

The Knowle Society Response to the Birmingham International Airport's Draft Master Plan: Towards 2030

The Knowle Society is a voluntary organisation open to all residents of Knowle and district, established to maintain the character of the village and to preserve the quality of life of its inhabitants. The Society comprises 21% of the local electorate.

The Knowle Society Response reflects the views of the members of the Knowle Society, most of whom live in Knowle. There is no attempt to speak, other than on behalf of Knowle. The views have been gathered from an extensive consultation process, including a public meeting, in Knowle, addressed by the Managing Director of Birmingham International Airport. A questionnaire was circulated after that meeting and the results were reported to a further meeting of the Society, for comment. A number of non-members have also expressed their views, which synchronise closely with those expressed by Society members.

The Response focuses on the proposal to extend the present runway, but the comments refer equally to a second runway. There is mixed reaction to an extension because the figures on which its need is based are projections, which may or may not materialise. There is resigned acceptance of an extension being built, but overwhelming opposition to a second runway, because the case has not been convincingly made.

Whatever development takes place, there is an urgent need for a powerful co-ordinating authority to ensure that all agencies involved, airport, road and rail, produce and deliver a coherent plan to meet all needs that will arise. Further, much work needs to be done to protect the environment, both natural and built, from adverse effects.

Detailed results of our consultations have been summarised into categories, for ease of use.

Surface Access

Future road problems cause the greatest concern to residents. Congestion on the M42, now, leads to flow back on Knowle roads. The consequences of a far greater number of road users arriving at and departing from the Airport, without major road developments, can only mean greater congestion, pollution and inconvenience on Knowle roads.

The Society believes that the target of 25% of air travellers using public transport is too low and needs to be raised and delivered. The Airport's planning application must include adequate provision for public transport.

Above all, the Surface Access issue requires a robust, co-ordinated and viable plan for an infrastructure strategy.

Noise

It is felt that noise contour maps do not reflect the true impact upon residents. Actual high noise, above the average, causes more disturbance and it is feared that the number of high noise events will increase with the increase in the number of Air Traffic Movements.

Knowle is already affected by noise from Take Offs to the north as well as to the south and from the engine testing area. Permanent noise monitoring in Knowle, as promised, to detect this, is expected.

We look to the Airport to introduce more noise mitigation measures including more acoustic barriers, narrowing the noise preferential route bands and raising the minimum height for overflying the residential areas.

Residents are also concerned about night flights and would expect the present strict control on night movements to be maintained.

Performance

We expect BIA to hold carriers responsible for the delivery of their targets in areas such as aircraft noise, exhaust emissions and other pollution. We expect the Planning Authority to set clear, unambiguous and transparent targets for BIA. The targets should show continuous improvement and breaches should be meaningfully penalised.

Financial

Elected representatives should regularly review and challenge the business plan to ensure that the level of development is both necessary and achievable.

If a genuine economic benefit accrues to the region, Knowle would expect to be among the beneficiaries.

Safety

It is recognised that the proposals for the expansion of Coventry Airport are still unresolved, but there is an underlying concern for safety where two airports, close to each other, are apparently indulging in uncontrolled competition.

Summary

All the comments from the members of the Knowle Society point to one thing, concern for the quality of life in this area. Greater noise, congestion and pollution from all sources will diminish the quality of life and the environment in which we live. We look to the Airport to minimise this by sound planning, regular monitoring of noise, air quality and congestion levels. Adequate measures must be put in place to prevent disturbance by strict routing of flights, provision of acoustic barriers, as appropriate, and adequate surface access.