

MPs urged to put health before wealth as latest air quality evidence proves expansion would be a disaster

Local authority leaders opposed to Heathrow Airport expansion comment on the joint report published today.

Local authority leaders opposed to Heathrow expansion say that it would be reckless for ministers to go ahead with plans for a third runway following publication of a new parliamentary report calling for a step change in government policy on air quality.

The joint report published today by four parliamentary select committees says that the current legislative framework is not doing enough to protect public health from the consequences of poor air quality. It calls for a new regulatory body and a commitment to new standards which are at least as high as equivalent standards in the EU.

The report says successive governments have been slow to take action on air pollution even when confronted with legal proceedings at the EU and UK level.

Cllr Paul Hodgins, Leader of Richmond Council, said: "Heathrow Airport already exceeds legal air quality limits. Expansion will further pollute the environment and damage the health of a huge number of West London residents.

"I say to Heathrow - tackle current air quality limits rather than steam roll ahead with a proposal that will only make matters worse.

"When making the final decision later this year, I hope that MPs put the health of our residents ahead of the wealth of Heathrow owners."

Cllr Ravi Govindia, Leader of Wandsworth Council, said: "As local authorities we have a primary duty to protect the health of our residents. We have

told ministers repeatedly that a third runway is undeliverable on air quality grounds.

"It would be reckless for ministers to blindly press ahead with expansion when the evidence plainly shows it will make air quality worse.

"They should be tackling the ill health consequences of poor air quality by introducing tougher post EU standards. If ministers continue to back expansion in the light of this report they will be gambling with people's health.

"We don't expect Heathrow's shareholders to put the health consequences of expansion first - we do expect this from our elected representatives."

Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "The government cannot continue to put our residents' health at risk by refusing to address air quality. By promoting the expansion of Heathrow Airport they are knowingly increasing pollution over thousands of people. It is completely irresponsible to go ahead with an expanded Heathrow, which will not only exceed the legal air quality limits it will also obliterate any improvements to pollution that local authorities are trying to achieve for their residents.

"A third runway will be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of people in London, and it's time that the government finally starts to listen."

Cllr Simon Dudley, Leader of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, said: "An expanded Heathrow would have a drastic impact on air quality and our residents' lives.

"The airport is already failing to meet its air quality targets and increasing the number of flights will only make this problem worse.

"This report is more proof that a third runway at Heathrow is not a good idea. The airport is simply not the right place for expansion."

