

I have listened to much of the hearing so far. I do not think that the applicant has followed government policy as they claim this application is in order to make best use of existing facilities. However, this is a new runway in all but name and not just best use of existing facilities. The construction work proposed to the emergency runway is enormous and the potential disruption plus future noise from additional aircraft overhead is not acceptable.

The applicant claims to be helping businesses, but it seems this only applies to airport based and related businesses. Many others throughout Sussex, Kent and Surrey will be harmed by this development. Any business that is based on outdoor activities or tranquility that finds itself subject to additional aircraft noise will be harmed such as heritage visitor sites, beer gardens, country house hotels, wedding venues, film locations, campsites, B&Bs etc. Workers may also be poached by the airport.

The Ashdown Forest and surrounding villages would be particularly vulnerable as aircraft noise from Gatwick arrivals and traffic to and from Gatwick are already too much. The Ashdown Forest is an environmentally important site within the AONB (SSSI, SPA), a national tourist attraction, and is also much loved by children throughout this country and far beyond as the home of Winnie the Pooh as featured in all the AA Milne books and recent Disney films. Many people visit the Ashdown Forest because of the AA Milne history. Gatwick should not be allowed to put its profit and/or resale value before the environment, our heritage and the wellbeing of residents who would be exposed to much more noise. This new runway would make Gatwick almost as big as Heathrow is today and people do not generally choose to spend their leisure time near to Heathrow for obvious reasons. Why then should Gatwick be allowed to impose its noise on residents and all those rural businesses in this area making them suffer ill health and financial loss.

I watched the noise hearing on 6th March. I was disappointed and wish to comment.

1. The applicant had paid insufficient attention to the impact of noise both during construction phase and on the wider community from increased aircraft noise. I would like to have seen more intense questioning as my impression was of an applicant that was dismissive of the noise it creates on communities who have no say over what happens over their heads. I do not understand why the hearing stopped so early.

2. There was no mention of the impact of increased noise from a busier Gatwick will have on rural businesses that are leisure/tourism based. Airport based businesses have a disproportionately loud voice. What about country house hotels, B&Bs, campsites, heritage attractions, wedding venues and filming locations such as the Bluebell Railway, Penshurst Place, Buckhurst Park, Hever Castle, Hammerwood House and the very many businesses serving outdoor leisure activities. No sane person will want to spend time outdoors with jets passing overhead very two minutes. These businesses will suffer from Gatwick noise.

3. The Ashdown Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Protected Area as well as AONB and already suffers from too much noise from Gatwick operations. Please look at the Ashdown Forest website for information about it and the Ashdown Forest Facebook page. It is held in great affection by local people, much used for outdoor healthy activities and Gatwick noise damages the tranquility. It is an environmental gem and home to many threatened species that depend on lowland heath. Please consider the impact that more Gatwick noise, more Gatwick road traffic, more Gatwick housing pressure, more Gatwick pollution will have on this precious, protected area. I am also concerned that the Future Airspace Strategy changes for the South East could bring even more concentrated air traffic right over the Ashdown Forest and associated villages and hamlets. It is also home to Winnie the Pooh and so Ashdown Forest is an international tourist attraction which is now at the mercy of Gatwick expansion.

4. Winnie the Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Owl, Tigger and Roo are beloved childhood heroes from the Ashdown Forest. The centenary is in 2026, I believe, and Disney has the copyright. Does Disney know what adverse noise and traffic impact Gatwick has planned for Winnie the Pooh's home? I hope that members of the Planning Inspectorate have the same affection for AA Milne's characters that millions of children the world over have and will stand up for those who do not have a voice.