

From: **David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

**Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport**

To: **Cabinet**

Subject: **Policy on Gatwick Airport**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Non-Key decision

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Information item for Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 5 December 2014

**Electoral Division:** Countywide

**Summary:**

Gatwick Airport Ltd has proposed a second runway which is now subject to a national public consultation by the Airports Commission. A recommendation will then be made by the Airports Commission to Government in summer 2015 on whether Heathrow or Gatwick should have approval for additional runway capacity.

The proposal for a second runway along with proposals for changes to airspace resulting in a concentration of flight paths; a high level of permitted night flights; and an increase in over-flight and noise currently experienced in West Kent; has resulted in Kent County Council **opposing a second runway at Gatwick Airport.**

The increase in over-flight across West Kent, the proposed airspace changes and night flights at Gatwick are also **opposed.**

The policy on Gatwick is stated in section 4.16 of this report and this will be added to '*Facing the Aviation Challenge*' which states Kent County Council's views on aviation.

**Recommendation:**

The Cabinet agrees that Kent County Council opposes a second runway at Gatwick Airport, opposes the increase in overflights across West Kent as a result of airspace changes, and supports a reduction in the number of night flights.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Airports Commission's interim report (December 2013) stated that it would take forward through the appraisal process; Gatwick Airport Ltd's proposal for one new runway to the south of the existing runway, over 3,000m in length and sufficiently spaced from the existing runway to permit fully independent operation. This option (a southern wide spaced parallel runway with independent mixed mode operation) provides the maximum amount of additional capacity in terms of aircraft movements and passengers; however, it also has the most detrimental environmental and noise impacts.
- 1.2 The Airports Commission is now undertaking a national public consultation until 3 February 2015, on this option for a second runway at Gatwick; alongside two options for additional runway capacity at Heathrow. The Airports Commission will then make a recommendation to Government in summer 2015 on where to add one net additional runway in the South East by 2030. The option of a Thames Estuary Airport was ruled out by the Airports Commission in September 2014.
- 1.3 Independent of the Airports Commission's work on airport capacity, the UK's air traffic service provider (NATS), working with all London airports, including Gatwick Airport Ltd, as part of the London Airspace Management Programme (LAMP) is implementing the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) Future Airspace Strategy (FAS). Airspace changes have been proposed that meet the requirements of the FAS to deal with airspace congestion and increase capacity; improve safety; use technological developments to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact; and implement the EU Single European Sky initiatives. Airspace changes must be implemented by 2020 and are based on Gatwick as a single runway airport.
- 1.4 These two major developments in UK aviation policy, in addition the Department for Transport's (DfT) decision to maintain the existing level of permitted night flights at the noise designated airports of Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted; could have significant impacts across West Kent.
- 1.5 In 2014, there has already been an increase in over-flight and aviation noise across West Kent. Along with the proposed second runway; airspace change proposals; and national policy on night flights described in sections 1.1 to 1.4 of this report; this has resulted in the need for a Kent County Council (KCC) policy on Gatwick Airport.
- 1.6 Therefore it is recommended that Cabinet adopts a policy on Gatwick Airport which opposes a second runway; increased over-flight of West Kent; the proposed airspace changes; and night flights.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 N/A

### 3. Policy Framework

3.1 The decision relates to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) as set out in the Council's Policy Framework (see Appendix 3 of the Constitution).

### 4. Policy on Gatwick Airport

4.1 Gatwick Airport Ltd's proposal for a new runway with fully independent operation, i.e. independent mixed mode (both runways used for departures and arrivals); provides the maximum amount of additional capacity in terms of aircraft movements and passengers. However, it also has the most detrimental environmental and noise impacts with no opportunity for respite from runway alternation (one runway used for arrivals while the other runway is used for departures).

4.2 The proposed operational configuration for the two runway airport, while providing the greatest increase in annual passenger throughput for a doubling of the runway capacity, could also potentially double the number of aircraft movements (from a maximum of 55 to a peak capacity of 95 movements per hour). This would result in an unacceptable increase in aviation noise from the high frequency of over-flights.

4.3 Table 1 shows the potential future capacity at Gatwick with a second runway taken from Gatwick Airport Ltd's consultation document (April 2014) compared with its current usage in 2013 (CAA annual statistics). It shows that by 2050 Gatwick could more than double its current air traffic movements and passenger numbers. Passenger numbers are 'million passengers per annum' (mppa).

**Table 1 – Planning Capacity with a second runway compared with current single runway usage**

Planning Capacity (with second runway)	2013 (existing single runway)	2030	2040	2050
Annual Movements	251,000	377,000	468,000	513,000
Annual Passengers	35 mppa	60 mppa	78 mppa	87 mppa

4.4 For comparison, Heathrow currently (2013) handles 472,000 annual movements (within its planning cap of 480,000 movements) and 72mppa; therefore Gatwick Airport Ltd is proposing an airport that by between 2040 and 2050 will be busier than Heathrow's current level of air traffic and passenger volumes.

4.5 In terms of surface access, Gatwick Airport Ltd claim to be "road and rail ready for a second runway by 2021" regardless of whether a second runway is delivered or not in the post 2025 period. Gatwick's surface access strategy for a second runway is heavily reliant on already planned, committed and delivered schemes for strategic road and rail access. These highway and rail schemes are already being implemented to help alleviate current levels of congestion and delay; and to meet background growth, without taking account of the demand generated by more than a doubling of Gatwick's size.

4.6 In terms of economic impacts, the West Kent districts of Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling did not even feature in the study area for the economic effects of a second runway in Gatwick Airport Ltd's consultation on

the runway options (April 2014); as less than 1% of Gatwick's workforce are from these Kent districts. Small towns and villages in West Kent feel the negative impacts of being under Gatwick's flight paths but are not benefiting as well as they should from the employment and business opportunities that come from being near to the UK's second largest airport.

- 4.7 Within its current single runway operation, Gatwick Airport Ltd should be engaging with schools and colleges in West Kent to make young people more aware of the jobs and careers that are available to them through working at the airport. Local transport improvements to the airport are also needed so that these opportunities can be accessed by West Kent's communities. Local businesses need to be made aware of the opportunities, both through the supply chain and the benefit of access to global markets from being located near to a major international airport. Gatwick could also do more to promote the attractions of West Kent to overseas visitors passing through the airport so as to encourage visitor spend in the local area.
- 4.8 The prospect of a second runway at Gatwick has caused widespread distress in the communities of West Kent. This has been coupled with an increase in over-flight and aircraft noise in 2014. CAA statistics show that Gatwick has experienced an annual increase in air transport movements (ATMs) over the last decade from 243,000 in 2003 to 251,000 in 2013. The busiest year was pre-recession in 2007 with 267,000 ATMs and after a period of decline, air traffic is now growing again. July 2014 was the second busiest July at Gatwick; and there has been 3% growth year on year during the peak summer month of July since 2011, with the exception of July 2012, which displayed no growth compared to the previous year's month.
- 4.9 Arriving aircraft into Gatwick fly over the Tunbridge Wells area generally at around 4,000ft or less and are descending so that they can join the instrument landing system (ILS) final approach path (a straight line of descent to the runway) by 10 nautical miles from the airport at an altitude of not lower than 3,000ft. Departing aircraft that head east are generally at around 5,000ft to 6,000ft by the time they pass into Kent and have climbed to around 10,000ft when flying over the top of the arrivals across the Tonbridge area. It is generally the low flying arriving aircraft that causes a problem for West Kent. Respite is only provided when there is an easterly wind because arriving aircraft then approach the airport and descend on the western side of the airport (easterly operations). When on westerly operations, which are the majority of the time due to the prevailing westerly winds, the frequency of arrivals over-flight is generally an aircraft every two minutes in the peak flying over West Kent. Aviation noise events of 50 to 70 decibels are experienced in the Tunbridge Wells area before aircraft have even turned and joined the ILS final approach at lower altitude.
- 4.10 Residents in West Kent have been very vocal with their complaints about the increase in over-flight and noise experienced in 2014. Table 2 shows analysis of the increase in number of movements in the peak summer month of July 2014 compared with July of the previous year (2013). This increase in flights coupled with the more average occurrence of prevailing westerly winds (69% in July 2014, compared with only 51% in July 2013), and an assumed 50/50 split of arrivals and departures; shows that there has been a 39% increase in the

number of arriving aircraft flying over West Kent in July 2014, compared with July of the previous year. This equates to an average of 12 to 16 arrivals flights per hour in July 2014, an average increase of 4 or 5 more arriving aircraft per hour than the previous year's summer month. At peak times of the day and peak days of the week, the frequency of arriving aircraft over-flight is even higher.

**Table 2 – Air Transport Movements in July 2014 compared to the previous July 2013**

July 2014 compared to previous July 2013	2013	2014
Air Transport Movements in July	24,663	25,406
Assuming 50/50 split of arrivals and departures - number of arrivals in July	12,332	12,703
Attributed number of arrivals over West Kent in July (2013 51% westerly, 2014 69% westerly)	6,289	8,765
Increase (decrease) of attributed arrivals in July from previous year		2,476
Percentage Change from previous year		39
Assuming 50/50 split of arrivals and departures - average number of daily arrivals in July	398	410
Attributed average number of daily arrivals over West Kent in July (2013 51% westerly, 2014 69% westerly)	203	283
Increase (decrease) of attributed daily arrivals from previous year		80
Percentage Change from previous year		39
Average number of hourly attributed arrivals (24 hour operations) over West Kent	8	12
Increase (decrease) in average number of attributed hourly arrivals from previous year		4
Average number of hourly attributed arrivals (18 hour operations) over West Kent	11	16
Increase (decrease) in average number of attributed hourly arrivals from previous year		5

- 4.11 The continuous over-flight of arriving aircraft into Gatwick causes significant detrimental impact for residents of West Kent and impacts on the tranquillity of the countryside, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); where the CAA discourages over-flight, if practical, below 7,000ft. There needs to be better adherence to this DfT guidance to the CAA to avoid over-flight of AONB, where practical; and aircraft should also avoid flying over the major tourist attractions that are of significant national heritage value in West Kent.
- 4.12 The current level of over-flight and resulting noise impact on West Kent is unacceptable and measures should be taken by Gatwick Airport Ltd to reduce the number of arriving aircraft flying over this area; and provide mitigation measures for the noise impacts. The number of flights into Gatwick is likely to continue to increase until the airport reaches its capacity limit for a single runway airport. The likely noise impact from the increased frequency of over-flight that would result from the proposed second runway would be intolerable for the communities in West Kent, further degrading the rural tranquillity of the area, the AONB and major heritage tourist attractions; as well as impacting on the urban areas of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge.
- 4.13 Furthermore, in 2013/14 there have also been two consultations by NATS and Gatwick Airport Ltd on proposed airspace changes for Gatwick as a single runway airport that need to be implemented by 2020, as described in section 1.3 of this report. If implemented, this would result in the concentration of flight paths into a single precision arrivals route for the daytime and one alternative arrivals route for the night time before aircraft join the final approach to land. The consequence of this is that every single aircraft will fly directly over-head of the communities below the proposed new flight paths. KCC has responded to these consultations opposing these proposals. As an alternative, KCC has proposed the use of precision navigation technology to devise multiple arrival and departure routes; which if alternated would provide the opportunity for

predictable rotating respite so that the burden of over-flight is spread more equitably between communities.

4.14 In terms of the number of flights at night, these are very frequent at Gatwick due to a lower quota set by the DfT compared to Heathrow. Gatwick's night time air transport movement limits (between 23:30 and 06:00) remains set until 2017, at 3,250 in winter and 11,200 in summer. This contrasts with far tighter night time movement controls at Heathrow (2,550 in winter and 3,250 in summer); therefore Gatwick's air traffic movement limit exceeds Heathrow by 27% in winter and is almost 3.5 times greater than Heathrow in summer.

4.15 Sleep disturbance has detrimental effects on the health of people living under flight paths, therefore in order for the situation for local residents to improve, there needs to be a reduction in the number of permitted movements at night. KCC has made the case to Government, in response to the DfT consultation (November 2013), for a reduction in night flights at Gatwick so that the number of permitted night movements is more comparable with the quota set by the DfT for Heathrow.

4.16 In summary, KCC's policy on Gatwick:

- KCC is opposed to a second runway at Gatwick Airport.
- Gatwick Airport Ltd's proposal for a second runway with independent mixed mode operation will double the number of aircraft movements with arrivals and departures on both runways and offers no opportunity for respite from runway alternation. The noise impacts on West Kent from Gatwick's current single runway configuration are already unacceptable and a potential doubling of these impacts with a second runway would be intolerable. Along with a lack of adequate surface transport infrastructure enhancements to cope with the additional demand and little obvious direct economic benefit to Kent; KCC is opposed to Gatwick Airport Ltd's proposal for a second runway.
- The increase in over-flight and noise currently experienced in West Kent is unacceptable and there needs to be an immediate reduction in aviation noise across West Kent. Operational procedures must be put in place by Gatwick Airport Ltd to provide respite for the communities that experience continuous over-flight day and night.
- Furthermore, the proposed airspace changes due to be implemented by 2020 with the concentration of flight paths and lack of suitable respite provision for arrival routes is unacceptable and is opposed by KCC. Gatwick Airport Ltd and NATS must re-design the airspace change proposal to include the use of multiple arrival and departure routes to provide predictable rotating respite and spread the burden of over-flight more equitably between communities.
- The current number of permitted night flights is unacceptable and is opposed by KCC. The DfT should reduce the night movement limit at Gatwick to at least a level that is comparable with Heathrow.

- In addition to the need for an immediate reduction in aviation noise across West Kent, action needs to be taken to ensure that West Kent's communities benefit from the business and job opportunities at Gatwick as a single runway airport.

4.17 The policy on Gatwick, stated above in section 4.16, will be added to '*Facing the Aviation Challenge*' which states KCC's views on aviation.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The proposal for a second runway at Gatwick Airport which is the subject of a national public consultation by the Airports Commission; along with the separate proposals for changes to airspace, the continuation of high numbers of permitted night flights, and the current unacceptable increase in over-flight and aircraft noise in West Kent; has resulted in the need for a KCC policy on Gatwick Airport.

5.2 The policy stated in section 4.16 of this report, which will be added to '*Facing the Aviation Challenge*', makes it unequivocally clear that KCC is opposed to a second runway at Gatwick; and that the increase in over-flight currently experienced in West Kent is unacceptable and an immediate reduction in noise through changes to operational procedures must be implemented by Gatwick Airport Ltd. The number of permitted night flights is unacceptable and the DfT should reduce the night movement limit at Gatwick to at least a level that is comparable with Heathrow. The proposed airspace changes for Gatwick as a single runway airport, due to be implemented by 2020, also need to be revised so that predictable rotating respite is provided to help spread the burden of over-flight more equitably between communities. The business and job opportunities that Gatwick currently offers also need to spread to West Kent.

## **6. Recommendation:**

The Cabinet agrees that Kent County Council opposes a second runway at Gatwick Airport, opposes the increase in overflights across West Kent as a result of airspace changes, and supports a reduction in the number of night flights.

## **7. Background Documents**

- 7.1 Facing the Aviation Challenge, Kent County Council, August 2014  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/15433/Facing-the-Aviation-Challenge.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/15433/Facing-the-Aviation-Challenge.pdf)
- 7.2 Airports Commission, Discussion Paper 05: Aviation Noise, Response from Kent County Council, 6 September 2013  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/15541/KCC-response-to-Airports-Commission-discussion-paper-on-noise.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/15541/KCC-response-to-Airports-Commission-discussion-paper-on-noise.pdf)
- 7.3 London Airspace Consultation – NATS (National Air Traffic Services) and Gatwick Airport Ltd, Response from Kent County Council, 20 January 2014

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/15543/KCC-response-to-Phase-1-of-the-London-Airspace-Consultation.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/15543/KCC-response-to-Phase-1-of-the-London-Airspace-Consultation.pdf)

- 7.4 Department for Transport (DfT) Consultation – Night Flying Restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Stage 2 Consultation, Response from Kent County Council, 31 January 2014  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/15542/KCC-submission-to-Department-for-Transport-consultation-on-night-flights.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/15542/KCC-submission-to-Department-for-Transport-consultation-on-night-flights.pdf)
- 7.5 London Airspace Change – Gatwick Local Area Consultation, Response from Kent County Council, 14 August 2014  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/15544/KCC-response-to-Phase-2-of-the-London-Airspace-Consultation.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/15544/KCC-response-to-Phase-2-of-the-London-Airspace-Consultation.pdf)

## **8. Contact details**

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