

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

10 November 2021

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 GATWICK NORTHERN RUNWAY CONSULTATION

Summary: This report provides an overview of the Gatwick Northern Runway consultation and draft consultation response.

1.1 Our Northern Runway: making the best use of Gatwick

- 1.1.1 Gatwick Airport is consulting on our proposals to bring the existing Northern Runway into routine use alongside their main runway. Additional development, reconfiguration and mitigation works are also proposed, this includes terminal building extensions, junction and highways improvements, an additional 18,500 car parking spaces, hotels with capacity for 1000 rooms, and 9000 sq/ft of office accommodation.
- 1.1.2 The consultation will run for 12 weeks and concludes on 1 December 2021. Further details can be found on the Gatwick Airport [website](#). The consultation summary is included at **Annex 1**.
- 1.1.3 If approved in due course Gatwick Airport anticipate that by 2038, the proposals would increase passenger throughput to approximately 75.6 million passengers per annum (mppa), compared to a maximum potential passenger throughput based on the existing runway of approximately 62.4 mppa. This represents an anticipated increase in capacity of approximately 13.2 mppa.
- 1.1.4 This level of passenger increase, along with the road improvements needed to support it, means the project is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and Gatwick will need to apply for a development consent order (DCO) to build and operate it.
- 1.1.5 The consultation is part of the DCO process. The feedback received, along with further technical work and environmental studies, will inform the development of the proposals ahead of submission of a DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). PINS will then review and examine the application, before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will take the final decision on whether or not to grant consent.

- 1.1.6 A draft consultation response is included at **Annex 2**. This makes clear that Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) does not support the proposal to bring the existing northern runway into use for the take-off of smaller aircraft. At present the runway is only used for emergency landings.
- 1.1.7 Having reviewed the proposals it is considered that the justification for airport expansion is inadequate. Especially so given that the Government has made it clear that the focus of expansion in the South East should be at Heathrow, following the publication of the Davies review in 2015. A third runway at Heathrow would provide capacity for more than 280,000 flights per year should it go ahead in the future, and therefore would satisfy any future regional growth requirement.
- 1.1.8 The nature of business travel is likely to change in the future as a consequence of the pandemic, with greater use of virtual communications reducing the need for some to travel. This combined with a growing concern regarding the need to reduce carbon emissions, could result in demand for air travel in the future which is less than the capacity forecasts referenced. The passenger projections are therefore considered to be highly ambitious, the supporting case for which is insufficient.
- 1.1.9 The proposed mitigation regarding surface transport connectivity with West Kent is inadequate, this has been a longstanding concern of West Kent authorities including TMBC. Whilst the consultation states that 42% of passengers who access the airport do so by rail, there is no ambition to increase this which will be difficult to achieve without a frequent direct rail connection via Redhill to Tonbridge. In the draft response we strongly urge Gatwick to work with partners including the DfT, TfSE, the LEP's and Great British Railways to cost and fund this connection as part of their northern runway DCO proposals.
- 1.1.10 At present the proposals are of limited material benefit to Tonbridge & Malling residents and businesses and are likely to worsen the impacts of aircraft overflight for some. Particularly those in West Tonbridge which remains beyond the 51dB noise contour for aircraft operations.

1.2 Conclusion

- 1.2.1 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council does not support the proposal to bring the existing northern runway into use for the take-off of smaller aircraft, and associated developments, the justification for which is insufficient. If the proposals are progressed, investment in a direct rail connection to Tonbridge via Redhill is strongly requested, to shift related trip demand away from vehicles using roads including the A21, M25 and M23. This would further help to reduce the long-term carbon impact of the airport's operations.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 There are no direct financial or value for money considerations arising from this report, there may however be wider economic benefits for local residents and businesses if the airport expansion plans gain planning consent in due course.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 TMBC should respond to this consultation, to express its objection regarding the northern runway proposal, which in effect is a comprehensive masterplan for the expansion of the airport. If the proposals progress there could be an increase in related vehicle-based journeys due to a lack of rail infrastructure, and a worsening of noise arising from aircraft overflight.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 That the content of this report be **NOTED**, and that TMBC objects to the northern runway proposals as set out in the draft consultation response. That this be supported for **APPROVAL** by the Cabinet Member and submission to Gatwick Airport.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

Annex 1 – Consultation Summary
Annex 2 – Consultation Questionnaire

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