

**North Herts Council
SOUTHERN RURAL AREA FORUM**

**Meeting held at Breachwood Green Village Hall, 15 Chapel Road,
Breachwood Green, SG4 8NX
On Thursday, 21st September 2023 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: *Councillor David Barnard (DB) (Chair), Councillor Ralph Muncer (RM) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Lisa Nash (LN), Councillor Louise Peace (LP), Councillor Claire Strong (CS) and Councillor Mandi Tandi (MT).*

In Attendance: *Aimee Flack (AF) (Community and Partnerships Officer) Cllr Steve Jarvis (SJ)*

Also present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were around 20 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

Meeting Started at **19:32**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

We have received apologies from Cllr Dominic Griffiths, Cllr Faye Frost, Cllr Ian Moody and Cllr Terry Tyler.

Cllr Lisa Nash and Cllr Mandi Tandi arrived later in the meeting.

2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Barnard welcomed everyone in attendance.

- Highlighted that it's an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.
- Members were reminded they are making recommendations and not decisions for grant applications.

3. MINUTES - AREA COMMITTEE 2 MARCH 23

To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Area Committee held on the 2 March 2023.

Unanimous vote that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 2 March 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair. LP didn't vote as wasn't at the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION

Aimee Flack, the Community and Partnership Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets. And highlighted that since writing the report, Holwell Parish Council have a robust Safeguarding Policy.

CS queried the grant budget amount.
AF advised.

Received a presentation in support of a grant application by the following:

Yvonne Hart presented the Holwell Parish Council application.

CS proposed.
LP seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending Holwell Parish Council's application for £1,928 towards chairs and tables.

5. INFORMATION NOTE: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Aimee Flack, Community and Partnerships Officer, presented the Community Update.
Further to the report, highlighted the new Community Investment Fund - further details through this link [Community Investment Fund | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk)

6. LUTON AIRPORT EXPANSION UPDATE

Andrew Lambourne, Chair of LADACAN (Luton And District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) presented an update on the application by Luton Rising for a Development Consent Order to expand capacity at Luton Airport to 32 million passengers per annum by 2043, with development works including a second terminal on Wigmore Valley Park, along with more car parks and aircraft stands.

Because the proposed increase in capacity exceeds 10 million passengers per year, the project is automatically classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, which must be decided by government and not locally.

Five members of the National Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate have been assigned as the Examining Authority, and the Examination opened on 10 August 2023 with a Preliminary Meeting and will close on 10 February 2024.

Over 1,600 people and organisations have registered as Interested Parties and

based on a skim through their initial comments some 90% of them oppose the application, as do LADACAN. Its environmental impacts and the added load on surface transport infrastructure would be very significant, and the proposal to add 70% more flights in the night and early morning periods is particularly egregious.

At the Preliminary Meeting stakeholders requested inclusion of topics such as the funding of the £2.7bn cost of the proposed development, and the governance arrangements. Luton Rising is 100% owned by Luton Borough Council and its Board mainly comprises Members and Officers of the Council. The Council derives income from the Airport and is its Local Planning Authority.

Two subsequent Open Floor Hearings enabled organisations and members of the public to express their views on the application. Many of those in support were charities or organisations funded by Luton Rising from airport revenues. Supportive statements emphasised the value of that funding; others appear to take at face value the Luton Rising descriptions of the proposals as “Sustainable” and “Green Controlled”.

LADACAN asked the Examining Authority for the definition of “Sustainable”, and they referred them to National Policy Statements for Airports and National Networks, plus the National Planning Policy Framework as defining the sustainable development framework that is required to be considered in the context of planning decision making.

The examination is primarily based on a series of written exchanges. At each deadline communities and local councils submit documents with comments, and Luton Rising submits responses to the previously submitted comments, so it all stays neatly out of phase.

The various impacted host authorities including North Herts and indeed Luton Borough have all submitted Local Impact Reports, and Luton Rising’s responses to those have been published on the DCO website. This can easily be found by googling “National Infrastructure Planning Luton Airport”.

There will be a series of Issue Specific Hearings between 26th and 29th September, where the Examining Authority sets an agenda of particular items in each topic where they may ask the applicant or those who have commented to provide more detail.

Thereafter, the next deadline is 5th October, when written submissions of cases put at the Hearings, plus updated “living documents” such as Statements of Common Ground, plus comments on latest responses, and responses to information requests by the Examining Authority all have to be made.

On 10th October the Examining Authority publishes written questions, to which responses and comments on the previous wave of documents are required by 1st November, and so it goes on.

The Secretaries of State Messrs Harper and Gove aim to release by 13th October their decision on the Inquiry into the called-in decision by Luton Borough Council to permit the salami-slice application for 19 million passengers in order to regularise the breaches of noise conditions which took place in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The effect of that decision (if it were to permit the 19 million and set new conditions) on a part-complete planning examination is hard to gauge but at the very least would cause everyone a lot more work.

We will know more after next week's Issue Specific Hearings about where the Examining Authority seeks further clarification, discussion or detailed examination as needed. I'm sure the Council receives the regular updates from the Case Officers.

Opened up to questions

MOP – has night flights been looked at?

AL – It's proposed they would increase by 70%, starting at 5am rather than 6am.

AL – You may still be able to register as an interested party if you contact the Case Officers.

DB – Night flights can be noisy – would the commercial side increase as well?

AL –

- Yes, the freighters are noisy – and government proposes to consult on the extent to which night flight are needed. This won't happen until after the examination.
- Other night movements – if the proposal goes ahead the forecast is business jets would reduce, with a reduction in business aviation to make more room for commercial flights.
- There would be a "Noise envelope" – but we have argued it can't just be measured by one parameter.
- LADACAN consists of unpaid volunteers who do what they can – and we're zeroing in on the serious weakness with the application.

Cllr Steve Jarvis representative on the LACC (London Luton Airport Consultative Committee) – delivered an update from North Herts Council (NHC) point of view.

- Andrew has given a really good update on the process.
- NHC are working with two councils – Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council.
- It's a very substantial piece of work.
- NHC doesn't have experts on its staff on areas to address, so there has been a need to hire in people.

- NHC is in the position it has had to agree the principal areas of disagreement. And common ground of what can be agreed about.
- Some areas being looked into - archeology asset, impact on landscape, rural areas, ground transport impact potentially across the districts.
- There is a rigid process to follow.
- NHC objects in principle to the expansion on this scale.
- If we are committed to reducing climate impact we need to look at not increasing the impact of air travel on the environment.
- Identify the things the applicant can't fix. Very keen that NHC look at fundamental objections.
- Recognised the value of LADACAN's work.

DB – advised that he has raised in the past issues with A505 basically grid locked several points of the day and cutting across using lanes that are tarmacked over farm tracks. The roads won't be able to sustain increased traffic.

RM – Asked for clarity around NHC's position with Luton Borough Council (LBC).

SJ – advised NHC isn't in a joint position with LBC.

- One of the processes is there is a requirement to identify what you don't and do agree about.
- There will be some discussion on areas where there is common ground. And that's the extent on the work with LBC as far as SJ aware. There is a need to engage to understand what they are saying.

CS – Highlighted that noise, transport and air quality are three big headlines.

AL – there is a formal requirement for the combined host authorities to submit their views, including Luton Borough Council who have raised questions about the application.

- There are also Local Impact Reports where each of the affected Herts authorities have produced their own statements.
- . The process of examination is that issues are raised and the Applicant adjusts things where it wishes to.

SJ – have to work with the system with all its short comings.

MOP – If the application be approved, is it possible for inspectors to set conditions for protection?

SJ – Yes they can set conditions. The enforcement process can be difficult to enforce conditions.

AL – A Development Consent Order is a legally binding agreement which becomes legislation. The way it's written there will be an Environment Scrutiny Group from local councils, which oversees the Green Controlled Growth that is supposed to ensure the airport stays within defined limits. Also, thresholds trigger action if any impacts get close to those limits.

MOP – if this goes ahead – what will the increase of night flights be?

AL – explained current limits and they expect 70% more night flights than currently.

MOP – at the Inquiry last year did you form any sense of how seriously they take the matter.

AL – The Inquiry was called because the airport operator grown capacity too fast. The Planning inspectors got that. They particularly zeroed on surface transport (road and rail) limitations as the weak point.

MOP – asked for clarity on what LBC can decide on as they have a vested interest.

AL – As an increase to 32 million passengers would be Nationally Significant, it is going through this formal process where the application has to be decided by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of government inspectors. It is out of LBC's hands.

RM – expressed his personal opposition to the airport expansion.

DB – thanked everyone for coming. Interested to hear more from Andrew Lambourne in the future.

7. OPEN DISCUSSION

None raised.

8. WARD MEMBERS ACTIVITIES

DB – Had a meeting with the police crime commissioner about road safety on A505. There have been fatalities and accidents. Trying to get a speed reduction to 50 mile an hour and maybe get some cameras as well.

9. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

AF and DB - it was explained that the next two meetings need to be virtual, therefore they will be held at Letchworth District Council Office on Gernon Road.

Opened it up that we would like to invite Essex and Herts Air Ambulance.

AF – suggested that this is turned into a Health and Wellbeing theme and see if Samaritans would like to come to talk about Rural isolation and loneliness.

The police will be invited to the March meeting and suggested that this is themed Rural Crime.

MOP - Thanked the Area Forum for coming to Breachwood Green.

MOP – On the subject of flytipping – NHC do a fantastic job of clearing it up.

MOP – Asked for an update on whether they can take rubbish to Luton tip?

SJ - There is no agreement with Luton.

Meeting closed 8.45pm