

By email to Gatwick Airport via feedback@gatwickfutureplans.com

Leigh Village Parish Council Response to Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Consultation

30th November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you on behalf of Leigh Parish Council (LPC), regarding the proposals by Gatwick Airports Limited (GAL) relating to expansion plans associated with the northern runway.

Leigh Parish Council (LPC) actively engaged with its residents in the Autumn of 2021 and have endeavoured to accommodate their opinions within this response. Whilst ensuring a fair representation of its parishioners' views, LPC have also considered the expansion plans as a local authority; addressing connected parochial issues, in particular increased traffic flow, drainage/flooding and broader environmental and economic impacts. Our response is categorised within these themes below (a) to (c).

Basis of expansion and forecasts

Having reviewed the basis for GAL's plans, we have concluded that the rationale for expansion is not founded on extrapolation of data from recent years, leading to questionable forward projections. For example, changes in societal behaviour influenced by environmental concerns and the Coronavirus pandemic have changed the nature and demand for air travel. We do not see these factors accommodated within the plans and the consequent moderating of growth and expansion work.

Specific concerns

(a) Traffic flow and congestion

- Accommodating an extra 18,500 car spaces will clearly have a major consequence locally. The figures provided for increased car journeys are unclear both geographically (indistinctive route placement) and numerically (assessed to be 0-1000 new AADT, which does not provide a meaningful range upon which to interpret impact). The proposals are also unclear how road improvements for major highways and A-roads will affect the local routes through Leigh and connecting areas.
- Increased traffic density, already excessive at peak times, will increase congestion, pollution, accidents and noise within the village. The speed and number of cars routing through the village is already a major and growing issue for residents.

(b) Drainage and flood risk

- Poor drainage is a long-term problem in parts of Leigh Village, with both the run-off and wastewater systems significantly under capacity.
- Leigh village lies downstream from Gatwick on the river Mole, with the consequence of ineffective drainage arrangements at the airport affecting the village, as has occurred in the past, for example at Flanchford Bridge.

- The consequence of the expansion on drainage configuration is not clear and hence the impact on Leigh is of concern. We cannot see mitigation for downstream drainage explained effectively. We cannot see that Thames Water have undertaken a review of wider local or downstream drainage, only that they are in the process (not completed) of reviewing sewage arrangements at Crawley.

(c) Further environmental and economic impacts.

- Factors such as a 20%+ increase in more aircraft will clearly lead to environmental impact beyond those concerns covered above, such as increases in noise through higher frequency of flights.
- Although we recognise some local economic benefits of expansion, GAL has stated that no increase in housing is required above current local authority plans which indicates that much of any benefit for employment will be accruing outside the immediate region.
- Again, we feel the rationale for expansion relating to its impact on the environment has not taken account of the increased concerns locally and nationally, in particular, higher CO2 emissions and reduction in air quality.
- The scheme does not reflect increased ongoing national and local scrutiny on environmental impacts and the prevailing direction of strategy set out (including as part of COP26) to undertake greater measures to halt plans that are contributing to global warming and climate change.

Combined factors

Although we have set out our views above within particular categories, the combined effect of the expansion plans, together with current pressures on the local community infrastructure will magnify and negatively impact the wellbeing of residents in Leigh. An example is the compound result locally on traffic volumes caused through the bypassing of traffic measures in nearby towns, leading to congestion in rural locations such as Leigh. We see this as the same potential consequence of changed road schemes proposed in and around Gatwick.

Conclusions

LPC has concerns that GAL's proposals based on the Airports National Policy Statement, is not reflective of the consequences on environmental and economic outcomes. Nor do we believe the proposals meet the requirements of the Planning Act given the ambiguous and dated assumptions made. The plans appear to be based on a projected inevitable need to expand, rather than the contemporary reality of balancing economic opportunities with local and wider environmental consequences.

In conclusion, based on the weight of concerns summarised above and feedback from our parishioners, Leigh Parish Council does not support the proposed runway expansion plans at Gatwick.

However, should plans be approved we would want to see:

- Greater clarity and currency on the rationale for expansion of the airport infrastructure including passenger numbers
- Increased specificity for traffic flows and mitigation within Leigh village and surrounds

- No increase in flight frequency, change in overfly location or noise envelopes
- Clarity on drainage arrangements affecting the course of the river Mole locally

We ask that Leigh Parish Council's concerns and comments are given serious consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Laura Mann
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