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New flight paths revealed

Double whammy for Horsham

The Airports Commission has produced a plan showing possible new flight paths if a new runway were to be built at Gatwick.¹ This has been unearthed by GACC from the mass of documents published last week. A copy of the plan is attached.

Brendon Sewill, Chairman of GACC, commented: 'The recent changes to flight paths are causing widespread anger across West and East Sussex, Surrey and Kent. This new revelation will make people even more concerned. Everyone will have the opportunity to express their opposition at the GACC Protest Meeting this Saturday 22 November at the Apple Tree Centre, Ifield Avenue, Crawley where the doors will open at 1.00pm.'

Although the plans are described as 'illustrative', certain conclusions can be drawn. Aircraft departing from the existing runway are shown using the present flight paths, except that - to avoid flight paths crossing - none will use routes to the south. Thus the number of aircraft using the present routes (except to the south) would roughly double.

All aircraft departing from the new runway towards the west are shown as using two new flight paths, one over Warnham and North Horsham (on the track of the immensely unpopular ADNID trial); and one turning sharp left to fly over the eastern side of Horsham. Since these two flight paths would need to take all aircraft taking-off to the west from the new runway, Horsham - on one side or the other - would experience one plane a minute.

As Sewill said: 'This would be a double whammy for Horsham - one plane a minute over the town. Some people who have been keen to support a new runway may now find they need to think again'

All aircraft taking off from the new runway to the east are shown as turning right to take a route close to East Grinstead. Some aircraft already use this route but with a new runway it would be one plane a minute - almost continuous noise.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371854/14-operational-efficiency--airspace.pdf page 39

Arriving aircraft are shown as taking two concentrated flight paths to the east and two to the west. Sewill said: 'GACC has been pressing NATS (air traffic control) to replace these concentrated routes by multiple routes but even so doubling the number of aircraft would ruin any remaining tranquillity in Ashdown Forest or the rural parts of West Sussex.'

In a consultation earlier this year NATS suggested that all arriving aircraft should be directed to 'merge-points', and the Airport Commission map shows a 'merge-point' (or perhaps two 'merge-points') in the vicinity of Haywards Heath. Sewill commented: 'The poor people under what are called the 'merge-points' would find every single aircraft over their heads.'

Experience in the past year has confirmed that new flight paths - and especially concentrated flight paths - over peaceful areas cause massive anger and distress because the previous quiet is shattered, expectations of tranquillity brutally destroyed, house values depreciated and people left trapped unable to move away without serious financial loss.

Notes

Gatwick with two runways is planned to handle 560,000 air traffic movements a year, compared to 250,000 a year at present.² At busy times of day at present aircraft take-off or land at a rate of nearly one a minute. With a new runway it would be nearly two a minute.

It is proposed that each runway should be used for both landing and take-off as with the present runway.

Five MPs and many Councillors will be attending the protest meeting on 22 November.

² Airports Commission Consultation Document. November 2014. paragraph 3.11