

**Report to:** Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

**Date of meeting:** 24 October 2023

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Gatwick Northern Runway Proposal Development Consent Order – East Sussex County Council response

**Purpose:** To update on the outcomes of the Full Council debate on Gatwick’s Northern Runway Proposal held on 10 October and outline the draft Relevant Representations that will be submitted in response to the current Development Consent Order application

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Development and Economic Development is recommended to:

- (1) Note the key points raised at the Full Council debate held on 10 October 2023 in relation to Gatwick’s Northern Runway Proposal and its current Development Consent Order application outlined in paragraph 2.2;
- (2) Agree the key issues outlined in Appendix 1 be included in the County Council’s Relevant Representations to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 29 October 2023 in response to the Northern Runway Proposal Development Consent Order application; and
- (3) Delegate authority, subject to recommendation 2 above, to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to agree the content of the final Relevant Representation submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 29 October 2023.

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## **1 Background Information**

1.1 In response to the Government’s 2018 Aviation Strategy and Policy Paper ‘Making the best use of existing runways’, Gatwick’s 2019 Masterplan presented their Northern Runway Project (NRP) for the potential use of the standby runway, north of the existing main runway, to enable dual runway operations which would increase the capacity and passenger throughput of the airport. The northern runway would be utilised by smaller aircraft for take-off whilst the main runway would continue to be used by larger aircraft for take-off and by all aircraft for landing.

1.2 The County Council has regularly engaged and responded to consultations on Gatwick’s NRP since 2021 to ensure that those living in and visiting East Sussex are appropriately represented, and it will continue to do so. The focus of the Council’s responses and engagement through the various topic working groups undertaken by Gatwick Airport on their proposals has been in relation to surface access, economy, noise, air quality, carbon, climate change and health. In doing so, the Council has worked collaboratively with other local authorities to ensure common issues and concerns are raised collectively to strengthen the voice and ensure these are fully considered and addressed by Gatwick in their proposals.

1.3 Neither the County Council nor the other local authorities in the vicinity of the airport are the decision making authority on Gatwick’s Development Consent Order (DCO) application. As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, the DCO application is

considered by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) as the Examining Authority who will make their recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport; it will then be for the Secretary of State to make the final decision on the application.

1.4 Gatwick submitted their DCO application to PINS on 7 July 2023. Despite the collective concerns raised by the local Gatwick authorities on the adequacy of Gatwick's consultation ahead of submission, the DCO application was approved by PINS on 6 August 2023.

1.5 Following the acceptance of the DCO application the process moves into its next stages. The Council has further opportunities through its Relevant Representations at 'Pre-examination' Stage, as well as its Written Representations and Local Impact Report (LIR) submission at 'Examination' Stage, to highlight any concerns and issues regarding the NRP, and in the event of the proposal being approved, what mitigations should be in place. It is important that the views of Councillors are sought to help inform the Council's responses to the DCO application. At the decision making meeting on 28 September 2023, the Leader and Lead Member resolved to seek the views of Full Council on Gatwick Airport Limited's NRP DCO and the key topic areas affecting East Sussex at a proposed full council debate on 10 October 2023.

1.6 The Leader and Lead Member resolved to consider a further report in early November on the outcomes of the debate and the Council's response to Gatwick's NRP. The consideration of this report has been brought forward from early November to ensure that the outcomes of the Full Council debate and the key issues to be raised are agreed ahead of the submission of the Council's Relevant Representation to PINS by 29 October 2023.

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 A Full Council debate was held on 10 October 2023 in relation to the key topic areas which are considered most likely to affect East Sussex, those being surface access, economy, noise, air quality, carbon, climate change and health.

2.2 The following key points under each of these topic areas were raised during the Full Council debate:

### Surface Access

- Consideration of the impacts of airport growth on the strategic road network (e.g. M25) alongside East Sussex County Council's (ESCC's) highway network beyond the immediate environment of the airport with the necessary mitigations should be referenced more strongly, alongside the timely delivery of infrastructure to mitigate any impacts.
- Whilst there was recognition of the need to demonstrate improving access by bus/coach to the airport from parts of the county, reference should also be made to ensure that rail infrastructure and services are in place to accommodate the increase in demand and capacity that will arise should the NRP go ahead.
- The need to strengthen the reference for measures that reduce traffic through sensitive locations near and through Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) and along the A22.
- That our response on surface access should not counter the direction of the East Sussex emerging Local Transport Plan 4.

### Economy

- The adequacy of the evidence which has been presented by Gatwick Airport on the economic benefits of the NRP on the Gatwick authorities, including East Sussex.
- There is a recognition that Gatwick does provide potential employment opportunities for East Sussex residents across the spectrum of jobs available at or within the vicinity of the airport.

- That the expanded airport provides opportunities to support local industry and the potential export of goods.
- That the airport expansion and potential passengers flying into the UK via Gatwick would support our visitor economy, as well as the wider south east.

#### Noise

- The detrimental effect of night flights on local communities, especially the north of the county, and to strongly emphasise the need to restrict flights to certain hours or cap the number of night flights.

#### Air Quality

- The need for further clarification on what Gatwick Airport considered to be ‘minor adverse significant effects’ in relation to air quality impacts on Ashdown Forest.
- Further clarity needed on the baseline information that has been used to assess air quality and that this is worst case.
- Further clarity needed on the air quality assessment scenarios; how air quality will be monitored, evaluated and reported to local authorities, and the robustness of the air quality model that has been used.
- Further clarity required on whether the embodied carbon from construction has been considered in the assessment.

#### Climate Change

- The potential over-reliance of Gatwick on new and emerging technology in aircraft and fuels in their case for reducing carbon emissions – for example there may be an unwarranted level of confidence in the introduction of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) being delivered in a timely manner to achieve this reduction.

#### Environment and Carbon

- That the NRP and additional runway capacity is not in alignment with the Council’s strategy towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Clarification is required on how the proposal aligns with the dark skies policy.

#### Health

- That the air pollution generated by the additional traffic demand generated by the increased number of passengers as well as increased emissions generated by additional flights to and from the airport needs to be adequately assessed.

2.3 A number of the key points raised during the Full Council debate were already reflected in the summary of the key issues for inclusion in our draft Relevant Representation at Appendix 1.

2.4 In addition to the previously identified topic areas, the Full Council debate also highlighted the need to include Biodiversity Net Gain as an issue in ESCC’s Relevant Representation. Whilst this is a greater issue for areas in the immediate environs of the airport itself, there is the wider biodiversity net gain impacts on environmentally sensitive designated areas in the county such as the Ashdown Forest.

2.5 The recommended additional points to be included in ESCC’s draft Relevant Representation following the outcome of the Full Council debate are shown in bold in Appendix 1. All these key points will be further elaborated on in our Written Representations and Local Impact Report submitted to be later this year ahead of the Examination stage which is expected to commence in early 2024.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The County Council has regularly engaged and responded to consultations on Gatwick’s NRP since 2021 to ensure that those living in and visiting East Sussex are appropriately represented, and it will continue to do so.

3.2 Following the acceptance of Gatwick's DCO application in August 2023 by PINS, the Council has further opportunities to highlight any concerns and issues regarding the NRP, and in the event of the proposal being approved what mitigations should be in place through the submission of its Relevant Representation by 29 October 2023, and its Written Representations and Local Impact Report ahead of the Examination stage in early 2024.

3.3 It was important that the views of Full Council were sought to help inform the Council's responses at the respective stages in the DCO application process. The Full Council debate held on 10 October 2023 centred around the key topic areas of surface access, economy, noise, air quality, carbon, climate change and health. The Leader and Lead Member is asked to note the key points raised, as set in Section 2 of the report, by Full Council in its debate on 10 October 2023.

3.4 The outcomes of the full Council debate have been reflected (in bold) in the summary of the key issues to be included in the draft County Council's Relevant Representation response to the Northern Runway Proposal DCO application at Appendix 1. The Leader and Lead Member is asked to agree these key issues which will inform our Relevant Representation submission to PINS. This will be signed off by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport or Assistant Director, Economy by the deadline date of 29 October 2023.

**RUPERT CLUBB**

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None