

# **Abinger Parish Council presentation for Open Hearing re the DCO application by Gatwick Airport Limited - Interested Party Reference number: 20044695.**

## **Introduction:**

My name is Edward Bigland and I am here to represent the views of Abinger Parish Council. I have lived in Abinger for 51 years and have been a Parish Councillor since 2020.

The recent application by GAL to build a second runway and increase flights does not have Abinger Parish Council's support nor do we agree with stated benefits or demand for the development.

## **Background**

Abinger Parish Council covers over 11 square miles, from Abinger Hammer at the north through to Oakwood Hill in the south. Abinger Parish is made up of a number of rural communities and is home to over 1800 residents from the villages of Abinger Hammer, Abinger Common, part of Holmbury St. Mary, Forest Green, Walliswood and Oakwood Hill. We are in the Green Belt, AONB and Leith Hill SSSI, boasting indigenous wildlife, flora, and fauna. Our settlements are approximately 12 kilometres from Gatwick Airport.

While local people accept the benefits of having an airport in this area, and have grown used to aircraft noise and a busy road, any further increase to the current levels of traffic, both in the air and on the surface, are not acceptable to the majority of these villages.

## **Surface transport**

The A25 is already a busy road as an artery between east and west. The M25 is subject to frequent closures or problems, and the A25 is an approved diversionary route which increases traffic through the villages to a very high level. The A25 is frequently slow due to normal traffic volumes. Many motorists, frustrated by the frequent delays on the M25/A25 will also take short cuts along country lanes through the rural areas via Abinger and Ockley to the villages of Leigh and Charlwood to the airport. The infrastructure in this area and current state of the roads cannot sustain further increases in traffic. Most recently, there have been serious gas leaks on the A25 and water leaks on Leith Hill Road leading to prolonged road closures. Gatwick's proposal for a new runway does not allocate any funds to handle the increased traffic flow on our Parish's rural roads, doubling passenger numbers and hence road use.

Gatwick night flights have been steadily increasing since 2014, and while diminished during the pandemic, they are now back at 2019 levels. It is understood that a further increase of 70% is forecast by GAL. This also applies to freight flights and my understanding is that the present pattern of flights is set to continue for a further three years. All this extra activity will result in additional traffic on our local roads during an otherwise quiet period.

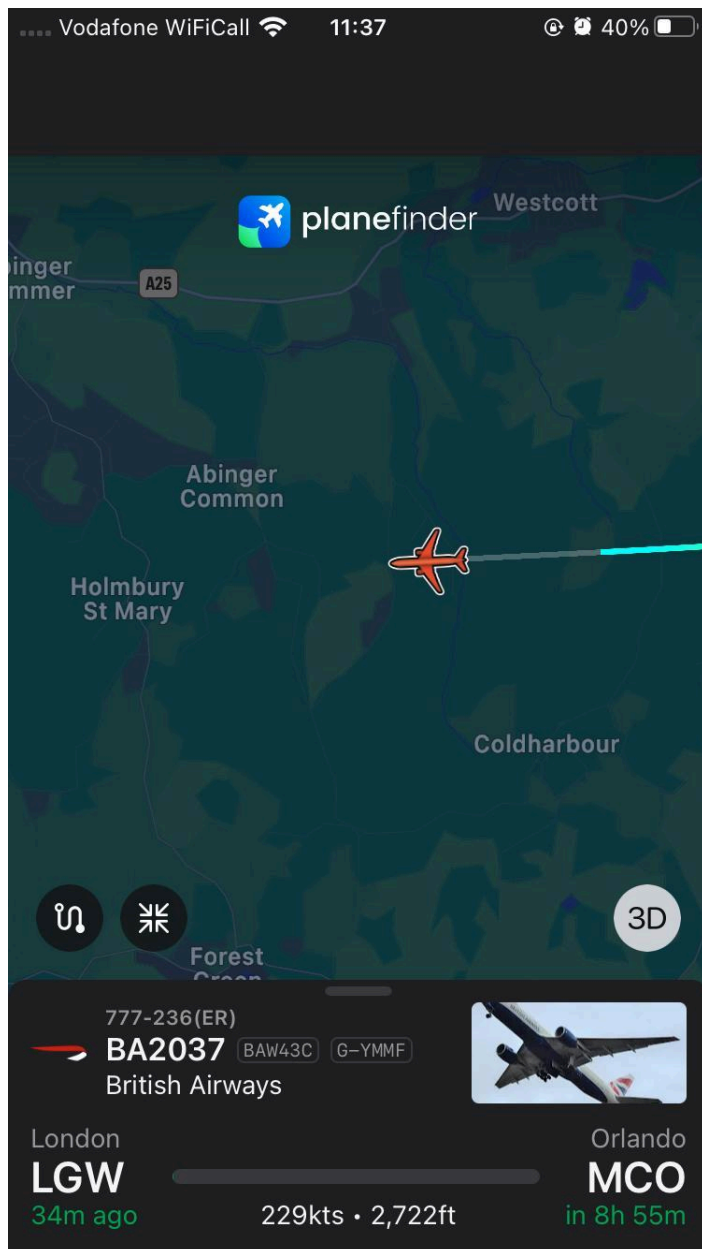
The North Downs railway runs through the north side of the A25 through Dorking with connections to Gatwick. Again, there has been no allocation for additional rail services on an already busy single line. Any increase in rail traffic would be detrimental in terms of noise and effect on the environment.

Increase in cargo at this airport can only result in significant increase in white van movements day and night plus the inward movements of sustainable aviation fuel as there is a lack of infrastructure at Gatwick to have this piped into the airport.

## **Air traffic**

Abinger Parish already experiences aircraft noise/pollution from flight departures and arrivals from both Gatwick and from helicopter and light aircraft traffic flying the east/west corridor over Abinger Hammer, Abinger Common, part of Holmbury St. Mary, Forest Green, Walliswood and Oakwood Hill. Departing aircraft from Gatwick frequently overfly all the settlements in the Parish but are particularly bad over Abinger Common, Walliswood and Okewood Hill.

During easterly departures on Route 3, take-offs over Abinger Common consistently fly below 3,000 feet, well below CAA regulations. These PRNAV routes are highly concentrated, which means that doubling the number of flights would make an already insufferable situation completely unbearable for residents already underneath low-flying aircraft. Plane movements are reported to double, so every minute would become every 30 seconds. See an example enclosed an Easyjet plane flying at 2,722ft. Coupled with the fact that Abinger Common is already 800ft above sea level this means the flights over the houses are actually at 1,922ft in reality. We would push for FASIS South routes to be redesigned to raise the height limit of Route 3 to be 4500ft, planes taking off steeper to 4000ft before being vectored off to their destination sooner than Leith Hill.



Walliswood and Okewood likewise already experience low-flying departures and arrivals, again doubling these numbers is inconceivable for parishioners living on or around satellite-guided flight paths severely diminishing house values worthless and making their gardens 'no-go zones'. Already, based on the proposal alone, mortgage companies are refusing mortgages to homes close to the airport; this will also affect homes on these further-concentrated flight paths.

While people may be able to insulate their houses against some of the noise effects, it is impossible to apply this notion to the enjoyment of their gardens and outside space during the daylight hours. This also can require windows to be shut whatever the overnight temperature.

Night flights are particularly intrusive and the debilitating effect of disturbed sleep on health and welfare is well documented.

### **Flooding**

The plans for further resurfacing will have an adverse effect on wildlife in terms of oil runoff pollution and flooding for the Mole River and wider region.

### **Environment and Climate**

Abinger Parish Council encourages the Parish settlements to adopt 'green' policies to avert the effects of climate change. We are also aware that the river Mole is subject to pollution. Any further pollution would endanger these policies and the wildlife.

This area as stated is one of outstanding natural beauty, and a further expansion of the airport encouraging road and air traffic will potentially increase CO2 emissions and pollution to an unacceptable environmental level. This would also apply to the construction period of the airport facilities when increased traffic would be passing through the area.

Several questions have been left unanswered such as - Where will the waste be transported to from the waste sorting site?

### **Economics**

Abinger Parish Council is aware of the New Economics Forum's economic forecasts questioning the accuracy of forecasts about the future of air travel, which appears to be principally commercially driven, and no account has been taken of the social and environmental costs to this area and to those of the outlying villages around Gatwick. Business travel has dropped off with the advent of video calling, the proposed jobs are non-existent as more roles are automated and the jobs that have remained have been lower paid than prior to Covid 19. The economic case for expansion is not realistic and the proposed benefits are not there; if anything, additional cheap flights are an economic drain away from the UK and the population spends their holiday money elsewhere.

There is currently a lack of existing workforce to fill current job vacancies let alone the supposed 14,000 job vacancies Gatwick says it will create.

### **Summary**

- Abinger Parish Council strongly opposes the plans of GAL to expand the airport through commercial use of the emergency northern runway.

- Gatwick does not have sufficient infrastructure to facilitate the kind of expansion it is proposing, hence Heathrow was given permission for an additional runway in the Davies Report.
- There is only one train line which is already too busy to accommodate the millions of passengers proposed.
- The road network is not sufficient for the increase in road traffic predicted; the rural roads are already in a state of disrepair in many cases and since Gatwick has made no allocation for repairs, then the rural roads traffic would be unworkable.
- The application makes no reference to the increased CO2 emissions that the additional capacity would cause or how this would tally with the UK Government's legally-binding commitments to Net Zero by 2050. At the time when the world is facing catastrophic consequences of surpassing the 1.5 degree limit set by the Paris Treaty and this last summer was the hottest summer on record with a 1.4 degree increase above pre-industrial levels it would be preposterous to suggest a further expansion and doubling of flights in and out of Gatwick.
- Gatwick is wholly unsuitable for expansion which is why it was not chosen by the Davies Report. Southend, Southampton and Bournemouth are all better suited to expansion if it were required, which the New Economics Forum has proved it is not.
- The application is not inline with policy of 'making best use of existing runway' as there is only one runway at any one time that can be flown at Gatwick Airport; as such, this must be seen as a new runway with the appropriate space between runways for safe taxiing and take off/landing.
- There is not adequate funding to meet the additional pressure placed on surface transport, lack of affordable housing and amenities. A project of this size is unsustainable.
- The increase in noise would impact Abinger Parish which is outside of the noise envelope being offered by Gatwick Airport as we are outside the 51 decibel day and 45 decibel night contours. Our Parish receives no compensation currently nor would it receive compensation with a new proposed runway.
- The impact on the carbon figures for the UK would be significantly increased, as much as 5% alone, by such an increase in aircraft movements; as such, it should not be approved at this time, when aviation is struggling to find alternative fuels to displace its current demands for fossil fuel.
- Other environmental impacts are of concern such as decline in air quality, biodiversity impact, flooding, lack of sewage treatment plants not to mention the disturbance of 14 years of construction traffic.

Ultimately Heathrow was awarded an additional runway by the Davies Report, taking up any extra demand for flights in the South East. Therefore this is no requirement for extra capacity as it has already been allocated to Heathrow which has the infrastructure to support it.

APC do not support the proposal that Gatwick are, 'making the best use of an existing runway' but are actually applying for a completely new runway which is not required, not supported (consultation has been lacking West and East of the runway) and not feasible from a logistical, environmental or economic perspective.

**Councillor Bigland**