

CHOLESBURY-CUM-ST LEONARDS PARISH COUNCIL

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Mr Stephen Braund
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Dear Mr Braund

NOISE POLICY CONSULTATION

Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Chiltern District's draft Noise Policy.

As you may be aware, this parish comprises four small villages set within the rural area to the north of Chesham. It comprises some 400 households, home to nearly 1000 residents, of whom 20% are under 16 and another 20% are over retirement age. Like much of the Chiltern District it lies wholly within the Chilterns Area of Natural Beauty. In contrast to other parts of the District though, and with specific relevance to the impact of noise, the parish is located between 230-260m above sea level and close to the highest point of the Chiltern Hills. As well as residents, the area is also popular with those from further afield who visit the area for recreational purposes and enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of this part of the Chilterns.

Specific noise issues: The parish is beneath the flight paths of aircraft approaching and leaving Luton Airport which is 25km to the southwest. Aircraft using the Bovingdon Stack on their approach to London Heathrow are also noticeable overhead. At its closest the parish is around 3km from the proposed route of High Speed 2 and there is concern that this will cause an increase to the level of background noise.

We are surprised and disappointed to find no mention throughout the policy of The Chiltern Area of Outstanding National Beauty, despite the fact that aside from urban areas, the AONB covers the whole of the District. Though Section 7 deals specifically with 'Quiet and Tranquil Areas' it fails to make any reference to the principle aim, of the AONB underpinned by statute, namely 'to meet the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside'. We would expect the District Council as a partner authority of the Chiltern Conservation Board to explicitly demonstrate within its Noise Policy, a commitment to work with the AONBs in supporting the achievement of this aim. We would also encourage the policy be reviewed to identify how the District's policy could be enhanced so that it is in line with those of the Conservation Board.

It is well-established that within a rural setting, one characterised by its open setting and historically with a low level of background noise, that disturbance caused by over flying aircraft can be all the more intrusive. Given the elevation of the Chilterns and the predominance of flight paths over the Chilterns, aircraft noise is a matter of continued concern for residents. Furthermore, recently published plans relating to Luton Airport indicate a range of proposals that could result in increases to overall levels of over-flying aircraft, to relaxation in policies relating to night flying, and rerouting and lowering of flight paths over the Chilterns. We have been advised the District Council failed to respond to at least one of these recent consultations which draws attention to a deficiency in the proposed noise policy which we recommend should include a section on responding to national and regional consultations alongside developing a more active dialogue with the airport authorities.

Yours sincerely,

S H Bell
Clerk to the Council
8th October 2012