

Appeal by BAA Ltd and Stansted Airport Ltd following the refusal by Uttlesford District Council of planning application UTT/0717/06/FUL

Proof of Evidence on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion

Historical Background

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personal details

- 1.1.1 My name is Peter Sanders and I appear at the Public Inquiry jointly on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion. ('SSE')
- 1.1.2 Norman Mead is co-author of this proof of evidence.

1.2 Qualifications and experience

Peter Sanders CBE, D.Phil

- 1.2.1 I have been a local resident for 25 years and a member of NWEHPA (North West Essex and East Herts Preservation Association) since the mid-1980s. I was Deputy Chairman of SSE from 2002 to 2004 and have been Chairman since 2004. Before my retirement I was Chief Executive of the Race Relations Board and the Commission for Racial Equality.

Norman Mead, MBE

- 1.2.2 In 1977 I moved from Harlow to the relative peace and quiet of the country village of Great Hallingbury. At the time I was assured from the results of previous inquiries that there would be no major expansion at Stansted Airport, but within a year yet another Public Inquiry was held to consider a two runway airport. I joined NWEHPA in 1978 and became General Secretary in 1986. I became Chairman of SSE upon its foundation in 2002 and have been Deputy Chairman since 2004.

2 STANSTED – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Early history to mid-80s

- 2.1.1 An airfield was first established at Stansted in 1942 when it became an American WW2 airforce base. In 1949 it came under the control of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- 2.1.2 In 1963 an inter-departmental committee of Government officials recommended that Stansted, with two runways, should be London's third airport. In response to the outcry that followed an independent inquiry (the Chelmsford Inquiry) was set up, conducted by Inspector Blake.
- 2.1.3 In his report (May 1966), Blake concluded:
'It would be a calamity for the neighbourhood if a major airport were placed at Stansted. Such a decision could only be justified by national necessity. Necessity was not proved by evidence at this inquiry'.
- 2.1.4 The Government had given clear undertakings that it would not overrule the Chelmsford Inquiry but it failed to honour them. Blake's findings were not announced for a year, and then, in the 1967 White Paper, were ignored by the Government: Stansted would become London's third airport, regardless.

- 2.1.5 This provoked a further outcry and a new independent inquiry was set up, the Roskill Commission, with the remit of finding the most suitable site for a four-runway airport. The Roskill Commission has been described as
- ‘the most exhaustive of its kind ever held, and perhaps ever likely to be held’¹*
- It lasted two and a half years (May 1968 – December 1970), examining 78 sites. After seven months’ work it whittled this number down to four and excluded Stansted. Eight other sites were considered more suitable.
- 2.1.6 The Roskill Commission recommended Cublington in Buckinghamshire, but one member, Colin Buchanan, favoured Maplin, taking the view that:
- ‘It would be nothing less than an environmental disaster if the airport were to be built at any of the inland sites.’*
- 2.1.7 There was a storm of protest against Cublington and in 1971 the Government chose Maplin. But Maplin was the most expensive option, and because of this, and the 1973-74 oil crisis, was abandoned by the incoming Labour Government.
- 2.1.8 In the light of its revised demand forecasts the Government decided that there was no immediate need to select a third airport and the 1978 White Paper ruled out Maplin. It also accepted that local people had a right to expect limits on airport development and decided that this could best be achieved by limiting the number of terminals. It gave undertakings that there should be no more than four terminals at Heathrow and two at Gatwick but gave no assurances about Stansted. The Government had no objection to increasing the number of passenger movements at Stansted to 4mppa but acknowledged that an increase to 16mppa would raise wider issues including major changes in planning policies.
- 2.1.9 The Government had in effect given the green light for Stansted's development and BAA, which had consistently advocated its development, applied for an increase to 15mppa.
- 2.1.10 Inspector Graham Eyre considered this application at Public Inquiry (1981-83) and recommended approval. Many of those who made representations warned him that granting permission for 15mppa would lead inevitably to development far beyond that. In response, Eyre was emphatic that permission for 15mppa should be granted only if the Government gave an unequivocal declaration of intent not to go beyond 25mppa or endorse a second runway. In the absence of such an undertaking he would recommend that the application be refused:
- ‘I would not be debasing the currency if I express my judgement that the development of an airport at Stansted, with a capacity in excess of 25 mppa and requiring the construction and operation of a second runway and all the structural and operational paraphernalia of a modern international airport as we know the animal in 1984, would constitute nothing less than a catastrophe in environmental terms. ...’²*
- ‘I take so strong a view on this aspect that if I believed, as so many do, that a grant of planning permission for an expansion at Stansted to a capacity of 15 mppa would inexorably lead to unlimited and unidentifiable airport development in the future of an unknown capacity, I would, without*

¹ Peter Hall, *Great Planning Disasters* (1980), p. 29.

² Report of the Inspector Graham Eyre, QC, Chapter 25, 12.12 [CD/31.1].

*hesitation, unequivocally recommend the rejection of BAA's current application in relation to the main site. ...'*³

- 2.1.11 In the 1985 White Paper the Government accepted Eyre's recommendations, approving 15mppa, with a review at 8mppa, and accepted there should be no second runway.
- 2.1.12 Eyre had insisted that, as a condition for the granting of permission, the Government should make an unequivocal declaration of intent that a second runway would not be constructed. The Government responded to this in the 1985 White Paper (para 5.36):
- 'On current forecasts it is very doubtful whether such a runway would be justified in the foreseeable future, while it is clear that it would give rise to severe environmental pressure. The Government therefore unreservedly accepts the Inspector's recommendation in this respect.'*
- 2.1.13 Nicholas Ridley, the Minister responsible, assured Parliament that Stansted had not been chosen as London's third airport. A very limited development was being allowed, he argued, and at 8mppa the question of further growth would be reviewed.

3 MORE RECENT HISTORY

- 3.1.1 In the event the development from 8mppa to 15mppa took place with almost no public debate and in 2003 UDC granted permission for 25mppa.
- 3.1.2 In June 2002, shortly before the 25mppa permission was granted, the Department for Transport launched its SERAS Consultation [CD/113] in which it put forward a series of options for the expansion of Stansted, including full use of the existing runway and options for up to three additional runways.
- 3.1.3 In its 2003 Air Transport White Paper ('ATWP') [CD/87] the Government came down in favour of full use of the existing runway and the building of a second runway. The 'unequivocal' assurance given by the Government in the 1985 White Paper, that there would be no second runway, was ignored.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Looking back over the past 40 years it is significant that whenever the Government has allowed an independent voice to be heard – Blake in 1966, Roskill in 1971 and Eyre in 1984 – the outcome has been either that there should be no major development at Stansted or that development should be limited to 25mppa and a single runway. In spite of this and also promises that the findings of these inquiries would be respected, Ministers, officials and BAA have ruthlessly pressed on with the development of Stansted, step by step.
- 4.1.2 Another way of describing this 'step by step' approach would be insidious incrementalism. By advancing one step at a time BAA, and its promoters and supporters, have been able to claim that the development would inflict very little harm.

³ Report of the Inspector Graham Eyre, QC, Chapter 23, 12.13.

- 4.1.3 We accept that the present application relates to the existing runway and not to the proposed second runway. But it was the Government's intention, spelt out in the 2003 White Paper, that when considering such applications, planning authorities should have the benefit of an Airport Masterplan to enable them to see the long term implications of the application. BAA has still failed to produce such a plan for Stansted. The development of the existing runway cannot be seen in isolation. It would be a major development in itself, but it would also be the necessary precursor of an application for a second runway. Dismissing this Appeal would not merely avert the further damage arising from the extra passenger movements on the existing runway: it would also avert the further damage arising from the proposed second runway.