

Lewes District Council
Response to Gatwick 2nd Runway Examination
12 March 2024

Response uploaded onto consultation website

To the Examining Authority,

Lewes District Council welcomes the opportunity for local authorities to submit representations by 12th March to the examination process.

We recently included within our new Corporate Plan a restatement of our intention to be a net zero carbon and climate resilient council and district by 2030. Tackling the climate crisis and nature emergencies is central to all our activities. A second runway will produce a significant amount of carbon and greenhouse emissions at a time of commitment to their reduction. Airport expansion on the scale proposed would substantially increase the CO2 emissions and other climate effects associated with Gatwick's operations and more aircraft movements. These include air quality impacts as well as noise pollution affecting the tranquility of the district's countryside within and outside the South Downs National Park. We therefore cannot support the expansion as proposed.

It is extremely challenging to adequately digest all of the relevant documentation submitted in relation to economic impacts. There would appear to be widely separate, inconsistent and debated economic arguments and uncertainties. For Lewes District this proposal is inextricably linked to connectivity and transport infrastructure. For example will employment opportunities expand for our residents or will this place just more stress upon house prices and infrastructure?

Any expansion of Gatwick is very likely to have a detrimental impact on traffic and associated air quality issues in our district. An increase from 46 million passengers in 2019 to 80 million passengers per annum (over 70% growth) without there being scope to increase rail capacity will inevitably increase congestion impacting the whole area. We would question whether the proposed expansion conforms with TfSE strategic plan aspirations. We would further ask that more work is undertaken on the overall impacts upon the whole of the south-east.

Whilst the airport is accessible by rail from Lewes District, train services are still limited to approximately hourly on the line between Wivelsfield and Lewes serving Plumpton and Cooksbridge. These same services also crucially connect the district to London and are important for commuting residents and the district's economy. The Council has aspirations for improved rail services related to existing infrastructure pressures and local housing growth. We seek assurances that airport expansion will not result in a shift in train services using the Gatwick - London line away from serving Lewes District to services focused on airport users. It is unclear what measures would be considered for increasing rail capacity that do not have knock-on effects on existing access to London by Lewes residents in terms of very challenged levels of train services.

It is understood that limited capacity for growth on the London - Gatwick - Brighton line is a fundamental issue for future growth and prosperity in the wider region. The relationship between Gatwick expansion and the potential re-opening of the railway line between Uckfield and Lewes should be explored. This would deliver strategic and widespread benefits in terms of alternative London - Brighton services alleviating strain on the London - Gatwick - Brighton line. It is understood that TfSE has aspirations to reinstate the former Uckfield to Lewes railway line to increase the resilience of wider rail connectivity between the South Coast and London. The emerging new Lewes Local Plan proposes to continue to oppose development that would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of the Uckfield to Lewes railway line.

Finally, we would be happy to participate further in the examination process in relation to any of the points in our response and if in the meantime you have any queries please do contact us.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Laurence O'Connor
Lewes District Council