

EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY
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Dear Sirs

Gatwick Second Runway Consultation

The East Grinstead Society wishes to give its views on the Consultation Document entitled A Second Runway for Gatwick.

These comments are a distillation of those made by members of the Society who have visited one or more of the exhibitions at various sites in the immediate area surrounding Gatwick Airport. Some of the comments may appear to be rather specific to East Grinstead but we believe they are relevant to many communities in the area which would be particularly hard hit by the effects of a second runway at Gatwick.

The first point to make is that this exercise is not a true consultation but merely a menu of three options which presupposes the expansion of the airport in the first place. If proof were needed that the consultation is flawed one had only to listen to the Today programme on Radio 4 on May 13th when representatives of both Gatwick and Heathrow spoke about the final detailed submissions for runway expansion they had just made to the Airports Commission before this consultation had even been completed.

One must question whether any of the three options put forward by GAL would be sustainable or deliverable as they do not comply with national or international law. A particular issue is with regard to the EU Habitats Directive incorporated into UK law as the Habitats Regulations. These extend protection to the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area designated on Ashdown Forest. There is substantial evidence to indicate that the doubling of capacity at Gatwick on its own would have a significant impact on Ashdown Forest even before considering the impact of the associated housebuilding and additional economic activity that would result from GAL's proposals.

Let us now turn to the question of housebuilding and additional economic activity. The document essentially confines the information about the impact of these proposals to the immediate vicinity of the existing airport. It is virtually silent on the effects of the development further afield other than some small scale noise contour maps which are difficult to decipher and potential changes to the north/south transport links. There are no projected flight paths for the planes taking off from the new runways nor is there any acknowledgement of the infrastructural changes which will be brought about by the gradual influx of up to 17,000 new workers and their families. We are not claiming that all these people would want to live in and around East Grinstead but a substantial number of workers currently employed at Gatwick or in firms associated with the airport do currently and there is no reason to suppose that the proportion will diminish.

East Grinstead suffers from traffic congestion and pressure on the sort of services that new residents would require, utilities, health facilities, schools, leisure facilities etc,etc.The road network is demonstrably inadequate for the amount of housebuilding currently being undertaken in and around the town and could not cope with even a small proportion of the increases implied by the increased size of Gatwick Airport. Nor has the increase in east/west traffic from extra travellers that would arise as a result of these plans been taken into account. This cannot be ignored on the grounds that such traffic would confine itself to the motorway network, there can be no certainty that it would . The topography of Ashdown Forest and the Weald does not lend itself to the A264 and the A22 becoming motorways with the pollution implications for Ashdown Forest and the increased congestion in East Grinstead and the villages around.

When the representatives of GAL were quizzed at the exhibitions about the lack of any information about the implications of these developments for places beyond the immediate vicinity of the airport the best they could come up with was that this would have to be subject to negotiations with local councils later. Nothing was currently available. How can this be said to be a proper consultation if the public are not given sufficient information to make an informed decision? What does it say about an organisation that is promoting the doubling of the size of an airport but which cannot say what the flightpaths of the aircraft which will be using that airport will be?

N J Beale
Chairman