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Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR
United Kingdom

30 January 2020

Dear Secretary of State

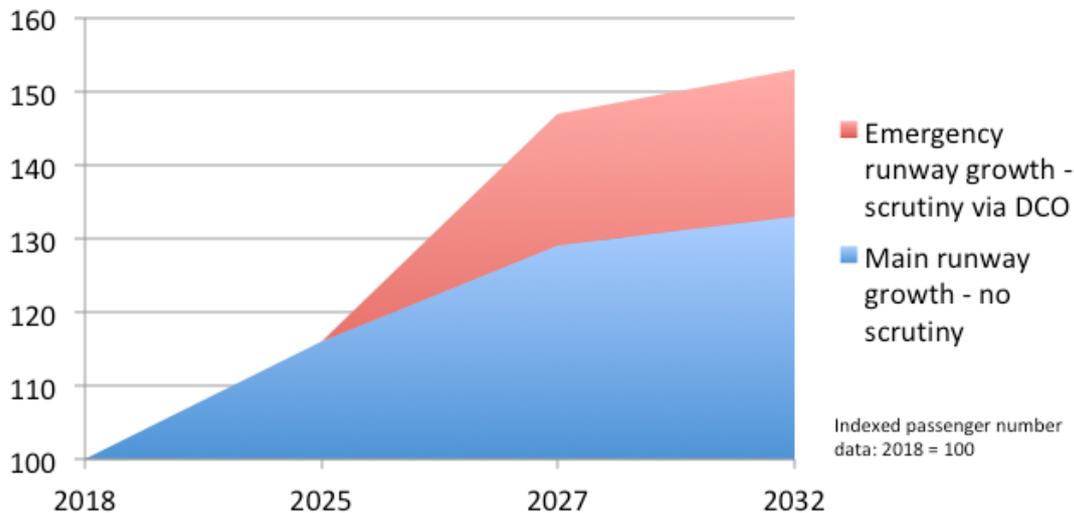
EXPANSION OF GATWICK AIRPORT: GROWTH WITHOUT SCRUTINY

I am writing on behalf of community groups around Gatwick airport to ask you to take all necessary steps to ensure that the growth proposed by the airport in its masterplan is subject to thorough scrutiny, proper stakeholder consultation (including with those likely to be adversely impacted by the airport's growth), and the grant of formal planning consent.

As the Department is aware, Gatwick's master plan proposes that the airport should grow from 46m to over 70m passengers per annum (mppa) and from 280,000 movements to over 390,000 annually.

Some 40% of this growth, from 61mppa to over 70mppa, is proposed to be achieved by making routine use of the airport's emergency runway from the mid 2020s. The climate change, congestion, noise and other consequences of that growth, and its benefits, will be addressed through the DCO process now underway. We look forward to engaging in that process.

However, 60% of Gatwick’s proposed growth, from 46mppa to 61mppa, commencing immediately, would be achieved by making more use of the airport’s existing main runway. That growth is not within the scope of the emergency runway DCO process and is not currently subject to any other approval process. The position is illustrated below.



It cannot be right that the UK’s second largest airport should be able to grow by over 15m passengers per annum, or 33%, without proper scrutiny, consultation and consent.

Growth on that scale would have profound consequences for people living near the airport and under flight paths, for local infrastructure usage, and for the environment. It would increase carbon emissions facilitated by the airport very substantially at a time when the Committee on Climate Change is advising that they should be reduced. It would increase noise impacts across large parts of Surrey, Sussex and Kent. It would increase infrastructure congestion and reduce air quality. And it would impact the value of local properties. All these issues must be properly considered. Currently there is no process through which that can take place.

Expansion of any other major UK airport on this scale would require full scrutiny and consent. For largely historic reasons, Gatwick believes there is no legal requirement for its main runway growth to be properly scrutinised and it has declined to make any arrangements for that to happen.

However, government policy is very clear that significant growth at airports must be scrutinised and approved. The government’s “Making Best Use of Existing Runways” document says “... we recognise that the development of airports can have negative as well as positive local impacts, including on noise levels. We therefore consider that any proposals should be judged by the relevant planning authority, taking careful account of all relevant considerations ...”. The policy is also clear that the government regards capacity growth of 10mppa as the threshold at which scrutiny is essential.

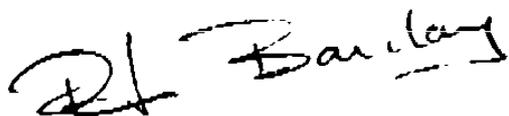
Gatwick's proposed main runway growth is 15mppa, some 50% above the threshold set out in your policy. The current lack of scrutiny is therefore a clear breach of government policy. We believe it is imperative that the government takes steps to ensure that all Gatwick's proposed growth, and the associated impacts, are thoroughly scrutinised and consented or rejected.

The most straightforward way for this to be achieved would be for the airport to amend the scope of the DCO process it has already initiated in relation to potential routine use of its emergency runway, so that it incorporates and can consent or refuse main runway growth. We have invited Gatwick to do so and it has declined. For the avoidance of doubt the Scoping Opinion for Gatwick's proposed emergency runway development makes clear that it will only address and consent or refuse growth associated with that specific development, that is above 61 mppa.

In the light of Gatwick's failure to put in place a process providing meaningful scrutiny, consultation and consenting of its main runway growth we propose and request that you do so in order to ensure compliance with the government's policy.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and your officials.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Barclay'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Peter Barclay
Chair, Gatwick's Big Enough coalition

Gatwick's Big Enough is a coalition of community groups around the airport led by the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign.