

Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign **GACC**

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Runway opposed

GACC is opposed to the plans for a new Gatwick runway because we wish to protect the towns and villages and countryside of Surrey, Sussex and west Kent from the impact of an airport which would be bigger than Heathrow today. Indeed the plans show Gatwick growing from 34 million passengers today to around 90 million.

According to Brendon Sewill, chairman of GACC: **“When people begin to realise what is likely to hit them, there will be a tidal wave of public resistance.”**

The plans announced by Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) today are the opening shots in a long battle. When GACC has studied the plans in detail we will be putting in a counter submission to the Airports Commission - which is not due to report until summer 2015.

The plans make it clear that GAL's preferred option is the so-called wide-spaced runway - only a few hundred yards (or less?) from the residential area of Crawley. But amazingly little detail is given. No airport boundary is shown. No indication of where a new terminal (which would need to be bigger than T5) would be located. Previous studies have shown that there would be insufficient space for aircraft to congregate around a terminal or to manoeuvre between the runways.¹

Sewill said: ‘The plans confirm that Gatwick is too small ever to provide an efficient airport.’

GAL talk big and glossy about the future of Gatwick as a hub to match Heathrow but previous attempts to operate Gatwick as a hub – by Laker, BCAL, Dan-Air, and BA – have all ended in bankruptcy or failure.²

The GAL submission rules out a close parallel runway because ‘the capacity benefit is relatively small’. And rules out a middle width option because there would be no room for a new terminal.

An ominous threat hangs over the town of Horley and the medieval village of Charlwood (with its grade 1 Norman church and 80 listed buildings) in the sentence that options for a runway to the north of the airport will be included in later consultations.

The environmental cost of trying to build a full-scale new runway as shown in the plans would be high. It would mean

- Twice the noise;
- Twice the pollution risk to health locally;
- Twice the climate change damage;
- Twice the airport-related road traffic;
- New flight-paths over areas at present peaceful. It is significant that no details are given of potential new flight paths – GACC has shown where they may go.³

‘More jobs’ is often given as the reason for welcoming a new runway but in fact a doubling the size of Gatwick would require far more employment (both on the airport and in new firms in the area) than is available locally and would thus mean a massive in-migration of labour from other parts of the UK or EU. That would result in large scale new house-building; substantial pressure on the local hospitals and schools; road congestion; over-crowded trains; the urbanisation of large areas of Surrey and Sussex; and the loss of beautiful countryside and woodlands.

Sewill added: ‘In fact there is no need for any new runway in the South East. With Stansted less than half full, and with new larger aircraft coming into use, there is sufficient airport capacity to last until 2050.⁴ Indeed that is why GACC stands shoulder to shoulder with our colleagues at Heathrow and Stansted, and with CPRE, Friends of the Earth, WWF, the RSPB and the Aviation Environment Federation in opposing any new runway.’

In the immediate future GACC will be concentrating on building up our membership and raising funds. ‘We may be David to an airport Goliath’ said Sewill, ‘but we have a few stones in our sling.’

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¹ Admitted in Gatwick Master Plan July 2012. Paragraph 10.3.6

² See www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news (Airport Operational Models)

³ See www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news

⁴ The average number of passengers per plane at Heathrow and Gatwick is 143. If over the next fifteen years it goes up to 180, that would be equivalent to one extra runway.