

Consultee Comments for Planning Application UTT/25/1542/FUL Stansted Airport

Consultee

Birchanger Parish Council

Response

Birchanger Parish Council opposes this planning application.

Stansted Airport's proposal to increase the yearly passenger cap from 43 million to 51 million passengers will have huge implications for the community and local area infrastructure. Birchanger village is a small village situated 1.9 miles northeast of Bishops Stortford and 2 miles west of the runway of Stansted Airport. As a village so close to the runway, we are well-qualified to comment upon our neighbour.

Noise:

Stansted's disingenuous statement that "Our plans are based on **making the best use of what we have** – a single runway within the same boundaries and **no more flights than currently allowed**" may sound reasonable but the shenanigans around night flights, for example, indicate just how manipulative Stansted can be¹.

Aircraft noise is a constant during the day and now, already, more frequently during the night period between 11.00pm and 6am. Stansted alleges that the increase in passenger numbers will not result in the number of flights rising beyond 274k aircraft movements per annum. The reality is that Stansted are not using their full movement quota so there will be an increase in flights.

Sleep disturbance is endured by those living in Birchanger and surrounding areas. The issues that concern the residents are not only the noise of the aircraft once airborne but also the take-off power decibel level required on the ground to initiate the take-off run. At full power this noise can be up to 140 DB's while running down the runway until the aircraft takes off. This noise is exacerbated by the weather and can happen throughout the day and night.

Aircraft operators could use the flex thrust on the take-off run, rather than full engine power. Most modern aircraft have the flex power option in their operational flight manual and that option is presented to the captain when the flight plan is uploaded to the aircraft. This is an option rarely exercised.

The runway at Stansted Airport is 10,000 feet long and most aircraft do not need that length of tarmac to get airborne even when fully laden. If aircraft were to use most/more of the 10,000 feet

¹ Stansted is currently allowed 13,700 night flights a year between the hours of 11.30pm and 6.00am. By comparison, Heathrow, which is three times bigger than Stansted, is allowed just 5,800 night flights a year.

Crucially, Airport management can grant 'dispensations' where flights are delayed by weather or Air Traffic Control problems. Dispensations do not count against the night flights limit. **Stansted (disproportionally) granted 1,200 dispensations Summer 2023 whereas Heathrow granted only 462.**

using the engine flex option, they would not need full power to attain the required speed to reach rotation and take off safely. This would significantly reduce the noise of departing aircraft.

Airlines may be ordering bigger, more efficient planes, but this may not result in a reduction in noise particularly as Stansted is currently the third busiest cargo airport in the UK and that cargo flights typically operate outside peak passenger hours or during the night. Older planes are used. Such flights have greater potential for noise disturbance. The increase in passenger flights does not reflect a consequent reduction in night flights. It will mean more noise, contrary to the Stansted assertion.

There is also a separate issue of aircraft using high powered reverse thrust, day and night, to slow and stop to enable the aircraft to leave the runway at the first rapid exit taxiway (RET). The more planes using the runway, potentially, the more times this will happen. This high-power noisy action by flight crews is not required for the safety of the aircraft during a normal landing run, it is only a requirement of the airport air traffic controller to get the runway empty as quickly as possible to allow other aircraft to depart or arrive. If flight crews are instructed to leave the runway further down at the last RET or end of the taxiway there would be no need for reverse thrust. The noise generated by reverse thrust can be as high as the noise produced by aircraft taking off.

As close neighbours, we would encourage Stansted Airport's operators to use the furthest RET on the runway during the landing phase to further reduce the noise of the landing aircraft. Pressure to reduce the use of reverse thrust would also assist in mitigating the issue.

Little of this noise is captured by the noise monitors situated outside the curtilage of the airfield and on the direct standard instrument departures and arrivals indicated by the Jeppesen navigation charts. But this noise, is sorely heard, by those in the community surrounding the airport².

Transport:

Roads: Highways infrastructure will be unable to cope with an increase in road traffic, it is already struggling, particularly at peak periods. Villagers already find it difficult to exit the village at points in the day. Local bus services struggle to provide a regular service, due to road closures, diversions, repairs etc. That is, if they indeed exist.

The Birchanger community does not have high unemployment but does have pockets of deprivation. The unreliability, or inconvenient timetables, of public transport means that a significant proportion of residents that work at the airport are reliant on private vehicles to travel to work. Many airport jobs, particularly those that attract lower salaries, operate on a shift basis. Personal transport is the only way to get to work. Enhanced employment opportunities, due to an increase of passenger numbers, will only compound this issue.

The M11 Stansted junction upgrade was completed in 2024. Transport pressures are such that gridlock is the new normal. Motorway incidents already impact upon the airport with passengers missing their flights. Traffic lights have been incorporated in a subsidiary roundabout on the A120 feeding the M11 to improve the flow of traffic for those endeavouring to exit the motorway. These measures are already proving inadequate. The interconnecting roads,

² The noise monitors outside the curtilage of the airport switch to day use at 6am every morning. That's why Ryanair do not normally fly before 6am, an incessant user of reverse thrust.

A120, A1250 and Birchanger, struggle to approach and negotiate the roundabout at peak times. There are times when it is impossible to exit the village.

There needs to be a M11 Stansted junction 8B for southbound traffic aiming for the airport. Traffic from the Midlands is very poorly served by the M11 junctions 8 or 8A. Whilst this will not directly advantage Birchanger residents there could be a consequent reduction in traffic in the area if the airport traffic was able to divert and not struggle around the “heaving” M11 roundabout.

Parking: The cost of parking, long or short term, at the airport is significant. Stansted pick-up and drop-off costs are the most expensive of all the “London” airports. This works to Stansted’s advantage as it encourages the use of public transport to the airport. The downside to this, is that Stansted is, effectively encouraging fly parking in nearby villages. Parking in a nearby village improves Stansted’s transport data for fly parking is not part of the data gathering nor analysis by the airport. Superficially, Stansted supports anti-fly parking measures by the provision of signage, but the reality is that fly parking in the community supports the Stansted eco-credentials³.

Trains: The London-Stansted Express service works well. There is not a comparable service from Cambridge to Stansted. Travellers from the Midlands contend with the local, much slower, train service. Stansted Airport has created a problem, increased passenger numbers will compound issues, yet the airport is doing little to resolve.

Importantly, those who live in the locality and wish to use the train pay extra for the privilege. Passengers currently pay a premium for journeys that originate from the Airport. Return ticket prices to Cambridge and London are, on average, 25% more expensive from the airport. Season tickets from the airport are on average 10% more expensive.

In summary, our contiguous near neighbour is costly, to Birchanger, the community and the environment.

³ Stansted Development Plan: Half of all passenger journeys to be by public transport, to relieve pressure on local roads.