

6 June 2025

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing in response to the letter from Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) with reference to the Development Consent Order for the Proposed Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Project (Ref: TR20005).

The Council has previously stated that at a Full Council meeting on the 6 October 2021 the following resolution was passed:

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council continues to oppose any further expansion of Gatwick Airport. This council does not support the airport's proposal to use its northern runway for routine use as it will lead to more flights and more pollution for our residents. The environmental damage this will cause goes against tackling the climate change emergency.

The Council remains strongly opposed to the expansion of Gatwick and the proposed routine use of the northern runway. Tunbridge Wells will be impacted by the increased volume of aircraft and the larger aircraft that the airport is seeking to encourage. The impact of increased flights is more air and noise pollution affecting local residents and businesses and the borough is unlikely to see any direct economic benefits as a result of the expansion.

The Council makes the following comments about the recent letter from GAL.

Requirement 15 – If the Secretary of State makes the decision to allow use of the northern runway, the Council considers that the noise envelope should be as per the Examining Authority's (ExA) suggested modification such that the area within the 51dB daytime air noise contour which must not be exceeded from the first to fifth year of dual runway operations is 125km² rather than the 135km² proposed by GAL.

In addition, this should reduce in future (in response to a review after 9 years or 384,000 air traffic movements) to ensure that the benefits from noise reductions due to technological changes in the intervening years are shared with the communities around the airport.

We would also ask that the ExA's drafting of Requirement 15 is revised so that the release of new slots would be contingent on the noise modelling showing a breach is unlikely, rather than assessing this in retrospect, as it would be more difficult to rescind slots.

The noise envelope must provide an adequate control on noise, ensure the benefits of reducing noise are shared with communities around the airport, and give certainty to local communities about what the noise landscape will be like into the future. The Council is **strongly opposed** to the wording of Requirement 15 suggested by the Applicant, which is a reversion to their original noise envelope proposals, would see none of the benefits shared, and provides fewer protections for residents.

Requirement 18 – Residents in Tunbridge Wells would not be covered by the Noise Insulation Scheme, despite experiencing significant existing noise disturbances which will increase further as a result of the proposed use of the northern runway.

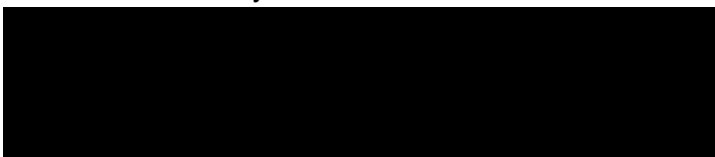
The Council supports the ExA's wording of Requirement 18 over that proposed by the Applicant. However, if the Secretary of State is minded to agree the Applicant's wording then the Council supports the suggestion by the Joint Local Authorities that the Scheme should be amended to include the 48 dB LAeq 8hr contour in the inner zone with insulation for bedrooms because this corresponds to one additional awakening at night which is a significant adverse impact.

Requirement 20 – If the Secretary of State is minded to approve the proposed development then the Council asks that Requirement 20 remains as per the ExA's recommendation so that the northern runway cannot operate without the sustainable mode share targets being met. The Council objects to GAL's proposal to permit dual runway operations by undertaking improvement works on the Strategic Road Network, as this would only serve to further worsen sustainable transport mode share.

The Council has previously questioned GAL's coach usage projections, both whether they are realistic and if there is physical space at Gatwick to accommodate them.

Importantly, along with Kent County Council and West Kent local authority partners, the Council has long supported frequent and direct rail connections from Tonbridge via Redhill to Gatwick which would serve residents in West Kent and would make a major contribution to the sustainable transport offer for customers of the airport as it currently operates. The Council considers that it is essential that work is undertaken to deliver this connection if the decision is taken to approve use of the northern runway.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Rob Wormington

Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability

