develop Stansted to this level. He did not agree with other speakers that local opposition to airport expansion had not achieved anything and said that it was important for the Council to persevere with its opposition.

Councillor Mrs Cornell said that she was disappointed that an amendment had been proposed as she had intended to support the original Motion. However, she doubted that conventional methods of opposition such as writing letters would be of any use.

Councillor Bayley commented that Best Value had been forced on us. Two of its four C's were to consult and challenge. With this encouragement, we would do so.

The Chairman said that he intended to seek advice from the officers on the status of the amendment in view of the current application by BAA and Stansted Airport for outline permission to expand the airport from 15 to 25 mppa.

Councillor Tyler, in his capacity as Chairman of the Development Control and Licensing Committee, said that Councillor Copping should realise that the wording of his amendment if carried, could be prejudicial to the Council and was most unwise whatever the level of feeling aroused by the expansion proposals.

The Chief Executive agreed that Members should be cautious and not do anything to prejudice the consideration of the present planning application. Special Meetings had already been arranged for this coming Friday and in September to give further consideration to this application and she urged that this process should not be put at risk by any decision taken at this meeting.

Councillor Smith said that he understood Councillor Copping's dilemma as the proposed motion did not fully express the anger felt by Members. However, the Chairman said that the proposed Motion was a paving mechanism which would enable work to be carried out to allow for a more strongly worded Motion at the proposed Council meeting in November. That would be the point at which the Council would decide its final response to the various consultation documents.

Members discussed the difficulties caused by the need to express the Council's views firmly in relation to the proposals under discussion tonight whilst maintaining a position of probity in relation to determination of the present planning application. Councillor O'Neill pointed out that the Motion set out a clear programme of work and authorised the necessary level of expenditure to enable the Council to oppose these matters more effectively. None of this would be achieved by passing the amendment.

Councillor Row urged Councillor Copping to withdraw his amendment.

In response to the concerns expressed by Members, the Head of Planning and Building Surveying said that it was an established rule of planning that Members of the decision making committee hear all sides of the argument before determining any planning application whatever the scale or impact of that application would be. The present application to expand Stansted had been through a thorough and exhaustive process of consideration and this process would be jeopardised if the amendment were to be agreed. He advised Members that the effect of approving the amendment would be to fetter the Council's discretion to determine the application. If this were to be the case it was likely that an appeal would be lodged for non-determination of the application and this Council would have no further role in its determination.

Councillor Copping said that having listened to the arguments put to him he would agree to withdraw his amendment, but only with the greatest reluctance. It demonstrated the folly of the planning process and the inability of the Council to win according to the established rules.

The original Motion proposed by Councillor Chambers was then put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be approved.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

## **SUMMARY OF QUESTION ASKED BY MRS JACKIE DEANE**

How does the Council intend to prove that the area of countryside to be destroyed or blighted by these proposals has a higher value in real terms than can be overcome by any economic benefit or compensatory measure?

## **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT MADE BY MR JIM MANN**

I urge the Council, in its protest, to intelligently examine the Government's claim that 150 million passengers per annum will eventually pass through Stansted Airport.

## **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT MADE BY MR SIMON LATHAM**

Thaxted Parish Council is on record as opposing any expansion of Stansted Airport beyond 15 mppa. The effect of three new runways will be catastrophic on the whole of north-west Essex. There are also major concerns about safety in the vicinity of the airport and it is felt that present infrastructure and air safety controls are inadequate. What happened to the finding of the Stansted Airport inquiry that capacity should not be developed beyond 15mppa and one runway? Uttlesford has been highlighted as the most desirable area in which to live but development of three additional runways at Stansted would make the area a living hell.

## **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT MADE BY MR SIMON COOKE**

Speaking as a Clavering Parish Councillor it is my view that the expansion plans, if realised, would lead to the destruction of the Uttlesford District as we know it. The Council's officers are wrong to claim that an increase in employment would not give rise to any additional local housing needs, nor to a need for further commercial development and associated community facilities. This view is hopelessly wrong as a major airport acts like a malignant tumour on its surrounding communities. There will be a growing urbanisation caused directly by any airport expansion. I do not therefore agree to any increase in passenger throughput at the airport let alone the proposed major expansion.

I am also concerned about the impact upon the environment and in particular noise. Aircraft are free from constraints of noise nuisance over 3,000 feet above sea level. Air traffic controllers are not required to give any thought to those living below the flight paths whose peace is shattered. The growth of Stansted would not only destroy Uttlesford on the ground but it would also destroy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside in Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and the rest of Essex. The air traffic control system should allow no deviation from a fixed flight path until the aircraft has reached 10,000 feet. There should also be additional controls on aircraft landing at Stansted. They should be stacked either over the North Sea or over areas of high ambient noise levels depending on the prevailing wind and not over open countryside.

I therefore call upon the District Council to liaise closely with all four County Councils to demand that the environment must be protected as far as possible from aircraft noise before any new airport development anywhere in the UK is allowed. Air traffic control services must be provided with the necessary money to enable them to implement the new regulations.

## **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT MADE BY MR NORMAN MEAD**

There has been a massive expression of anger from the public at various meetings held since the Government announcements were made, including the meeting held at Stansted last night. The minimum position should be that the full use of existing runways should be achieved which means 40mppa, or even 50mppa as quoted in the SERAS report. I hope that the Council will challenge any further increase at Stansted over the existing permitted level of 15mppa.

The scheme for the provision of one additional runway would involve the taking of extra land for the provision of extra infrastructure. The Council must not be misled into believing that only one additional runway is required. In particular, the figures on airport capacity in the last page of the Department for Transport's report should be questioned.