

FARMBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Response to Planning Application 26/P/0686/OU2

Application: 26/P/0686/OU2

Site: Bristol Airport, North Side Road, Felton, Wrington, BS48 3DY

Proposal: Hybrid planning application (full and outline elements) with Environmental Statement for the expansion of Bristol Airport to enable a throughput of 15 million passengers per annum, operating within a rolling 12-month cap of 99,931 air transport movements and 4,974 night flights between 23:30 and 06:00.

Applicant: Bristol Airport Limited

To: Development Management, North Somerset Council

From: Farmborough Parish Council

Recommendation: Farmborough Parish Council **OBJECTS** to this application and recommends refusal, for the reasons set out below.

1. Introduction and Basis of the Council's Interest

Although Farmborough lies within Bath and North East Somerset rather than North Somerset, and the application site itself lies wholly outside our parish boundary, Farmborough Parish Council is directly and materially affected by this proposal and considers it has legitimate grounds to comment. Our village sits on one of the principal eastern approach routes used by airport traffic from Bath and the surrounding area, and our residents already experience the cumulative effects of the airport's growth. B&NES Council's own consultation response to this application identifies the A37, A39 and A368 as routes which "pass through or close to villages of Clutton, Farmborough and Chelwood" and "form part of the eastern approach routes to the airport for passengers travelling from Bath and the south." Farmborough Parish Council endorses and relies on that finding.

Farmborough Parish Council notes that a number of Parish and Town Councils bordering the airport – including Timsbury, Chew Magna, Compton Martin, East Harptree, Stowey Sutton, Corston and Saltford – have objected to this application, several as members of the Parish Councils' Airport Association (PCAA). Farmborough Parish Council associates itself with the concerns raised in those submissions and in the PCAA's detailed objection, and sets out below the points of particular relevance to our own community.

2. Traffic through Farmborough

Farmborough already carries a share of the airport-related traffic that approaches from Bath and the villages to the east and south, along the A37/A39/A368 corridor identified in B&NES Council's own response. An increase in passenger numbers of 25% (12mppa to 15mppa), and the accompanying growth in car parking provision (an additional c.5,000–6,300 spaces across the various assessments), can be expected to increase this traffic further, not reduce it.

Chew Magna Parish Council's submission notes that sat-navs already direct drivers from the A37 onto minor B-roads to reach the airport, and describes the resulting congestion on routes of this kind as commonplace even at current passenger volumes. Farmborough Parish Council considers the same pattern applies, or risks applying with growth, to routes through Farmborough. North Somerset Council is asked to require the Transport Assessment to be updated to properly model diversion and "rat-running" onto roads in B&NES, including through Farmborough, Clutton and Chelwood, rather than treating impacts as confined to the immediate vicinity of the airport and the A38 corridor alone.

Farmborough Parish Council also notes B&NES Council's own highway authority comments, which record that the Transport Assessment's public transport mode-share table shows a comparatively higher assumed public transport uptake from B&NES than from more distant origins such as Wiltshire or the Mendips – meaning the model itself does not assume our area is car-dependent, yet no meaningful public transport alternative to reach the airport exists for Farmborough residents. This gap between assumption and reality should be resolved before, not after, further passenger growth is permitted.

This engages NPPF paragraph 115, under which development should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe; Farmborough Parish Council considers that an inadequately assessed evidence base prevents this test from being properly applied, and asks that it be revisited before determination.

3. Lack of local public transport to the airport

There is no direct public transport connection between Farmborough and Bristol Airport. As with Chew Magna, the only realistic means of travel is by private car or taxi. The Airport Surface Access Strategy's reliance on a “monitor and manage” approach to public transport delivery, rather than firm and funded commitments ahead of consent, offers our residents no confidence that this will change. Farmborough Parish Council asks that any further growth in passenger numbers be conditional on demonstrable, funded public transport connectivity for outlying communities such as ours, not deferred to a review process running to 2038.

4. Increase in flights and night-time noise disturbance

The application proposes to increase the annual cap on night flights (23:30–06:00) from 4,000 to 4,974 – a 24% increase – alongside a wider increase in daytime movements. Persistent aviation noise, and night noise in particular, is widely recognised as a cause of sleep disruption and stress, and several neighbouring councils (Timsbury, Chew Magna, Compton Martin, Saltford) have raised the same concern in their own submissions.

Farmborough Parish Council notes the pattern, highlighted by Compton Martin and Chew Magna Parish Councils, of a steep and continuing rise in “dispensations” for late-running flights outside the formal night quota – from 43 in 2019 to 863 in 2025 – and supports calls made by those councils for delayed flights to be counted within the night quota rather than treated as exempt. North Somerset Council is asked to consider a condition to this effect.

Farmborough Parish Council has reviewed Bristol Airport's own published track data – “Living near the airport: Where aircraft fly” (January 2025 edition, based on August 2024 movements, the airport's most recent published track-keeping information) – which shows Farmborough sitting within the curved turning arc followed by Runway 27 arrivals as they approach from the east, swing south past Marksbury, Timsbury and Paulton, and loop back to align with the runway centreline, and close to the EXMOR1Z Noise Preferential Route sector used by Runway 09 departures heading east and southeast. On this evidence, a single aircraft movement on the curved arrival track can pass close to or over Farmborough twice in the course of one continuous manoeuvre – once on the outward part of the turn and once as it loops back. This means a straightforward count of annual air transport movements may understate the number of individual noise events actually experienced on the ground in a village positioned within a turning arc of this kind, compared with a village under a straight-line approach or departure track. North Somerset Council is asked to have this checked by its own noise consultants against the airport's Noise and Track-Keeping System data, and, if confirmed, to ensure it is properly reflected in any noise assessment relied upon in determining this application.

5. Larger aircraft

The application accompanies its passenger growth with an increase in the proportion of larger aircraft using the airport, including via the proposed 170m runway extension to accommodate longer-haul

services. Compton Martin and Chew Magna Parish Councils' submissions note that, notwithstanding the airport's claims about fleet modernisation, the 2025 Annual Monitoring Report records that only 35.3% of movements currently use modern, quieter aircraft, and that the absolute number of older, noisier aircraft movements would rise by around 6,000 per annum under the 15mppa proposal. Larger aircraft flying lower on approach, as several submissions describe, will be more perceptible to residents than the current mix, including in areas some distance from the airport boundary.

6. Air pollution – aircraft and traffic

Increased aircraft movements and the associated growth in surface traffic will increase emissions of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter along routes used to access the airport, including through Farmborough. B&NES Council's own response notes that its emerging local air quality targets for these pollutants are more ambitious than current Government objectives, and specifically raises concern that the application does not address potential air quality impacts within the Temple Cloud Air Quality Management Area arising from additional traffic passing through B&NES. Farmborough Parish Council asks that any assessment of traffic-related air quality impacts be extended to cover the eastern approach routes through Farmborough and neighbouring villages, not solely the B3130 corridor around Chew Magna.

7. Overspill and holiday parking in the village

Several submissions (Chew Magna, Compton Martin) describe the growth of unauthorised, off-site airport parking in villages and on rural land as passenger numbers rise, driven in part by the current enforcement mechanism of removing on-site parking spaces when public transport targets are missed – which simply displaces demand rather than reducing it. Farmborough Parish Council asks North Somerset Council to secure, by planning condition or Section 106 agreement, funded enforcement against unauthorised off-site parking that extends to affected areas of B&NES, including Farmborough, and to reconsider an enforcement mechanism tied to air transport movements rather than car parking numbers, as proposed by Stowey Sutton and Compton Martin Parish Councils.

8. Health impacts

Farmborough Parish Council supports the calls made by Compton Martin, Chew Magna, Stowey Sutton and the PCAA for a stand-alone Health Impact Assessment, noting that none was carried out for the previous increase to 12mppa despite the proposed growth representing a further substantial uplift in noise, traffic and air quality impacts. The PCAA's submission cites independent evidence questioning whether ultrafine particle emissions from aircraft have been adequately assessed, and the Government's own May 2026 report on the impacts of airports on local residents, which links aviation noise to reduced reading ability in children at schools under flight paths. Farmborough Parish Council considers these matters directly relevant to the health of our residents, given our position on the approach corridor, and asks that any Health Impact Assessment cover communities in B&NES on the eastern approach, not solely those immediately around the airport.

9. Questioning the economic case

The applicant places significant weight on the economic benefits of expansion, including additional employment and Gross Value Added. However, the PCAA's independent economic review (prepared by the New Economics Foundation) questions this case on the basis that approximately 75% of Bristol Airport's passengers are outbound leisure travellers, and that the assessment largely excludes the economic effect of outbound tourism – spending that leaves the region and, in the Foundation's assessment, may increase economic leakage from the South West rather than generate genuine local benefit. The same report notes evidence of a sustained decline in the region's domestic tourism economy over recent years.

Farmborough Parish Council considers this a material point for an area such as ours, where the local and sub-regional economy – including Bath's – depends significantly on inbound tourism. If a large

proportion of additional passenger growth represents local residents travelling abroad rather than visitors travelling in, the net economic effect for Bath and the surrounding area is considerably less certain than the application suggests, and could plausibly be negative once displaced spending in local tourism, hospitality and retail is accounted for. North Somerset Council is asked to test the applicant's economic case against this evidence before affording it significant weight in the planning balance, consistent with the PCAA's conclusion that the claimed economic benefits should be treated with caution and given only moderate weight.

10. Felton Common – use of protected common land

Farmborough Parish Council wishes to record its solidarity with Felton Parish Council and neighbouring communities over the proposed use of Felton Common – registered common land – for airport approach lighting infrastructure. Absent agreement with Felton Parish Council, the applicant intends to rely on compulsory purchase powers to secure this land. Farmborough Parish Council shares the concern raised by the PCAA, Avon Wildlife Trust, Chew Magna and Corston Parish Councils that permanent commercial airport infrastructure on protected common land – secured, if necessary, through compulsory acquisition against the wishes of the community that holds rights over it – sits uneasily with the protections the Commons Act 2006 exists to provide, and risks setting a precedent whereby common land can be appropriated for private commercial gain wherever an applicant considers it operationally convenient.

The ecological dimension is equally serious: Felton Common lies within the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation, and Avon Wildlife Trust's objection states that the lighting proposal was not part of the original masterplan and raises unresolved questions about mitigation for the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bat populations that rely on the Common as dark foraging habitat. This engages NPPF paragraph 195 (Habitats Regulations) and paragraph 198 (light pollution and dark skies).

11. Positives, for balance

In the interests of a fair and balanced response, Farmborough Parish Council recognises the following in the applicant's favour:

- Bristol Airport is a significant regional employer and a piece of nationally important transport infrastructure, and national aviation policy supports making best use of existing runway capacity.
- The application includes some embedded transport mitigation, including a new bus lane and junction improvements on the A38, and a stated intention to pursue a mass transit link to the airport.
- The applicant has proposed noise contour caps intended to hold ground noise footprint broadly stable at the 57dB daytime and 55dB night-time contour, notwithstanding the increase in movements.
- The Airport has, to date, made some financial contribution toward off-site parking enforcement, albeit without the certainty of a Section 106 agreement.

Farmborough Parish Council considers that these benefits, while real, do not outweigh the cumulative harm to communities such as ours on the eastern approach corridor, for the reasons set out above and in the fuller evidence submitted by the PCAA and neighbouring Parish Councils.

12. Relevant policy

Farmborough Parish Council asks North Somerset Council to have regard, in particular, to the following in determining this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework: paragraph 11(d)(i) and footnote 7 (presumption in favour of sustainable development disappplied where designated sites, including the SAC and Green Belt,

are engaged); paragraph 115 (severe residual cumulative transport impacts); paragraph 195 (Habitats Regulations); paragraph 198 (light pollution, dark skies and nature conservation); and the Framework's provisions on noise and air quality.

- North Somerset Core Strategy: Policy CS6 (Green Belt), Policy CS23 (Bristol Airport, requiring environmental impacts on surrounding communities and surface access to be satisfactorily addressed).
- Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Policy DM11 (Mendip Hills National Landscape), Policy DM12 (Green Belt development), Policy DM24 (safety, traffic and sustainable transport), Policy DM31 (air safety) and Policy DM50 (Bristol Airport).
- West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (2020–2036), which places significant emphasis on modal shift away from private car use for major trip-generating development.
- B&NES Council's own Climate Emergency (2019) and Ecological Emergency (2020) declarations, and its cross-party resolutions opposing airport expansion in 2019, 2022 and March 2025 – the formally adopted position of our own local authority.

13. Conclusion

Farmborough Parish Council objects to planning application 26/P/0686/OU2. For our village, the case against this application rests principally on the combined effect of increased traffic along the A37/A39/A368 corridor, the continued absence of any public transport alternative to reach the airport, and the additional noise our residents can expect to experience – not only from the wider increase in flights, but from Farmborough's position within the turning arc used by Runway 27 arrivals and close to the EXMOR1Z departure route, which on the evidence set out in Section 4 may expose the village to noise events more frequently than a simple movements count would suggest. These impacts fall on our community whether or not Farmborough is treated as a directly consulted party, and Farmborough Parish Council asks that they be given full and explicit consideration in North Somerset Council's assessment, rather than folded into a general assessment of the wider B&NES area.

Farmborough Parish Council also shares the wider concerns raised by neighbouring Parish Councils and the PCAA regarding air quality, health, the ecological impact at Felton Common, and the unresolved economic case for the expansion, and asks that these be given appropriate weight in the overall planning balance.

Farmborough Parish Council asks North Somerset Council to refuse the application. Should North Somerset Council nonetheless be minded to grant permission, Farmborough Parish Council asks that the conditions and Section 106 obligations identified by the PCAA and neighbouring Parish Councils be secured, and in particular that traffic monitoring, public transport provision, off-site parking enforcement and noise mitigation be extended explicitly to cover the eastern approach corridor through Farmborough, rather than being confined to the immediate vicinity of the airport.

Adopted at the September 2026 meeting by Farmborough Parish Council.

Signed: Debbie Tutchell (Clerk)

On behalf of Farmborough Parish Council

Date: 8 September 2026