

28th August 2019

Dear Mr Shapps,

RE: Heathrow expansion review

I am writing to you regarding your recent announcement on an independent review into the future of HS2. While we make no comment on the merits of HS2, we feel that the same approach should also be taken on the decision to expand Heathrow Airport.

Obviously this links in with recent press reports that you are also questioning whether the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport really “stacks up” on financial grounds, and that you have made a commitment to take a “really close” look at the case for building a third runway.

As you know, Richmond Council campaigned for over a decade, along with other local authorities and organisations including Greenpeace and the Mayor of London that the case for expansion indeed does not ‘stack up’. Indeed, until recently, as you know, so has the Prime Minister, who has vowed to “lie down in front of the bulldozers”. Even the Government’s own figures failed to support economic case for expansion at Heathrow.

What is fact is that a third runway can only be built by demolishing thousands of homes and making life noisier and the air deadly for hundreds of thousands of people living in London and the Home Counties.

Large increases in road traffic both for freight and passengers is frankly inevitable, making pollution even worse and will be catastrophic for the environment.

Whilst yes, Heathrow shareholders have committed to cover the cost of the expansion, it will be for the taxpayer to stump up the currently unbudgeted costs of around £10bn for the new rail schemes and transport infrastructure needed in south and west London if the additional road traffic generated by a third runway is to be contained. Heathrow's response to this transport challenge is frankly lamentable – their talk of “sharing taxis” and “better bus routes” is like using a sticking plaster to fix a dam.

We believe that expansion would be financially catastrophic. And, before a further penny of public money is spent on this potentially disastrous project, I urge you to make good on your promise to look at the proposals and commission a similar independent review to that of HS2.

When MPs voted on the proposals they were not in receipt of the full facts. The consultation was flawed, the environmental impacts not fully explored and the real affects on our health put to one side.

There is still time to review this project before any lasting effect on our country and our environment for future generations. I have no doubt that history will judge a third runway a Heathrow as one of the environmentally damaging decisions taken in a generation. We simply mustn't let this happen on our watch.

I am happy to discuss this further. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards



Cllr Gareth Roberts
Leader of Richmond Council