

Councils urge the government to quit plans to expand Heathrow following parliamentary report



Four councils are urging the government to give-up their plans to expand Heathrow, following a parliamentary report which points out that the government can't demonstrate the airport can achieve legal environmental limits.

In the report, issued today (Thursday 23 Feb) by the cross party cross party Environmental Audit Committee, it states that there is little evidence that the airport can expand without continuing to exceed legal limits on air pollution.

This confirms the views of Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead councils, who are campaigning that the airport cannot be expanded.

The report also highlights the government has provided no precise timing of a night flight ban and little evidence that predictable respite can be achieved if the airport is expanded. In addition, the government is relying on people switching to cleaner cars to reduce air pollution but there is no confidence that the government will meet its targets for uptake.

The committee was also critical of the government's 'scant' detail on its approach to limiting carbon emissions.

This means that there was no sound basis for picking Heathrow third runway for the current NPS consultation, and that the current consultation is seriously misleading.

Lord True, Leader of Richmond Council, said: "Yet again this is more evidence that expanding Heathrow is not feasible. The Government should give up now. Heathrow already contributes to illegal pollution levels. And, the Government has no realistic plan to combat this. Expanding Heathrow would not only be damaging to the environment, but it would damage the health of tens of thousands of Londoners.

"We already take far more than any other European airport's noise and air pollution. We already do our bit for the national interest. But enough is enough. The Government needs to stop the spin and come clean on the real impact of expansion."



Cllr Simon Dudley, Leader of The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, said: "The Royal Borough welcomes the verdict of the Environmental Audit Committee, confirming once again the Government's failure to show air quality and environmental impacts can be mitigated, if it attempts to build a third runway at Heathrow.

"The council will continue to hold the government to account, particularly on environmental impacts, ensuring that local communities are protected."

Cllr Ravi Govindia, Leader of Wandsworth Council, said: "This influential cross-party House of Commons committee has reached exactly the same conclusions we have. The Government's plans for Heathrow will never pass a simple legal test on air quality. The airport already churns out unlawful levels of air pollution, offers woefully inadequate transport capacity and has Europe's worst noise footprint - and that's with just two runways. Expansion will make all these issues worse.

"It's wrong on every level, legally undeliverable and will end in failure after years of wasted effort. Nothing is going to change between now and 2018 to make this scheme any less polluting so ministers should face up to this truth now and abandon their plans for a third runway."

Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "We've told the government time and time again that a new runway at Heathrow will make already illegal air pollution levels around the airport worse, and cause damage to the environment and to the wellbeing of people. This latest report proves that the government has been misleading the public and highlights the negative impact that expansion of Heathrow will have on the environment, yet still the government refuses to accept that it is breaking the law on the very important issue of air quality and pollution.

"The current consultation by the Department for Transport is incomplete and unbalanced, and doesn't even mention the fact that Heathrow already contributes to illegal levels of air pollution which would increase with expansion. We will continue to represent our residents' views and to challenge any proposal that has such a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing."