

## Stansted Airport Generation 1 Inquiry

### Proof of Evidence from the Ramblers' Association

#### 1. Introduction

This evidence is presented by Philip Greswell, Countryside Secretary for Hertfordshire Area Ramblers' Association. Philip has been a resident of the area for 28 years and an active member of the Ramblers since 1979.

#### 2. The Ramblers' Association

##### a) National

The Ramblers' Association is a voluntary organisation founded in 1935 whose aims are to promote walking, to protect public rights of way, to campaign for access to open country and to defend the beauty of the countryside. All of these aims are threatened by the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport. The Association has over 137,000 members, making it the largest single organisation representing walkers in the UK.

##### b) East of England

The counties of Hertfordshire and Essex, both of which will be severely affected by the proposal, are represented by two Area Associations of the Ramblers. These in turn are made up of a combined 26 local Groups (Essex 19, Herts 7) with a total of around 10,000 members.

##### c) Approach to Aviation and Airport Expansion

The Association has a long track-record in expressing concern about the effect of airport expansion, both in terms of immediate physical impacts on the local environment and countryside, and the longer-term impacts of noise and pollution, all of which damage the walking experience. In 1985, the Association's General Council agreed:

*"That this Association welcomes the successful efforts made by members of Parliament of all political parties to dissuade the government from authorising the development of Stansted as London's third airport. It reiterates the Association's view that the large scale expansion of Stansted would have widespread and disastrous effects upon open countryside and rights of way in Essex and Hertfordshire."*

And most recently in 2003 adopted the following policy:

*This General Council is concerned at the adverse effects that major development of air transport in the UK would have on the British countryside. New or expanded*

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*airports and their associated infrastructure would damage substantial amounts of countryside in terms of visual, air and noise pollution, and would undermine efforts to develop sustainable rural tourism.*

*Council therefore ... [agrees] ... to campaign against the government's proposals for airport development outlined in the Department for Transport's national consultation "The future development of air transport in the United Kingdom". Council urges the government to manage future developments of air transport in the UK in a sustainable way and to reject the "predict and provide" approach.*

These policies are the basis for our objection to the present proposal.

### 3. Support for other Objections

We are happy to add our support to the cases made by other objecting groups, particularly Stop Stansted Expansion, residents groups and parish councils, on environmental issues, noise, quality of life and economic/tourism aspects."

### 4. Grounds for opposition

We wish to focus on the following areas identified by the inspector as relevant to the Inquiry:

*Issue 3: The effects of the proposals on the living conditions and health of residents in the area, particularly in terms of aircraft noise and air pollution;*

*Issue 4: The effects of aircraft noise on the quality of life of the area in terms of the educational, cultural and leisure activities of communities*

*Issue 6: The effects of increased air pollution from aircraft and surface traffic on nearby woodlands.*

Hertfordshire and Essex have beautiful areas of countryside providing great pleasure to those who live, walk and spend time here. The largely rural nature of the region is in danger of being lost forever if these proposals and the consequent pressure for further development go ahead. Already there is massive pressure in the East of England Plan for more housing and infrastructure, and the Stansted proposal is of course a consequence of the 2003 Aviation White paper, which also foresees expansion of airports elsewhere in the region.

Easy access to open green space is vitally important to individual and community health and wellbeing. Regular physical activity benefits both physical and mental health. According to the Department of Health, exercising regularly can reduce the risk of up to 20 chronic diseases or disorders including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. The Mental Health Foundation has concluded that exercise is at least as effective as antidepressant drugs in treating mild and moderate depression. Walking is perhaps the most sustainable form of exercise, recreation and transport possible. Ramblers' Association figures show that the popularity of recreational walking is rising, with 77% of adults or 38 million people walking for pleasure at least once a month. Walking is the most popular recreational activity being three times as popular as swimming, the second most popular. Around 7 million people walk in the

countryside every weekend, providing a significant contribution to the rural economy, £6.14 billion a year<sup>1</sup>.

Airport expansion invariably degrades the countryside and damages the walking experience. This discourages walking and recreation in the countryside, which in turn is to the detriment of the quality of life and health of the population in the region. We are aware of many members who no longer walk close to the perimeter of Stansted for these reasons. Another example in the region is at St Pauls Walden near Luton, where the spectacle of Easy Jet flights and the noise of low flying aircraft is ruining a historical and beautiful part of the County. Increased passenger numbers will of course also generate extra traffic in and around the area, from both the passengers and the staff needed to service them. This will lead to busier, noisier roads and increased parking outside the airport perimeter, with inherent danger, obstruction disturbance for walkers.

Much of the area surrounding Stansted is extremely popular with walkers, both members of the Ramblers' Association, footpath societies and the public at large. The local Ramblers walks programme, attached as appendix RA 1 / 2, shows that in the last three months alone, 15 led walks have been organised that come within the airport catchment area. Some walks starting from outside the flight path will pass under it during the walk. The Uttlesford Group is most significantly affected. These can attract an average of 20 to 30 participants each, and are promoted as a means of achieving the range of health and wellbeing benefits associated with walking detailed above.

In recent years, efforts have been stepped up to promote walking within the area, reflecting national trends. To mark the new millennium, a "Five Parishes Walk" guide was produced and distributed to everyone in the parishes of Broxton, Little Easton, Tilty, Chickney, and Great Easton. This helped local people become aware of the walks available, and has increased use of the footpaths. Local GP practices in Stansted Mountfitchet run a successful "Walking for Health" programme, consisting of short 3 mile walks for recuperating patients.

All these programmes and initiatives are under threat from the expansion proposals. Walking needs to be seen as enjoyable and accessible as possible. It is difficult to classify walks taking place under increasingly busy flightpaths as quiet or enjoyable. Walking in the countryside around Stansted is already far less pleasant than in many similar parts of the country or, as our General Council predicted in 1985, than it was before initial growth of the airport. There is no question in our minds, based on long years of experience and contact with the walking public, that this further expansion will have a severely detrimental effect to the walking environment of Hertfordshire, Essex and indeed the wider region.

This proposed expansion, to increase the number of flights per year, must be seen in the light of further development plans for the airport. Allowing this proposal will increase pressure for further buildings and second runway. In those circumstances, a large number of footpaths will have to be relocated, lost or will be so positioned that the quality of the walking will continue to deteriorate significantly. The proximity of new roads and the general despoliation of the area that follows will blight the environment with planes,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Mike Christie and Jon Matthews 2003, The Economic and Social Value of Walking in Rural England  
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runways and traffic and more housing for airport workers. All this will simply compound the problems to be expected from the current proposal.

For these reasons the Stansted expansion must be seen in the context of other regional airport developments and wider national policy. The cumulative effect of massive airport expansion throughout the South East will vastly increase noise and air pollution. Access to the countryside on foot will also be increasingly restricted. The ability to walk, and the experience of walking, in these areas will be significantly degraded. This in turn will affect government ambitions to encourage greater use of non-motorised and public transport, and to improve health and wellbeing indicators.

The Ramblers' Association therefore objects to these proposals.

APPENDIX: RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION GROUP WALKS PROGRAMMES

This sample from our most recent walks programmes demonstrates the regularity of organised recreational walks likely to be affected by the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Local Ramblers Group</b>	<b>Walk Start Point</b>
28-Jan-07	Finchley and Hornsey	Hatfield Broadoak
01-Mar-07	Royston	Clavering
01-Mar-07	West Essex	Much Hadham
14-Mar-07	West Essex	Harlow Mill
27-Mar-07	Royston	Wadesmill
27-Mar-07	Maldon and Dengie	Great Dunmow
05-Apr-07	West Essex	Takeley, Church Lane
06-Apr-07	Uttlesford	Stansted
10-Apr-07	Havering and E. London	Matching Green
11-Apr-07	West Essex	Great Dunmow
14-Apr-07	East Herts	Much Hadham
14-Apr-07	Cambridge	Stansted
15-Apr-07	Lea Valley Friends	Matching Tye
17-Apr-07	Havering and E London	Matching Green
21-Apr-07	Lee Valley Friends	Sheering
21-Apr-07	S E Essex	Matching Green
22-Apr-07	Chelmer and Blackwater	Great Dunmow
22-Apr-07	North Herts	Sawbridgeworth
23-Apr-07	Redbridge	Widford
28-Apr-07	East Herts	Little Hallingbury
28-Apr-07	Hampstead	Watton at Stone to Sawbridgeworth
28-Apr-07	Cambridge	Sawbridgeworth
28-Apr-07	North West Essex	Standon
04-May-07	Chelmer and Blackwater	Great Dunmow
05-May-07	Uttlesford	Stansted Mountfitchet
08-May-07	Brentwood	Hatfield Heat
13-May-07	East Herts	Wadesmill
13-May-07	Redbridge	Standon
23-May-07	North West Essex	Little Easton
26-May-07	Redbridge	Matching Green
26-May-07	North West Essex	Thaxted
28-May-07	Uttlesford	Little Easton
03-Jun-07	East Herts	Stansted.Castle Car park
05-Jun-07	Redbridge	Stebbing
06-Jun-07	Havering and E London	Roydon
10-Jun-07	North Herts	Ware
18-Jun-07	Royston	Duton Hill
19-Jun-07	Redbridge	Sawbridgeworth

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23-Jun-07	Hampstead	Sawbridgeworth
27-Jun-07	West Essex	Roydon
30-Jun-07	Uttlesford	The 5 parishes Millenium walk, Broxted, Little Easton, Tilty, Chickney, Gt Easton
04-Jul-07	Chelmer and Blackwater	Stansted Abbotts
06-Jul-07	West Essex	Elsenham
07-Jul-07	Redbridge	Little Hadham
10-Jul-07	Uttlesford	Great Easton
11-Jul-07	Royston	Thaxted
14-Jul-07	East Herts	Thaxted
15-Jul-07	West Essex	Eastwick
15-Jul-07	North West Essex	Gt Dunmow
17-Jul-07	Redbridge	Bishops Stortford
21-Jul-07	Lea Valley Friends	Stansted
22-Jul-07	Finchley and Hornsey	Hatfield Broad Oak
22-Jul-07	Royston	Roydon
22-Jul-07	East Herts	Roydon
05-Aug-07	Royston	Harlow
05-Aug-07	East Herts	Harlow
12-Aug-07	Finchley and Hornsey	Harlow
01-Sep-07	The Essex Hundered	110 miles a day over 9 days. Starts at Widdington, Chipping Ongar, Hatfield Heath, Mole Hill Green, Takeley
15-Sep-07	SSE	the Runway Ramble in Hatfield Forest