

The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for Communities & Local
Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

26 May 2009

Our ref: RH/UTT/0400/08/FUL

Please ask for Cllr Jim Ketteridge on 01245 438427
email: cllrketteridge@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear Ms Blears

STANSTED G2 PUBLIC INQUIRY

I am writing as Leader of the local planning authority further to Cllr John Jowers letter of the 14 April on behalf of the Councils: Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils and Uttlesford and East Herts District Councils, You now have received a letter of 20 May from BAA regarding the potential start date of the intended Stansted G2 Public Inquiry. This letter was not copied to us - despite our role in any Inquiry - but we wish to comment briefly on its contents.

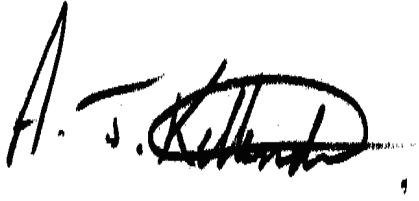
Our April letter set out our position and this has not changed. Indeed it has been strengthened by BAA's response to the Competition Commission. Put simply, in our view, to go ahead with the Inquiry under the present circumstances would be a waste of public money at this most difficult of periods for public bodies. The changed circumstances since the application was called in and the financial and other uncertainties facing the industry, to which the BAA appeal has only added, together mean that an Inquiry at this time would achieve very little or nothing.

We will not repeat the issues set out in our previous letter. The future ownership of Stansted remains uncertain and will be so until the final result of BAA's Competition Appeal Tribunal (CAT) is known. In the light of this uncertainty BAA should withdraw this application and leave it to whoever is the final owner to submit a fresh one for the development they wish to implement. In our view, the concept of suspending the planning process for a lengthy period for a project such as G2 is highly unsatisfactory, as, with the passage of time, a very large proportion of the supporting material and Environmental Statement becomes out of date and unreliable. Additionally, uncertainty for those affected by the proposal becomes even more acute.

However, it is, in the Councils' view, essential that no Inquiry should be held until it is clear that any prospective owner of the airport is both willing and in a position to implement the decision should permission be granted. This cannot be clear at least until the CAT process is completed and to proceed otherwise would lead to a serious waste of public resources. It would seem inevitable that there would need to be a further application and inquiry (including compulsory purchase procedures) at some time in the future.

The best way forward would be for BAA to withdraw this application, but they have chosen not to do so to date. We appreciate that this leaves you in a difficult position as the Minister responsible for local government and its prudent use of public resources in that you may consider you are not able to cancel the Inquiry outright. If that is the case, the Councils would respectfully suggest any choice of start date for an Inquiry should be left until the result of the CAT process is known and all the parties have the opportunity to consider the implications of its outcome.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Ketteridge', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Ketteridge
Leader, Uttlesford District Council

c.c. Andrew Philipson, Carmel Edwards Planning Inspectorate
c.c. Alistair McDermid, Planning Director BAA
c.c. Nabarro (SACC)
c.c. Carol Barbone (SSE)
c.c. John Jowers, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Localism and Planning
c.c. Derrick Ashley, Hertfordshire County Council, Executive Member Planning, External Relations & Waste
c.c. Mike Carver, East Herts Council, Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport.