

Questions inviting views and conclusions in respect of the three short-listed options

Q1: What conclusions, if any, do you draw in respect of the three short-listed options? In answering this question please take into account the Commission's consultation documents and any other information you consider relevant. The options are described in section three.

Withyham Parish Council does not accept that there is any need for a second runway at Gatwick or that the case as set out in the consultation has been made. The commission has not fully taken into account the proposed infrastructure improvements throughout the rest of the UK, the excess capacity at other airports or the need to properly integrate the North and South of the country. Insufficient weighting has been given to the effect on Heathrow and its employees of introducing a competitive second hub. The Commission appears to have completely ignored the unwillingness of major airlines to use Gatwick as a hub or the lack of infrastructure at Gatwick to handle large numbers of passengers or freight. The decision to only consider Gatwick and Heathrow alienates the North of the country.

Q2: Do you have any suggestions for how the short-listed options could be improved, i.e. their benefits enhanced or negative impacts mitigated? The options and their impacts are summarised in section three. Questions on the Commission's appraisal and overall approach

Siting a second runway at Gatwick will require an additional 60,000 employees which is impracticable in an area of very low unemployment levels. Housing will be needed to accommodate the employees most of which will be low paid and unlikely to be able to afford to commute from any distance to work at the airport. The Commission appear to have taken little or no account of local factors in considering Gatwick a potentially viable option.

In order to accommodate these low paid workers, there will be a need to increase housing locally by an unacceptable level. There is little or no capacity at present and the increase in the size of the airport will remove some present housing to accommodate buildings and roads, therefore exacerbating the problem. This is likely to have a direct impact on this parish which is entirely within the 7 km exclusion zone around the Ashdown Forest (preventing new development) and within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is 40 minutes to 1 hour from Gatwick by car in present road conditions, therefore in theory likely to be affected by the need for additional housing, schools, hospitals and roads, for which there is little if any space or capacity. Gatwick has made no indication that it is prepared to fund any of the required infra-structure.

If no workers cannot be found locally, there will, no doubt be further immigration from the EU necessitating additional accommodation for those arriving. The waiting lists for local authority housing are overflowing and we, as a Parish Council, are aware that local people cannot find local authority housing now.

The Parish Council is also aware of the overcrowding on all rail services to London and this appears to have been totally ignored in the business case presented by Gatwick.

In addition our residents find that the M25, between Sevenoaks and M40, junction 16, is normally best described as a car park at busy times. Increasing the flow of traffic by the introduction of a second runway at Gatwick will confirm that status 24 hours a day. A small alteration to the junction on the M23 will merely speed up cars reaching the M25 car park.

The doubling in flights, as a result of the second runway, over the rural parish that the Parish Council represents is an unacceptable intrusion into the peace and tranquillity of the area. No recognition has been made of the increased effect of aircraft noise in rural areas. Lack of ambient noise has been shown to increase, not mitigate, the effect of aircraft noise. The Commission is using very old data to make its case and should be required to take account of the ambient noise as a limiting factor on flight numbers. Any direct comparison with Heathrow without taking into account ambient noise levels appears to this Parish Council to be invalid.

Furthermore there is no evidence of any plan to offer respite to any of the areas over flown by the increase in flights which will have a hugely negative effect on the health and wellbeing of our residents. We also reside in an area that will not have any compensation, if the offers can be believed or even are enforceable. No amount of compensation will compensate for the disruption of residents' lives, and the effect on this exceptional Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Specific Scientific interest. Our residents will just have their lives disrupted and the nature of this exceptional area will be permanently damaged. If aircraft are getting larger do we actually need another runway in the South at all?

The flight paths were narrowed in the summer and are likely to be narrow in the event of a second runway. No research has been done into the health implications of putting large numbers of aircraft in narrow bands and should be properly explored.

The Commission appear to have taken no heed of the requirement to reduce nitrogen deposits on the Ashdown Forest through the EEC Habitats Directive, which we as a Parish Council have to take into account when considering any planning applications. It seems to be one rule for us and one for the Commission.

The Commission has failed to consider that Gatwick is sited within and surrounded by A.O.N.B. Allowing expansion within this area would set a precedent that would degrade the value of all A.O.N.B in the future.

Q3: Do you have any comments on how the Commission has carried out its appraisal? The appraisal process is summarised in section two.

The Commission appear to have tried to have a rational approach. However, we are concerned that the Airport Commission has not been sufficiently rigorous in its approach to examining the costs, risks and environmental impact of the change to infrastructure that would be required if a second runway was to be built at Gatwick.

Q4: In your view, are there any relevant factors that have not been fully addressed by the Commission to date? Questions inviting comments on specific areas of the Commission's appraisal

The Commission have wrongly ignored the impact of HS2, HS3 and HS4 on the accessibility of London from the North. They have not fully explored the excess capacity of northern airports. They have failed to take fully into account the need to mitigate the North South Divide. The commission has failed to consider realistically the availability and proximity of workforce in particular to Gatwick.

The Commission has discounted the impact of the recent changes to flight paths over Gatwick. They have failed to properly examine the present effect, or commission proper research, into the effect of doubling the number of aircraft at Gatwick. The Commission appear to have failed completely to understand or accept the growing opposition to the present flight paths which have had an enormously detrimental effect on our residents.

The Commission has used outdated noise level measurements and failed to research fully the effect of low ambient noise on doubling of flights over the rural areas proposed by Gatwick.

We have a hospital on the borders of our Parish and three primary schools within the Parish. The Commission have not placed enough weight on the effect of the doubling of flights on these. A number of local historic venues have this year had to cancel outside events due to the recent changes in flight patterns which have generated loud invasive noise day, evening and night. Doubling flights will destroy any prospect of sufficient funding to support these historic buildings.

Q5: Do you have any comments on how the Commission has carried out its appraisal of specific topics (as defined by the Commission's 16 appraisal modules), including methodology and results?

Withyham Parish Council understands from press reports that a second runway at Gatwick is not wanted by airlines. Gatwick is not easily accessible now by road and the Commission seems to have been somewhat naïve in believing that merely improving one junction on the M23 is a solution to major traffic problems that already exist in this area. Any further traffic congestion will impact on our residents and the businesses situated in the Parish.

The economic benefits of Gatwick as calculated by the Commission are half of those for Heathrow. Building at Gatwick will do nothing to alleviate the North South divide.

The Commission has seriously over-estimated the capacity of the railway infrastructure to cope with a second runway, the main railway even now running at full capacity with standing room only on the busy trains.

The Commission has failed to take proper account of ambient noise in our rural communities and its noise calculations do not reflect the impact on the local population.

We would have no respite from aircraft noise, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The recent change to flight paths has caused enormous stress and distress – a second runway is unacceptable exacerbation.

There is no explanation or consideration of where the additional housing would be built to accommodate the influx of workers needed to run the airport. This part of the UK is already seriously short of housing and it is unrealistic to think that workers will be shipped in from the few employment blackspots when the infrastructure is simply not there to transport them.

With one railway line and one motorway Gatwick will be constantly under threat of overwhelming congestion.

The Parish Council finds it hard to trust anything that Gatwick has said in support of its case because of its history of changing flight paths and denying it had done that.

Q6: Do you have any comments on the Commission's sustainability assessments, including methodology and results?

The Parish Council does not believe that the Commission has fully examined the business case or sustainability assessment of this area of East Sussex if a second runway is given the go-ahead in terms of employment, the need for extra housing, schools, hospitals and surface access infrastructure.

Q7: Do you have any comments on the Commission's business cases, including methodology and results? Other comments

Following press reports the Parish Council understands that the business case for Gatwick has been rejected by EasyJet and British Airways which is a fundamental flaw.

However, as the financial information provided by Gatwick to the Commission has not been made public, it is difficult to make a proper assessment but the Parish Council noted that Moody's did suggest that the debt needed by Gatwick may well be unaffordable in the context of increased charges.

Q8: Do you have any other comments?

The Commission should take note that whilst East Sussex County Council (ESCC) - of all the surrounding county councils - alone have supported expansion at Gatwick, the majority of our local County Councillors who live and work near to the airport, opposed the motion. The decision taken by ESCC, which our Parish Council think is the wrong decision, was made by a majority of councillors who are least affected by the airport.

We have been inundated with complaints about Gatwick from our local residents whose lives have been disrupted in the last twelve months by flight changes. We therefore in the

Response to the Airports Commission

strongest terms oppose any expansion to Gatwick and ask that the Commission rejects the Gatwick proposal.

For Withyham Parish Council representing its residents - **no new runway and no new flight paths.**