

## **Formal complaint about the Gatwick Airspace Consultation which closed mid August**

**Sent to 'airspace.policy@caa.co.uk' on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

Dear Sirs

Whilst we appreciate that this complaint is not made within the timescale of the consultation, we wish our views as a local authority severely affected by any changes to Gatwick Airspace, to be taken into account.

We are extremely concerned about the nature and content of the consultation which failed to explain clearly or at all any of the proposed changes in relation to the proposed new arrival flight paths. The document contained highly technical and oblique language, filled with meaningless statistics but no concrete health or cost benefits to the population. The document stated baldly that it could not precisely define them and therefore could give no population statistics relating to those who would be affected. This is nonsense. The Government Code of Practice on Consultations states that all consultations must be 'clear about the consultation process, *what is being proposed*, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.'

Without defined and precise proposals we cannot have any scope to influence. It was impossible to elicit any of the vital information that would have allowed us to make a specific response to the consultation, in particular about flight arrivals. We had to assume the worst case scenario to make comments that no doubt will be largely discounted due to their lack of specificity.

Asking for a change to rules established to protect the population from excessive noise and disturbance without explaining exactly how and who the change will affect is tantamount to asking a turkey to vote for Christmas. Question three of the consultation did exactly this.

Indeed the complete lack of information has created a huge distrust amongst councillors and the population of this parish of the motives of Gatwick in undertaking this meaningless consultation process.

The Council believe that the timing of the consultation to coincide with the primary holiday period was a cynical attempt by Gatwick to reduce any responses to it. Again this breaches the Government Code of Practice on Consultations, in that consultations should be easily accessible and targeted at those it is intended to reach, and consideration should be given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible. By no stretch of the imagination can a consultation with an end date in the middle of August be described as accessible or targeted at the general population who are likely to be away during some or all of that period, thereby missing any advertising or information relating to the consultation. Whilst the consultation was extended by two days that was due to an error of early closure by Gatwick suggesting a cynical disregard for due process.

Gatwick failed to hold any open meetings, refused to attend open meetings and furthermore failed to respond to our invitations (by phone and e-mail) to attend a Planning Committee of the Parish Council (there was the option of attending three different dates) to allow us to illicit further and relevant information. That fact speaks for itself – as our population is likely to be severely affected by any changes that we, by a process of elimination believe are likely to happen, we can only think that Gatwick did not intend to be open in respect of the consultation or target that part of the population most affected by the consultation.

Finally as this consultation process is a part of a larger exercise then we cannot understand why the first consultation in relation to the change in airspace was not done by Heathrow. If as we understand, the height and spread of flights in and out of Heathrow, the primary UK airport, determines any height and spread of flights at Gatwick; either Heathrow should have consulted first or both airports should have consulted at the same time with inter related proposals. We do not understand the logic of a consultation by the lesser airport first as any decision will be dependent on the later decision on Heathrow, therefore rendering this consultation a complete waste of time and money.

Yours faithfully

Mrs D Siddle (Clerk) on behalf of Withyham Parish Council