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Committee

With much regret we report the resignation from our Committee for personal reasons of Miss M.D. Corlett and Mrs. P. Hammond. Both will be greatly missed. Miss Corlett has for several years been very active in matters concerning the far north of our area, whilst Mrs. Hammond played a very major part in identification and registration of public footpaths and bridle paths throughout our area. We are very grateful to them both for their past services and for their offering to help with specific items in the future.

Aircraft Noise

The increase in noise from aircraft since the new Beacon was introduced last July has been given much attention. We were fortunate in getting Mr. Ronald Bell, Q.C., M.P., to report to our AGM in October about his efforts on our behalf. He said that the Minister, Mr. Cranley Onslow has suggested that a meeting be arranged with Mr. Bell in the chair at which a panel of experts could explain the official policy and be questioned by the public. This would enable us to determine facts on which to base a submission which he felt we should make to the Noise Advisory Council (N.A.C.). The AGM agreed that this meeting should be held.

It was arranged in co-operation with the 21st July Action Group and took place in the Hall of St. Nicholas' School, Taplow, on 16th January 1973. It was crowded and vigorous but controlled; it was well reported by the local press, which estimated the audience at 300.

Background to the present policy:

The meeting discussed the policy for routing aircraft departures which was introduced on 21st July 1972 when the new Beacon near Marsh Lane came into operation. This confines aircraft flying West from Heathrow to a narrow route between Slough and Windsor which swings North-West over Taplow. Before 21st July 1972 they followed a wider spread of paths and turned North-West a little earlier.

This new route is an example of what is called a "Minimum Noise Route" (MNR) in spite of the aircraft being concentrated into it. This concentration is justified on the basis of a social survey carried out around Heathrow in 1961. It was claimed that analysis of the results obtained from this survey showed that annoyance due to aircraft is related to the logarithm of their frequency, so that an increase in the number of aircraft per day from 1 to 4 would cause the same increase in annoyance as would an increase from 20 to 80, or even from 80 to 320. For an average case this might be a doubling of annoyance. If, however, the same aircraft were spread over four tracks the number of people affected would be quadrupled. It was claimed that this increase in the number of people affected would be worse than doubling the annoyance of those under the original track, particularly if it lay over a sparsely populated rural area between towns. It was admitted that ethically this is unfair to those who suffer, but it was claimed that the reduction in total disturbance outweighed this disadvantage.

However, this theory of the logarithmic relation between number and annoyance has been subject to increasing attack. It has been claimed that the questions used in the survey were biased against the number of aircraft. The same questions were indeed used in a second survey published in 1971 which led to the remarkable result that the number of aircraft had little effect on annoyance. Thorough analysis of the 1961 results had shown a higher dependence of annoyance on number than was originally suggested.

The theory makes no allowance for the qualitative difference between the effects of increasing an extremely intense annoyance (e.g. 80 per day to 320 per day) and a very small one (e.g. 1 per day to 4 per day). Indeed, it may be that a frequency of less than one plane an hour would hardly be noticed, particularly if they flew at a height of 3000 ft., such as is supposed to be observed over Taplow. Perhaps the most striking omission, however, was the simple fact that a given noise causes

much more annoyance in a quiet area than in a noisy one. And the rural areas between towns into which the MNR's are to be forced are - otherwise - the quiet ones. No allowance for this is made in the case of MNR's.

Discussion at the Meeting

The panel consisted of a representative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), another of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and two pilots representing the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA).

The representatives of the DTI and the CAA said that the MNRs were introduced for amenity reasons only and not for safety or operational convenience. They were an experiment intended to reduce disturbance, which clearly had failed. But, unfortunately, nothing better had been suggested. Both pilots said that BALPA preferred a policy of dispersion.

It was reported that the Minister had asked the Noise Advisory Council, which originally advised the adoption of MNRs, to reconsider this policy. The Council had set up a working group to do this, which would receive written evidence and might receive oral evidence also. The chairman of this working group was present at the meeting.

The meeting unanimously resolved :-

"This meeting rejects the policy of Minimum Noise Routes as unfair to the village Communities and demands that in its place a policy of dispersal be adopted."

Submission by the HTPS to the NAC

In the light of the discussion at this meeting, your Committee has made a written submission to the NAC and has offered to give oral evidence.

Our submission covers the following points:

1. The new route was introduced as an experiment in the hope of reducing disturbance. The great increase in complaints has shown that the experiment has failed.
2. When the new route was introduced it was taken further West than the old one in the belief that fewer people lived in the area around Taplow. Study of the population under the new route has shown that as many people are now affected as if it had not been moved West. The area round Taplow is quiet, so that the disturbance caused to individual inhabitants has been increased without reducing their number. (Note: These studies were made by Mr. T. A. Field)
3. Since the policy of concentration has failed, the routes should be spread at least as widely as was the case before July 1972.
4. Aircraft with destinations across the North Sea should no longer be diverted as far West as Taplow.
5. The use of the name "Minimum Noise Route" is gravely misleading, and the policy of annoying a few grievously, rather than many slightly, is unjust and cannot be seen to be otherwise. Both should cease.
6. BALPA have previously made detailed recommendations for a policy of dispersal. These should be reconsidered.
7. Arriving aircraft are already widely spread and this should continue.

## Planning Matters

### Current Items Reported Previously

#### Taplow House

The previous applications for demolishing Taplow House and erecting 24 flats has been replaced by one for 18 flats on the present site of the house. Your Committee feels that this plan, like the previous one, would leave the garden open for further development later, and considers that Taplow has sufficient flats already, but needs more somewhat larger houses. A letter urging that any development here should take the form of detached houses in their own gardens has been sent to the ERDC.

#### Traffic on Berry Hill

As a result of our letter to the Taplow Parish Council asking if some of the heavy traffic now passing up Berry Hill and Hedsor Hill could be diverted to the new Marlow By-Pass, the Clerk wrote to the Bucks County Highways and Bridges Department. They replied that it was premature to consider diversion until the traffic can be more easily identified. We will raise the matter again.

#### Skindles Hotel

Applications have been submitted -

- a) For residential development of land West and North of Landsdown House, Bath Road, and North of Skindles Garage;
- b) For the building of a restaurant/public house on the site of the Orkney Arms and the Sir Percy Flanagan, previously demolished to make way for an extension of the Hotel;
- c) For the demolition of the hotel and its replacement by ten town houses.

Two applications were made for the residential development ('a' above). The first involved building at a density of 90 rooms per acre, and has been rejected by the ERDC; the second was for twenty detached houses in all. Both involve building on Green Belt land. It was felt that the area had been improved by the demolition of the old public houses and that any replacement for them ('b' above) should be on the present site of the hotel. The houses proposed under 'c' above were considered to be too high and to involve unduly dense development.

A letter opposing all three applications was therefore submitted to the ERDC. Also, the Penn Country Branch of the CPRE have written opposing the intrusion into the Green Belt involved in the proposed housing development ('a').

### New Items

#### Green Belt

It has now been confirmed that the Green Belt extends up to the Thames along our boundary.

#### Conservation Areas

Your Committee's proposal that the area from Hitcham Road to the Gore should be declared a Conservation Area was passed by the Clerk of Burnham Parish Council to the County Planning Department. After inspecting the area they expressed the view that the conditions had not been fulfilled, but said that the area would be put on a list of proposed Conservation Areas to which special attention would be given. There is, however, a possibility that the area around Taplow Village Green might qualify; this is being pursued.

#### Saw Mills, Heathfield Road

An order was served on the occupants in 1970 to desist in their industrial use of the premises within three years. They applied last Autumn for permission to convert part of the property as offices and workshops. Your Committee objected to this proposal on the grounds that this was little different from the prescribed industrial use and that any commercial activity in this rural area was undesirable. The ERDC have refused the application.

Dropmore Lodge, Heathfield Road

A proposal to demolish this Lodge and erect a larger modern house instead was submitted to the Wycombe R.D.C., in whose area this part of Heathfield Road falls. This Lodge lies on the corner of the private road to Cadbrook, and though it may not have great architectural merit, it blends well with its surroundings. It was felt that any new building would be an intrusion into this pleasantly wooded rural area and might be a precedent for further building. A letter was therefore sent opposing the application. The Penn Country Branch of the CPRE also wrote opposing it.

Path from Mill Lane to Taplow Court

In an attempt to reduce damage by vandals, Messrs. Plessey who own Taplow Court have placed a door at the entrance to the path from Mill Lane and a notice indicating that it is private. Historical studies by Mrs. R. Ibbetson have shown that the path could be closed by the owners as a result of a decision of the Magistrates in 1853. However, Members have reported that their families have used it more or less continuously since then; an approach has therefore been made to Messrs. Plessey to alter their notice to indicate that the path may be used for walks to and from Bapsey Pond and Taplow Court.

Barn behind Hillmead, Boundary Road

A proposal to demolish this barn and erect a dwelling house in its place was opposed on the grounds that it lay in the Green Belt, in which agricultural buildings may be converted for other uses only in very special cases. The application has been rejected by the ERDC.

Land between Penwortham and Westalls, Taplow Common Road

A proposal to erect a dwelling house was opposed since this land lies in the Green Belt. It has been rejected by the ERDC.

Land East of Existing Houses, Station Road, Taplow

A proposal for a bungalow here was also opposed because it lies in the Green Belt. It was rejected by the ERDC.

Warehouse and Packing Facilities, Lake End Road

A proposal for building South of the premises of Messrs. Neville & Griffin was opposed because the land lies on the Green Belt, and has been rejected by the ERDC.