

A NEW GATWICK RUNWAY?

A Briefing Note By GACC. January 2013

1. Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) have stated that they will studying options for a new runway at Gatwick.¹
2. There have been some suggestions that any new runway would only be small and short, and would only handle small quiet aircraft.² But a very different impression is being given by GAL to bodies concerned with national airport issues. For example in written evidence to the Select Committee on Transport, GAL have stated that: “A new runway at Gatwick would enable the airport to grow to a similar size as Heathrow’s ultimate capacity as a two runway airport.”³
3. Even if the new runway were to be built as a short runway, all experience at Gatwick and at other airports around the world is that over a period of years short runways are extended to become full length runways. As GAL have stated: “A new [Gatwick] runway would not suffer from the physical capacity constraints of the relatively short third runway option at Heathrow.”⁴
4. Doubling the size of Gatwick would mean twice as many aircraft, twice the noise, twice the pollution, twice the airport-related road traffic, and new flight-paths over areas at present peaceful. For example, aircraft taking off towards the west on a new runway would probably be instructed to turn left – over Horsham. Aircraft approaching from the east would need to fly in two parallel streams about 1 km apart over East Grinstead and the Hever area.
5. Making Gatwick the same size as Heathrow today would require a new terminal, the size of T5 at Heathrow.
6. Doubling the size of Gatwick would approximately double the number of people employed at the airport. At present there are around 21,000 people employed at the airport. But GAL state that the total number of jobs provided by Gatwick, including indirect and induced employment is 41,700.⁵ Thus a new runway could be

expected to provide around 40,000 new jobs. That would be far in excess of any available pool of unemployment, and would involve a large inward migration of labour, additional housing, pressure on hospitals, schools and social services, and the urbanisation of rural areas.

7. A new runway would require major infrastructure changes - the A23 in a tunnel for 1½ miles, a new motorway access to the new terminal, widening the M23 and M25, and probably a new western bypass round Crawley. The increase in road traffic would cause serious delays at many road junctions. There would also be a need for major new railway infrastructure to avoid congestion at East Croydon, and the risk of a deteriorating overcrowded train service.
8. The Gatwick Airport Master Plan, July 2012, showed a full length runway 1035 m. south of the existing runway. This would only be about 400 yards from the residential area of Crawley, with the airport boundary only 100 yards away. Noise and pollution would have a serious impact on many of the 100,000 people living in Crawley. The plans show little space for noise barriers or landscaping. Trying to squeeze in a new western bypass south of the new runway would mean more noise and more property demolition.
9. A new runway to the north of the airport is ruled out by a sizeable hill, and by the fact that it would mean the virtual destruction of the medieval village of Charlwood which has a grade 1 Norman church and over 80 listed buildings. It would point straight at Horley.
10. A close parallel runway south of the existing runway sounds relatively harmless but in practice, because of the wake vortex problem, would add little to the capacity of the airport.
11. GAL have suggested that a new Gatwick runway would be preferable to one at Heathrow because fewer people would be affected by noise. But in fact large areas of Kent, Surrey and Sussex are already adversely affected by noise generated by Gatwick's operations. The area around Gatwick is not sparsely populated but has many large towns and villages. It is blessed with several areas of outstanding natural beauty such as Ashdown Forest, each offering tranquillity to about a million visitors a year. Aircraft noise is accentuated by low background noise.

12. UK passengers on return flights from Gatwick already create more climate change damage than the sum total of all other human activities in Surrey or in Sussex. A new runway would double that damage.

¹ <http://www.gatwickairport.com/newrunway/>

² For example, at a recent meeting of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership

³ Written Evidence to the Select Committee on Transport. December 2012.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmtran/writev/aviation/m68.htm>

Summary, third bullet point. The ultimate capacity of Heathrow is reckoned by the Department for Transport as around 80 million passengers a year, compared to Heathrow 69 million, Gatwick 34 million, at present.

⁴ Written Evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport. Summary, fifth bullet point.

⁵ Gatwick Master Plan 2012. Figure 8.2.

http://www.gatwickairport.com/Documents/business_and_community/Gatwick%20master%20plan/2012-07-18-GAL_Masterplan.pdf