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Secretary of State for Transport  
Great Minster House  
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FAO: Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit

09/06/2025

**RE: Application by Gatwick Airport Limited Seeking Development Consent for the Proposed Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Project (Ref: TR020005)**

Dear Secretary of State,

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the request for comment on this important scheme. Network Rail, our infrastructure partner is the statutory consultee, and we provide this letter as a supplement. The purpose of this letter is to express Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) support and encouragement for the Northern Runway Project.

As the operator of railway services for Gatwick Airport and the wider Brighton Main Line, we recognise the Gatwick Northern Runway Project as an important catalyst for economic growth across the region and wider UK.

From the future perspective of a publicly owned railway, the Northern Runway project is a significant opportunity. This is because it will help generate the passenger journeys, both domestic and international and with them the fare income needed to help support the key investments that are required for the Brighton Main Line. The latter are required irrespective of whether the Northern Runway project goes forward.

In sum, from a railway perspective, its primary benefit is it will reduce the amount of public investment otherwise required to meet emerging challenges on the Brighton Main Line, and by doing so, will therefore provide a wider positive benefit for sustainable transport across the southeast.

This is because the demand generated by the airport is typically contra-peak – for example, journeys away from London in the early AM, or concentrated in holiday periods where commuter demand lessens. It will therefore provide income from capacity provision that would otherwise be underutilised.

Critically, this capacity provision is however required to sustain peak direction journeys from the primary source of demand on the route – the significant volume of additional housebuilding planned. The capacity will be required to be in place regardless of whether the Northern Runway project is taken forwards.

Without this investment in additional capacity, the Brighton Main Line will struggle to accommodate growth in demand.

Meeting future demand will require two key investments over the next decade. The first is a larger train fleet to enable the lengthening of services as following retirements during the pandemic, there are currently 18% fewer carriages available to the GTR network as a whole relative to the 2019 position. The second is infrastructure investment to resolve the significant performance and capacity constraints posed by the Croydon area, to then enable additional services to run.



Funders should be clear that the railway will require investment and change to meet both the underlying growth on the network and to support the airport.

Given the challenging position for public finances, the benefit from a funding perspective of an “evergreen” source of secondary additional rail demand from the airport is significant. Our view is the discussion on sustainable surface access to the airport, would benefit from reframing - to see the Northern Runway project as a way of creating additional passenger journeys which through ticket revenue, can then help support the wider infrastructure business case needed for sustainable rail travel across the wider region. The wider Brighton Main Line and Sussex Coast already benefits from a high frequency service underpinned by demand for Gatwick.

More widely, London Gatwick has demonstrated its support for public transport and has worked with GTR, Network Rail and GWR in partnership to drive use of rail. This partnership has delivered significant improvements in recent years, including the expansion of Gatwick Airport Railway Station, and driving the use of public transport by staff working at or from the airport.

We have confidence that the airport is committed to increasing the modal share for public transport, and we recognise our role in delivering sustainable transport services alongside London Gatwick and within the wider transport network.

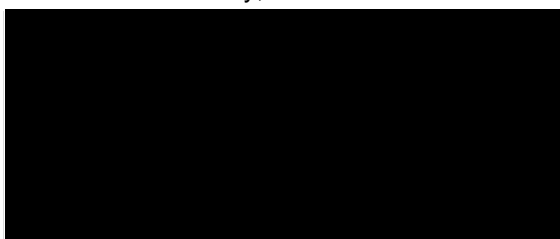
As specific elements of the proposed development consent, we endorse monitoring road traffic and transport mode shares for several years in advance of starting dual runway operations to enable London Gatwick to proactively shape its action plans.

The inclusion of ringfenced funding for rail is welcomed and GTR is ready to engage proactively with London Gatwick in its efforts to achieve its mode share targets.

There are undoubtedly challenges for capacity and performance on the Brighton Main Line, that will challenge the existing industry norms, including train service levels, resources, user experience, commercial and retail offerings and maintenance regimes to name just a few. As the Brighton Main Line will require significant investment in any scenario, the potential additional complexity introduced by the Northern Runway is outweighed by its benefits.

London Gatwick has demonstrated that it works as a partner, and we are therefore of the view that an additional source of passenger rail demand through the Northern Runway project is key in supporting the UK rail sector, Government and wider stakeholders to address these challenges.

Yours sincerely,



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