

I would like to first address the decision to schedule the Climate Change Issue Specific Hearing for May 1st and the Open Floor Hearing for May 2nd. I believe this scheduling is undemocratic as it conflicts with both local elections and potentially the general election. Many citizens across the country may find it challenging to participate fully in the democratic process and attend these hearings simultaneously. Therefore, I strongly urge for these dates to be reconsidered.

As a pilot working at Gatwick Airport, I am vehemently opposed to the proposed expansion of Gatwick (LGW) through the development of a new Northern Runway. My objections span several critical areas, including concerns about climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, impacts on the water environment (such as sewage, flooding, and water over abstraction), traffic congestion, air quality deterioration (from both road transport and increased aircraft fuel pollution), noise pollution, night flights, ecological disruption, biodiversity loss, and the potential impact on housing prices for local residents in Horsham during the lengthy 15-year construction period.

Here are some key concerns I have:

Induced demand: Gatwick Airport is already operating beyond capacity, particularly during the summer months. Allowing further expansion could exacerbate congestion issues by increasing air traffic. If Gatwick is allowed to expand its slot capacity by 40% it is my concern Gatwick will sell more than 40% more slots. Leading us back to where we are now with an over crowded airport just with even more planes in the hold wasting fuel. Is there any way for Gatwick to have a limit of flights like Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS)? Would a 2nd runway with traffic capped at current levels reduce emissions? (Less holding).

Climate Emergency: There is a pressing climate emergency, and the aviation industry must contribute to reducing carbon emissions. Simply relying on efficiency savings and tax breaks to drive growth is insufficient. Any expansion of Gatwick Airport should not be justified solely on economic grounds. If consent is granted for expansion, there should be a binding cap on aviation CO2 emissions to ensure accountability and mitigate environmental impact.

Climate Change: Climate change poses significant challenges that must be addressed in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. LGW must acknowledge and take responsibility for the emissions generated by flights from the airport. Increasing Gatwick to the size of Heathrow, would make it as big as the UK's single largest climate polluter. LGW's claims that the climate impact is "insignificant" are misleading and must be refuted with evidence-based assessments. How can LGW becoming the size of the UK's largest climate polluter be "insignificant"?

Worst-Case Environmental Impact: There is a notable failure from LGW to accurately assess the worst-case scenario for environmental impact. With the projected increase in passenger numbers from 40.9 million passengers per annum (mppa) in 2023 to 80.2 mppa in 2047, it's crucial to evaluate potential consequences comprehensively. Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) has compared environmental impacts against a future baseline of 67 mppa in 2047, representing only one-third of the projected increase. However, Environmental Assessment guidance emphasizes evaluating impacts against the realistic worst-case scenario. It's essential that the modelling, scenarios, and actual impacts are compared to both the current situation and a future case without any increase in flights or passengers. This approach would provide a comprehensive assessment of the full impact of Gatwick's expansion, ensuring that future environmental and local impacts are no worse than the present condition.

Transport Infrastructure: Gatwick Airport (LGW) should model transport scenarios that account for no growth in car usage and no exacerbation of overcrowding on the rail network, taking into consideration luggage space constraints. This would necessitate the introduction of new train services to and from the airport, potentially extending to connections between London and the South Coast. Given the current overcrowding on trains, where passengers often stand for over 20 minutes during peak times, addressing this issue is paramount to ensure efficient and comfortable transportation for passengers.

Poor Quality of River Mole: GAL must address the existing poor quality of the River Mole, including Gatwick Airport's potential contribution to sewage overflow incidents and downstream flooding. It's imperative to conduct thorough assessments and implement measures to mitigate any adverse effects on the river's water quality and ecosystem.

Addressing these concerns is essential to safeguarding the health and integrity of the River Mole and surrounding areas.

Sussex North Water Zone: The impacts of over-abstraction in the Sussex North Water Zone need to be carefully addressed by the Applicant. Given that water resources have no boundaries, it is essential to ensure that the project does not contribute to further depletion or degradation of water sources in this area. GAL should provide legal guarantees in perpetuity to prevent water extraction from the Hardham site or any location within the Sussex North Water Zone. The Examination Authority (ExA) must conduct a thorough examination of this aspect to safeguard irreplaceable habitats and ecosystems from potential harm arising from the project. It's crucial to prioritize the protection of water resources and the preservation of habitats for the long-term sustainability of the environment.

I will finish with a quote from Brighton Pavilion Green MP, Caroline Lucas, who echoes my thoughts: "As the planetary emergency grows ever more rapidly, it's ridiculous we're still even having this conversation about expanding runways whether at Gatwick or anywhere else. The Government's own independent climate advisors have been crystal clear: building any new runways at all would be fundamentally incompatible with meeting the UK's climate change commitments."

Thank you.