

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Applications by London Ashford Airport Ltd

APP/L2250/V/10/2131934 & APP/L2250/V/10/2131936

Site at London Ashford Airport Limited, Lydd, Romney Marsh, TN29 9QL

CPRE/02/B – Tranquillity

Evidence of Behalf of CPRE Protect Kent

Regarding the effect of the proposed development on tranquillity as mapped by the Campaign to Protect Rural England in association with the Universities of Northumbria and Newcastle, published in 2006

SUMMARY

- 1.1 I am Mr Graeme Willis, Rural Policy Officer at CPRE, who has responsibility for our work on tranquillity. I have a degree in Modern Languages from Durham University and a Masters Degree in Environmental Science and Society from the University of Essex. I am the compiler of *Mapping tranquillity: a short report on the methodology*, provided in the appendices to main proof of evidence (CPRE/02/A), which is based on the full technical report prepared by Northumbria and Newcastle Universities.

2 SUMMARY

- 2.1 CPRE is primarily concerned with the protection of the quality and extent of the English countryside for the enjoyment and well-being of everyone. CPRE identifies the beauty, diversity and tranquillity of the countryside as being particularly significant qualities, valued by society. A common understanding of both beauty and diversity in the context of the countryside is well established. But although tranquillity is a familiar term, a formal understanding of its specific application to the experience of the countryside is more recent. Since the early 1990s, CPRE has led the study of tranquillity, its definition as an experiential quality in the environment and how it can be mapped accurately. Our objective, working with a range of partner organisations, has been to achieve a consensus on the substance and importance of tranquillity and to enable public policy to acknowledge it and conserve it.
- 2.2 Public attitude surveys have shown that the public value the tranquillity or 'peace and quiet' of the countryside.
- 2.3 The Civil Aviation Authority recently published its *Future Airspace Strategy (FAS) 2011 to 2030 – Draft* for formal consultation. Tranquillity is one of four environmental impacts addressed in the Strategy alongside climate change, noise and local air quality. The CAA states that:

'The impact of airspace use on tranquillity is an issue that needs to be considered in the context of the future airspace system'.¹

- 2.4 Tranquillity mapping is a well-established and credible methodology that was developed by CPRE in conjunction with the University of Northumberland, the University of Newcastle and the Countryside Agency (now Natural England). The methodology takes full account of three important factors:
- The definition of what does and does not contribute to tranquillity through extensive public and stakeholder consultation, leading to the establishment of 44 individual factors, 21 positive and 23 negative and their ranking in order of significance. This process of consultation has ensured a substantial consensus of opinion as to what does and does not constitute a tranquil experience. Seeing then Hearing low flying aircraft and Seeing then Hearing high altitude aircraft feature as the 6th, 7th, 18th and 22nd factors in those that detract from the potential to experience tranquillity;
 - The mapping of positive factors contributing to tranquillity as well as negative factors detracting from it, giving an overall understanding of tranquillity in any single 500 metre square; and
 - Detailed topography, allowing the mapping to be sensitive down to a resolution of 500 metre squares to the physical characteristics and associated positive and negative factors determining tranquillity.
- 2.5 The output from the methodology can be used by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to produce spatial maps of relative tranquillity. Places where tranquillity is most likely to be experienced are represented in green, those places least likely in red, with a continuous colour shift through yellow and orange between. The colours offer a straightforward visual interpretation of specific tranquillity scores calculated for each square from the range of factors applicable to it.
- 2.6 The methodology and outputs has been accepted, and used, by various government departments and bodies including Natural England, Defra, the Environment Agency and the Commission for Rural Communities, National Park Authorities, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and local authorities.
- 2.7 Tranquillity mapping clearly shows, using a national colour scale, that Romney Marsh is the largest relatively tranquil area in Kent and indeed in South East England. In the face of many types of development pressure, CPRE believes it is vitally important to protect the few remaining islands of high tranquillity in the South East.
- 2.8 We conclude that there is widespread and growing agreement as to the importance of tranquillity in public policy and acceptance of the value of the national tranquillity map and data. Tranquillity maps show the potential level of tranquillity which could be experienced in countryside surrounding the proposed development at London Ashford Airport and contribute to understanding the effect of such a development upon it.

¹ p.29 Civil Aviation Authority, Future Airspace Strategy 2011 to 2030 – Draft published on 1st November 2010 (<http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/2065/20101026FutureAirspaceStrategyDraftv2%20%20-%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed 9/12/2010)

- 2.9 Romney Marsh is likely to be impacted by:
- Noise, lights and visual impact of overflying aircraft approaching and leaving the airport;
 - Noise, vibration and lights from aircraft taking off and landing;
 - Noise and lights from airport operations (onsite vehicles, buildings, lighting, navigation); and
 - Noise, vibration and lights associated with increased levels of road traffic servicing and using the airport.
- 2.10 The extensive areas of higher tranquillity in Romney Marsh and in particular the Kent Downs AONB) are relatively accessible to large centres of population in the South East and, as such, represent a valuable and increasingly scarce resource. They contribute to the quality of life in a region subject to considerable development pressure and associated disturbance of the natural environment.
- 2.11 We were disappointed that applicants did not address tranquillity in their planning submission documents despite CPRE, and other parties, raising concerns about tranquillity since our first submission on the applications in the first round of consultation in 2007. The statements that have been made demonstrate both a lack of understanding of tranquillity methodology, which is not solely noise based.
- 2.12 Some other factors detract from the experience of tranquillity in the tracts of tranquil countryside we have identified, including pylons and roads. **But it is important to recognise that the reduction in the experience of tranquillity is cumulative.** Each additional detracting feature adds to the reduction in the potential to experience tranquillity. Given the value and rarity of more tranquil countryside particularly in the south east, in our judgement the incremental damage likely to be caused by the proposed development would not be in the public interest.
- 2.13 It is often noted by the supporters of airport development that modern jet airliners are considerably quieter than their predecessors. This may be true, but even at 20,000 feet a modern airliner will drown out birdsong. On landing approach or take-off, aircraft old and modern utterly destroy peace and quiet – and therefore quality of life – and can even cause structural damage to buildings through noise vibrations.
- 2.14 CPRE’s research revealed that 49% of those who visit the countryside do so in search of a tranquil environment. Based on Government data, this suggests that through rural tourism, tranquillity helps to support 186,200 jobs and 12,250 small businesses and contributes £6.76 billion a year to the UK’s economy.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 CPRE believes that:
- the experience of tranquillity in the countryside is a significant benefit to society
 - the extent and potential to experience differing degrees of tranquillity can be measured

CPRE Protect Kent: Proof of Evidence SUMMARY
CPRE/02/B – Tranquillity

- the characteristics which contribute to and detract from tranquillity are based on a strong consensus
- there is strong and influential support for the mapping of tranquillity and its protection through public policy
- the tranquillity of Romney Marsh and the Kent Downs AONB will be materially harmed by the aircraft noise, and society, well-being, the quality of the countryside, economic development and protection of the environment would all be damaged should permission for this application be granted.

3.2 We therefore ask the Inspector to recommend to the Secretary of State that the applications for the runway extension and new terminal building be refused.