



RECEIVED 23 MAR 2009

Department for  
**Transport**

From the Secretary of State

Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DR

The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7944 3011  
Fax: 020 7944 4399  
E-Mail: [geoff.hoon@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.hoon@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: GH/007257/09  
Your Ref: 01090324

20 MAR 2009

*Tessa*

Thank you for your letter of 11 March regarding the concerns of your constituents on the expansion of Heathrow Airport, and in particular the impact it would have upon your constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood.

### Noise

It is important to note that in terms of noise, Dulwich and West Norwood is currently outside of the 57dBA noise contour (the area most significantly affected by noise), and will remain so, even with a fully utilised third runway in 2030.

In 2002, the area around Dulwich and West Norwood was overflown by, on average, 169 arriving planes a day, at a height of 6,000 to 3,000 feet. Indicative plans suggest that in 2030, no arriving planes will overfly the area around Dulwich and West Norwood. In terms of departing aircraft, the area around Dulwich and West Norwood was overflown by on average 24 aircraft a day, whereas indicative plans suggest that in 2030 no departing planes would fly over the area.

I should also point out that levels of aircraft noise at Heathrow Airport have been steadily reducing over time as the environmental performance of aircraft has improved and older, noisier, aircraft have been retired and replaced. Modern aircraft are typically 20 decibels quieter than their predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s. This represents a reduction in perceived noise of around 75 per cent, achieved through a combination of improved engine design, better performance and quieter airframe designs.

This downward trend is set to continue, driven by action within the International Civil Aviation Organisation to progressively tighten aircraft noise certification standards since their introduction in 1971. The newest generation of wide-bodied aircraft is expected to make significantly less noise on arrival than the largest planes flying into Heathrow Airport today. The 'double-decker' Airbus A380 will generate no more departure noise than an Airbus A340-200/300 despite being more than twice its size. These improvements will assist the Government's policy aim of preventing any deterioration in the noise climate at Heathrow Airport, even with further growth.

## **Air Quality**

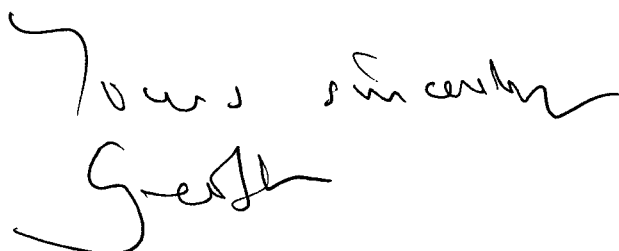
With reference to air quality, the critical local pollutant at Heathrow is nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and the most significant contributors to this pollutant in the Heathrow area are road vehicles and aircraft. Air quality has been progressively improving due mainly to emission controls on road vehicles and industrial sources and we expect this to continue, due to substantial reductions in road vehicle emissions over the next decade, as a result of tighter European standards, and the improved environmental performance of aircraft, as today's fleet is either replaced or re-equipped with cleaner engines.

Meeting our EU obligations on air quality was one of the conditions that needed to be satisfied before support for expansion at Heathrow could be given, and as my statement of 15 January made clear, the work we have undertaken means that I am satisfied that the condition can be met.

## **Compliance Mechanism**

In order to reinforce our commitments on noise and air quality, additional flights above the current 480,000 a year limit will only be allowed once the independent Civil Aviation Authority is satisfied that noise and air quality conditions are already being met. The air quality limit is already statutory, and the noise limit will now also have legal force. The detailed mechanism for achieving this is being developed with the relevant parties and will be consulted on later this year.

I hope that you find this information useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yours sincerely Geoff Hoon'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**GEOFF HOON**