



Air Traffic Committee Comments – Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Proposal

This submission is made by Speldhurst Parish Council representing the more than 5000 residents of our four villages and the businesses in those villages. We have been vocal over many years with Gatwick and with CAA over the detrimental impact on our parish of concentrated aircraft noise. These proposals would exacerbate that already unacceptable noise level. This is far more than just “moving a runway 12m sideways”! It is a multi-billion pound programme to expand taxiways, terminals, piers, hangers, hotels, offices, water treatment, flood works, parking and much more. Together this would result in a massive increase in airport operations to enable a huge increase in flights. As we have stated in response to Gatwick’s earlier consultation on the Northern (Emergency) Runway we believe the expansion plans presented would have devastating consequences for local communities and people under flight paths. All of our comments made in that 2021 consultation remain valid.

Following a detailed and comprehensive review about the location of one additional runway in the South of England, finalised in 2015 the Government decided to approve a third runway at Heathrow. Gatwick’s submission for an additional runway was rejected. Nothing has changed except that the expected growth in air traffic has been deferred by the impacts of the Covid pandemic. As a result the request by Gatwick to build an additional runway (and that is what this is) should be rejected as inconsistent with that Government mandate.

Notwithstanding the above there are various direct factors which must be addressed in the event of any development at Gatwick:

Noise

Expansion of Gatwick would significantly increase aircraft noise for those further away under flight paths which will include our parish. The noise envelopes Gatwick has proposed are not consistent with government policy and CAA guidance and are wholly one-sided. They should be substantially revised.

The Environment

It remains relevant and appropriate to consider the serious implications for the local tourism economy affected by the proposed expansion. Gatwick Airport is situated within an area valued for its unparalleled historical importance and natural beauty. At present, no coherent assessment has been commissioned/published focusing on the consequences of an inevitable urbanisation within an area of outstanding natural beauty retaining, inter alia, the highest percentage of ancient woodland and some of the darkest night skies across the British Isles.

Night flights

We have called for this many times before, but a ban on night flights should be a condition of any expansion at Gatwick. The airport should also be required to set out a comprehensive package of measures to incentivise the use of the quietest aircraft at all times but particularly at night outside the hours of a ban.

Climate change and air pollution.

Expansion on the scale proposed would increase very substantially the CO2 emissions and other climate effects associated with Gatwick's operations and flights. There are currently no proven technologies for reducing aviation emissions at scale. Expansion of Gatwick would therefore have a material impact on the UK's ability to meet its carbon reduction targets. Carbon emissions will also result from construction works and increased road traffic to the airport. Flights and traffic will make air pollution worse. As of October 2023, it remains relevant and appropriate to consider that Gatwick's expansion approach is in direct opposition with the government's climate objectives. The statement issued by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) in June 2023 highlights the urgency of developing a 'capacity management framework' for the aviation sector prior to any expansion application being considered by the UK government.

Transport impacts

Gatwick's targets to increase how many people bus, train, walk and cycle are insufficient to prevent a massive increase in road traffic around the airport. This increase in traffic would increase congestion on local roads and increase off-airport parking. Gatwick is not providing any extra rail services but the project will increase pressure on future train services, with the result that more passengers will have to stand on the mainline services between London Victoria and Brighton. Further inconvenience for people not using the airport but as a direct result of Gatwick's activities.

Need

Gatwick's overall case for expansion does not comply with the Airports National Policy Statement

which requires airports (other than Heathrow) to demonstrate sufficient need to justify their expansion proposals, additional to (or different from) the need which would be met by the provision of a Northwest Runway at Heathrow. This growth at Gatwick will have a huge adverse environmental effect on our communities and countryside. The primary people to benefit will be Gatwick's shareholders.

Economic case

The economic benefits of expanding Gatwick have been overstated by the Gatwick Airport Ltd. Significant economic, social and environmental costs have been ignored and/or understated. The economic benefits of air transport growth are subject to diminishing returns. In an already highly connected economy such as the UK, additional economic benefits from further expanding air transport are largely dependent on *net* inbound tourism and business travel growth, both of these are absent in the UK today. When Gatwick's scheme costs, benefits, and the long-term societal risks are taken into account, the scheme's economic case no longer stacks up and entails unreasonable levels of risk to local wellbeing.

Finally, it remains relevant and appropriate to consider that while the collaboration between the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority is aimed at improving and modernising air traffic, the current noise impact on the communities living under the current flightpaths remain unacceptable as a result of no adequate monitoring and enforcement arrangements. The current situation will therefore be greatly exacerbated by the proposed expansion and should not be permitted without such monitoring and enforcement arrangements.

Tuesday 24th October 2023