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The Reader: London City Airport has to shut down, not expand

The Evening Standard

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While we might debate the tactics of protesters, one thing is certain: London City Airport's expansion is bad for the environment. What started as a small, specialist business service for about 100,000 travellers a year has spun out of control to more than 4.5 million passengers a year. Now it wants to raise capacity, adding another one and a half million.

The PR images for the expansion are disingenuous. Those white blocks around the airport aren't warehouses, they are our homes. The few green spaces nearby have nothing to do with the airport. The airport's thirst for profits, siphoned off by its foreign investment conglomerate owners, seems unquenchable. We need space for housing and local businesses, not global airlines. We need schools, medical facilities, and community infrastructure. What good is an airport when your area has no bank or post office, and you need to walk 15 minutes to buy a pint of milk?

London City Airport was never intended to grow to this scale. A sensible way forward would be a new airport outside London, away from residential areas, linked by public transport. It is high time we thought about shutting this airport down.

Dr Peter Vlachos

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Editor's reply

Dear Peter

I'm afraid I disagree — London City has brought jobs, business and blissfully short waiting times. I'd climb on a plane to save it.

No doubt the local area needs amenities but these must be paid for. Closing the airport and waving farewell to its £2million a year in business rates would hardly help. Ditto halting expansion that will nearly double its 2,200 workforce. Yes, the airport seeks to make profits and pay some dividends to shareholders but those are the pension funds of Canadian teachers and public-sector workers. Not the shady ne'er-dowells you imply.

Air travel may cause two per cent of greenhouse gas emissions but shutting airports is no answer. A carbon offset levy on air fares and subsidies for trains would be a start.

Jim Armitage, City Editor