

The Planning Inspectorate

7 August 2024

our ref: ESCC/GAL/NRP/DCO

Dear Sir/Madam

**Gatwick Northern Runway Project (Project Reference: TR020005)
East Sussex County Council Registration Identification Number: 20044514
Deadline 8 [REP8-] Submission**

Please accept this letter as our response to Deadline 8 of Gatwick Airport's Northern Runway Project Development Consent Order Public Inquiry.

Firstly, I would like to provide confirmation that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) are supportive of the Joint Local Authorities (JLA) responses being submitted at Deadline 8 titled 'Joint Local Authorities Response to the Applicant's Deadline 7 Submission [REP7-095]'.

We are particularly supportive of Section 8 of the JLA response, notably that the Joint Local Authorities (excluding Kent) submitted a tracked change version of the Surface Access Commitments at Deadline 7. The changes that the Joint Local Authorities considered are required to the SACs [REP7-043] and as set out in the Joint Local Authorities Deadline 7 Submission, Response to the Applicant's Deadline 6 Submissions – Appendices [REP7-104].

The submission [REP7-104] reiterates comments previously made by ESCC that we require bus service improvements between East Sussex and Gatwick Airport to reduce reliance on the private car and to increase public transport usage. Currently, the only public transport access to the airport from (the predominantly rural) East Sussex is by rail (but with no direct service), and there are no direct bus or coach services available; a position which could undermine the Applicant's delivery of its mode share targets.

We have continued to press the Applicant to reconsider its stance on improved bus services to East Sussex and include indicative routes to East Sussex, including within Table 1 on page 7 of the Surface Access Commitments (SACs), and most recently, to include our requests for bus service improvements in Commitment 5 of the SACs [REP7-104].

Our specific requests for bus service improvement are notably included in:

- Our Local Impact Report [REP1-070],
- Written Representation [REP1-071],
- Comments on the Applicant's comments on the Local Impact Report [REP4-047],
- Statement of Common Ground [REP1-039], [REP5-039/040],
- Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement [AS-062], [REP2-043], [REP3-121], [REP5-088/089], and
- The Joint Local Authorities Deadline 7 Submission – Response to the Applicant's Deadline 6 Submissions - Appendices [REP7-104] page 8

The bus service improvements requested by ESCC are:

- **Extending the 261 route beyond East Grinstead** to provide a direct service between Uckfield and Gatwick Airport. ESCC wish to see the operational hours of the service extended to include early mornings, evenings and weekends.
- **An hourly bus service from Uckfield to Gatwick Airport and extending this service to Hailsham / Hellingly** (we had previously identified an extension to Heathfield but with recent housing allocations for the Hailsham/Hellingly area this is now considered the higher priority area for connectivity to Gatwick).
- **A Crowborough to Gatwick service which could run via Forest Row and East Grinstead** thereby, in combination with the extended 261 Uckfield – Forest Row – East Grinstead – Gatwick service, doubling the frequency between Forest Row and Gatwick.

Since ESCC has been unsuccessful to date in securing the requested bus service improvements in the SACs, we are, in parallel, pursuing a requirement with the Applicant. Communications between the legal representatives are currently taking place with it being made clear from our perspective that one or the other methods of securing the bus service improvements would be acceptable.

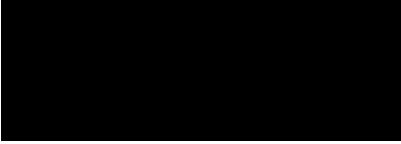
It should be noted that the Applicant has stated in the Statement of Common Ground [REP5-039/040] ref. 2.20.4.2 that they are committed to provide a Transport Mitigation Fund, proposed to be secured in the draft DCO S106 Agreement [REP2-004]. They state that this would be available to address impacts over and above what was modelled and which has not been anticipated. In essence, the Applicant considers ESCC should seek the bus service improvements via this process. However, we remain concerned that the bus service improvements are not guaranteed to be secured, as this fund will be competitive and is very likely to be oversubscribed. Additionally, ESCC will not have a seat at the decision making board, thus further impacting the likelihood of East Sussex in benefitting from this fund.

For these reasons we are only seeking the bus service improvements via inclusion in the SACs or as a requirement of the DCO.

In the latest version of the SAC [REP7-043] the addition of a Rail Enhancement Fund is welcomed. ESCC supports Network Rail's position on the acceptability of whether the level and requirements of the fund are fit for purpose.

Should you have any questions on the issues raised above please do not hesitate to contact localtransportplan@eastsussex.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Rupert Clubb
Director Communities, Economy and Transport

E: @eastsussex.gov.uk