

## RESPONSE TO GATWICK'S MASTERPLAN

### Town Forum and TWAANG oppose Gatwick's Masterplan

Gatwick Airport has announced that it intends to proceed with expansion plans which include:

- making better use of its existing main runway through improved techniques for handling air traffic;
- making routine use of its standby runway for departing flights;
- protecting the land that would be required if it obtained permission for a third runway.

***The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum<sup>1</sup> and TWAANG<sup>2</sup> protest against the Gatwick Master Plan. There are serious consequences for Tunbridge Wells, the surrounding villages and wonderful countryside, with devastating increases in noise, pollution and traffic congestion from an expanding Gatwick.***

In 2013 Gatwick changed the way it handled arrivals and sent significant numbers of incoming flights over Tunbridge Wells and the adjacent villages such as Langton Green, Rushall and Speldhurst. In addition, Gatwick has increased the number of flights since 2013 by over 13% (CAA figures). Gatwick forecast that, with the standby runway change of use, the number of flights could increase from today's numbers by 30% by 2028, and almost 40% by 2033 (Master Plan figures).

### Gatwick expansion rejected by Davies Commission

Heathrow's third runway is not yet a certainty and if it were to fail then Gatwick would press even harder for approval for a new runway - the proposal rejected by the Davies Commission in 2015. This would put the airport's capacity close to that of Heathrow. As the Master Plan puts it, 'An additional runway would add significant capacity to the existing airport, approximately doubling its size.' A massive investment in appropriate infrastructure such as roads, housing etc would be needed and a thus a major burden on local taxpayers.

The Tunbridge Wells conurbation is not only the largest and most densely populated area affected by Gatwick's activities, but it also contains a large number of sensitive sites such as Schools, Hospitals and Nursing Homes as well as nearby historic buildings and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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<sup>1</sup> Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

<sup>2</sup> TWAANG is a member of the Town Forum and a member of the Noise Management Board for Gatwick Airport, the body that provided a voice for concerned local communities, recently suspended by the airport's management

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#### Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alex Green (Deputy Chair); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Linda Lewis (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); Marianna MacDonald (Wellbeing) Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

More arrivals traffic will not only increase the frequency of disturbance, but also the pressure we already see, for flights to be forced eastwards further over the town at peak times on their approach towards Gatwick.

### **More evening and night-time disturbance in densely populated area.**

The current high level of arrivals activity from mid-evening into the early hours of the morning causes sleep disturbance with health, education and work performance consequences. A substantial part of this comes from flights that are delayed during the day, and ever-increasing traffic exacerbates the problem. It is totally inappropriate for Gatwick to increase further evening and night-time disturbance in a densely populated area.

There was a 'public consultation' over the Master Plan during the autumn of 2018. Gatwick claims that its plans had 66% support for maximising the use of its existing capacity. What they do not mention is that much of the support came from areas unaffected by its operational disturbance - Brighton and Croydon are examples. Closer inspection shows that all Local Authorities and Councils nearest to the airport, along with Environmental and Action groups, were very much more critical. The Coordination Group of local MPs expresses serious concerns about the plans, particularly as they fly in the face of Parliament's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency.

### **Time to challenge Gatwick's plans for expansion**

Gatwick has a legitimate interest in developing its business, but local communities (and the wider public) are entitled to live healthy, tranquil and productive lives. These plans do not offer a fair balance between these competing interests and need to be challenged. The planning approval process is a lengthy one and involves close scrutiny and further consultation. We need to take all opportunities that are presented to us to shape a set of changes at Gatwick that ensure that the airport continues to thrive but that it makes a proper contribution to reducing its impact and meeting any costs that it creates.

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