

HEVER CASTLE



The Planning Inspectorate
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Interested Party Ref No: 20041645

Chief Executive's Office:
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Dear Sirs

Gatwick Airport Second Runway - Hever Castle

I am disappointed the Government is minded to approve Gatwick Airport's second runway but I understand it will require your approval. Part of the condition is that proper noise mitigation is carried out.

Hever Castle is a Grade 1 listed building within a Grade 1 listed park and garden within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Gatwick's plan is to only use the second runway for take-offs - this essentially means Hever castle potentially will get significantly more planes flying over it unless the airspace is significantly changed. Surely it is not right that the High Weald AONB's most visited attraction, which also happens to have many designations, should be subject to such noise intrusion in an otherwise tranquil, aesthetically pleasing place.

I would ask you to encourage the powers that be to properly consider our most special places. While it is not possible to avoid all of the AONB surely there should be some real efforts made to avoid over flying the most popular part.

I would very much welcome the Planning Inspectorate coming to visit Hever Castle to determine themselves whether it is appropriate for planes to fly over a very important part of the UK's heritage, which currently attracts well in excess of 400,000 visitors a year and supports hundreds of jobs. We have, incidentally, somewhere in the region of 1,500 – 2,000 suppliers, the majority of whom are within the south east.

I do not know to what degree you might be able to influence the powers that be but the best solution for Gatwick Airport would be a new, narrow concentrated flight path chosen because it avoids the most people, the most visited places and the most designated protected places. This would actually be easily achieved and, while those living under that concentrated flight path would be rightly upset, this could be managed by providing compensation. Because it is outside the current noise envelope it would be perfectly suited and appropriate to introduce compensation based on the loss in value of the property which might not be as much as people expect as, after all, houses in Richmond are very valuable indeed, even at Hever they are not cheap. The Government should also allow anyone who does not want to continue living under such a concentrated route to relocate within one year or 18 months and stamp duty would be waived.

AN EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER

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This action would stop the huge amount of money, time and expertise spent on fighting plane movements and it would, most likely, reduce the amount of CO2 and fuel emissions, while also disturbing significantly less people than are currently disturbed by planes, many of which fly over Hever Castle. Flying over Hever Castle usually means flying over Penshurst, Fordcombe, Chiddingstone, Langton Green and parts of Tunbridge Wells - to name a few. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a route that disturbed more people on its approach to Gatwick Airport.

While I appreciate the parameters determining what action you take might not allow for this, I would implore you to press the Government to properly consider it. Gatwick Airport tell me that this probably would be the ultimate best solution but they say there are no parameters to allow that to happen because it is outside the noise envelope. If the UK wishes to get ahead we need to be able to make sensible, informed solutions that have the best outcomes and not allow our own self-made bureaucracy to prevent that from happening.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Duncan Leslie MRICS
Chief Executive