

Opposition View on the Airport Expansion Plan

The Farnborough Society represents a wide cross-section of the local community with correspondingly varying views on the proposed airport expansion. Thus, because we had already welcomed Brandon O'Reilly to present TAG's position, we felt we must invite the opposition leader, Geoffrey Marks, OBE, to present his case. In spite of appalling weather, some 50 members and guests turned out to hear Mr Marks express his concerns on a number of issues, including the lack of transparency during the planning process and the failure to adopt best practice in the areas of noise and risk.

Having outlined TAG's application and the benefits he believes they seek to achieve, Mr Marks began by pointing out that Rushmoor's Local Plan is simply not sufficiently robust to protect local residents against negative environmental and economic impacts. Consequently, Mr Marks advocates that TAG's application be set aside until a more robust Local Development Framework (LDF) is in place.

In supporting his contention that the planning process lacked transparency, Mr Marks highlighted the fact the following emerged only after the current planning approvals had been granted;

(a) Noise. Contrary to the Local Plan Inspector's recommendation, which had been accepted and therefore carried forward into the Local Plan, Rushmoor established a noise contour that is so generous that it cannot possibly act as a long term constraint on levels of flying.

(b) Third Party Risk. Rushmoor wrongly interpreted the Department for Transport's Public Safety Zone policy, and thereby failed to adopt the Inspector's recommendation that the location of the Farnborough College of Technology justified a risk averse policy.

(c) Airport Infrastructure Capacity. Whilst limiting the permitted level of movements to 28,000 movements per annum, Rushmoor granted planning approval for an airport infrastructure capacity that is 4 times that level. This was significant because it was argued by TAG at the 'Weekend Movement' Inquiry, but denied by Rushmoor, that the 28,000 movement limit was regarded as an interim measure pending the gaining of confidence in TAG's ability to install and operate a satisfactory noise monitoring system. The question arises as to why such an 'understanding' between Rushmoor and TAG might have been reached when the systems TAG had said it would install have been successfully operated at other airports over many years

In order to put things right Mr Marks urges Rushmoor Borough Council to set aside TAG's application until it can be considered against an LDF that:

1. Establishes limiting noise contours.
2. Introduces additional noise criteria based on individual noise events.
3. Establishes an intolerable level of Third Party Risk and invokes the HSE's As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) principles.
4. Addresses housing blight.
5. Clearly takes into account national and EU policies post 2000, and emerging 'sustainability' policies.
6. Recognises that outstanding airspace utilisation issues have been resolved and consequently Noise Preferential Routes can be utilised without recourse to Visual Flight Rules.

Establishes a housing policy that precludes new housing being built under flight paths, thereby complying with the CAA's 'Balanced Approach' to noise nuisance.