

Ifield Village Conservation Area Advisory Committee



Gatwick Airport Planning Team
National Infrastructure Planning
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

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Sent as an email attachment to: gatwickairport@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Interested Party Reference 20045061

Dear Planning Inspectorate

Ifield Village Conservation Area Advisory Committee continues to be opposed to the expansion of Gatwick Airport. The objections are not only concerned with the impact on the Conservation Area, which lies just two miles south of the airport, but also on Crawley as a whole. In addition, we have singled out for more detailed comment, problems of sewage management, the impacts on the water quality of the River Mole and the challenges of water supply.

Traffic

The transport infrastructure to the airport particularly from the south and east are insufficient for additional traffic. Much of the additional traffic would go through Crawley adding to the already congested roads. While transport from London is reasonable 'on paper', the reality is that trains are often over-crowded at peak times and the roads leading to the M23 through south London boroughs cannot sustain increased traffic. From the Ifield Village Conservation Area (IVCA) perspective, IVCA is already used inappropriately as a rat run to the airport when main roads are congested – this will be exacerbated.

Noise

Noise is obviously a concern to the Conservation Area being so close to the airport especially as Gatwick still does not have a ban on night flights as Heathrow does. One of the serious noise effects is the sound of engines starting up in the early hours of the morning; this sound is transmitted through the ground as well as through the air.

Housing

Housing for additional workers is not to be overlooked. Crawley is spending a very high proportion of its budget on temporary accommodation for homeless families. There are not the houses available should workers try to move to the area. If they cannot find accommodation, then they add to the number of people commuting and hence to

traffic problems. If they do find accommodation, then it exacerbates the homelessness problem.

Climate change

Additionally, we ask the wider question as to why this expansion is even being contemplated. First, the Airports Commission Final Report (July 2015), reported in favour of Heathrow. Secondly, in the interest of reaching a carbon neutral position nationally, it is environmentally unsound to try and expand the use of aircraft. We are very much in sympathy with the detailed 'late response' from the CPRE Sussex (24 December 2024¹).

Wastewater, water quality, water supply

However, our more detailed response at this stage is to draw attention to issues of waste-water, water quality and water supply (see below).

Sewage – dealing with wastewater

The responses from both Thames Water (19 December 2024) and the Environment Agency (18 December 2024) indicate considerable concerns in dealing with the additional sewage. Previous underinvestment from Thames Water has led to the two nearest sewage works (Crawley and Horley) being classified 'red' (i.e. in danger of not meeting even the present requirements). Thames Water has made it clear that the cost of dealing with the sewage must be paid by the applicant. It cannot be emphasised enough that IF the expansion of the airport were permitted then a new facility and associated infrastructure must be built, and that the finances cannot come from Thames Water.

Thames Water's response also indicates that a great deal of preparation in the form of modelling is required before they would be able to confirm that any new facility and its associated infrastructure are viable, sustainable and fit for purpose. It seems imprudent, if not illegal, to permit a development prior to the necessary infrastructure being assured.

Water Quality

The Environment Agency (5 June 2024) has also questioned the impact on the River Mole into which the treatment works would discharge. The quality of the water in the Mole is not good except in tributaries in the Upper Mole catchment above any sewage works. The Mole already sustains nine sewage works in its short journey to the Thames and while seven of them are not labelled 'red', they all frequently discharge many hours of untreated sewage into the river beyond the permitted limits. Testing of nitrate, phosphate and ammonia levels show the negative impact of sewage works on the river health. For information, see the high-quality data from River Mole River Watch (a group of citizen scientists) collected over several years, at:

<https://www.rivermoleriverwatch.org.uk/post/news-from-the-river-mole-early-january-2025>

¹ I have used the date of the submission, not the date at which it was posted on the document website – which is usually a few days later. This procedure has been followed for all dates given.

Needless to say, surface water flooding collects particulate matter from road use (tyre and metal wear even from electric cars) and this often finds its way into water ways. The additional traffic will therefore also adversely affect the water quality in the streams.

Water Supply

We note that in their response of 15 July 2024 that Sutton and East Surrey Water (SES Water) was confident that they could meet the water requirements. We wonder if the demands for AI have been adequately factored in. Even in the six months since SES's response, use of AI has increased enormously and with it a massive increase in the demand for water.

Ifield Village Conservation Area is in the Sussex North Water Resources Zone of Southern Water region. This zone is under severe water stress, so we are painfully aware of the limits to growth occasioned by constraints on water supply. Natural England has imposed water neutrality requirement on all new development and water 'offsetting schemes' are being developed. While SES Water, which supplies the Gatwick area, does not have these challenges at present, it is in the South East of England, a region which has one of the lowest rainfalls of the whole country.

Kind regards

[Redacted]

On behalf of Ifield Village Conservation Area Advisory Committee

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