

The case against a second runway at Gatwick restated

1. Rejected by the Airports Commission

After three years intensive study, at a cost of £20 million, the Airports Commission reached the clear and unanimous decision that Gatwick would be a poor second best.¹

2. Low economic benefit

The Commission found that a new Gatwick runway would provide £44 billion increase on GDP over 60 years compared to £103-£129 billion for a third runway at Heathrow.²

3. 'Bucket and Spade'

Gatwick has always been mainly a leisure airport, catering for short-haul traffic to Europe. According to the Commission, Gatwick 'is unlikely to provide as much of the type of capacity which is most urgently required: long-haul destinations in new markets.'³

4. Worsening the North - South divide.

It has been estimated that a second runway at Gatwick at full capacity would create around 60,000 new jobs.⁴ Since there is low unemployment in the Gatwick area, these would all need to come from the EU (depending on how much immigration is permitted) and from other parts of the UK, worsening the regional imbalance.

5. Wrong place

Making Gatwick bigger than Heathrow would mean that many passengers would need to travel from north of London, making congestion on the M25 even worse. The South East has one third of the population of the UK but two thirds of the flights. Expanding Gatwick would inhibit the growth of regional airports.

6. Severe environmental damage

The town of Crawley with 110,000 residents would suffer severe noise and pollution. The proposed new airport boundary would be only 100 yards from residential areas.

The character of parts of Surrey, Sussex and Kent would be altered for ever as a result of urbanisation, noise, pollution and traffic congestion.

7. Urbanisation

About 40,000 new houses would be needed, also many new commercial premises, causing urbanisation and loss of countryside.⁵

8. More noise

According to the Airports Commission aircraft noise would affect about three times as many people as at present.⁶

Comparisons between the number of people affected by a new runway at Heathrow or Gatwick are not valid as they fail to take into account the impact of noise in rural areas where ambient noise levels are low, meaning that more people are annoyed over a wider area.

9. New flight paths

A second runway is designed to double the number of aircraft in the sky. New routes over previously peaceful areas or doubling the number of aircraft on existing routes would cause intense disturbance, distress and anger.

The awkward layout of Gatwick, with the two existing terminals on 'the wrong side' of the runway would mean that both runways would need to be used for landings and take-offs. Thus there could be no respite from noise, as at Heathrow.

10. Worse air quality

The Airports Commission found that over 50,000 people would suffer worse air quality; more schools and hospitals would suffer pollution at an expanded Gatwick than with a new north-west runway at Heathrow; and more households would be placed at risk of health-damaging air quality at Gatwick.⁷ An Air Quality Management Area (where there is a risk that pollution may exceed legal limits) has already been designated within 1 mile of the proposed new airport boundary.

11. Road traffic delays

It has been estimated that a second runway at full capacity would mean around 100,000 more vehicles a day, causing serious road congestion and delays.⁸

Gatwick's aim to achieve a tenfold increase in freight would mean more commercial vehicles, increasing pollution and congestion.⁹

12. Rail chaos to continue

A second runway would mean around 90,000 extra people a day using rail services in the Gatwick area.¹⁰ Most of the improvements planned at present are necessary to deal with natural growth, so the result would be that the recent chaos would be set to continue.

13. Risk of disruption

With Gatwick served by only one rail line and only one motorway any serious incident could bring the airport to a standstill.

14. Cost to the taxpayer

The cost of widening the M25 and M23, and major engineering work on the Brighton main line would - according to Transport for London - be at least £10 billion more than the Airports Commission assumed.¹¹ That extra cost is set to fall on taxpayers or rail passengers - despite claims to the contrary by Gatwick Airport.

15. Heritage at risk

Seventeen listed buildings would be demolished - more than at any time since the WW II blitz.¹² Five of these buildings are listed grade 2* - of special importance. HS2 would only mean demolishing six listed buildings of which only one would be grade 2*.

14 hectares of ancient woodland would be destroyed.¹³

16. Climate change damage

Twice the number of flights would mean twice the climate change damage; or worse if there are more long-haul flights. It would be difficult to reconcile that with the agreement signed by 175 nations in Paris 2015 to limit global warming to 2⁰, and to aim for 1.5⁰.

17. Strong opposition

A second Gatwick runway is opposed by:

- easyJet and British Airways
- West Sussex County Council
- Kent County Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Horsham District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Wealden District Council
- 50 Town and Parish Councils
- CPRE
- The Woodland Trust
- Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace
- RSPB and WWF UK
- Campaign for Better Transport
- The Aviation Environment Federation
- All ten local Members of Parliament.

GACC
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¹ Airports Commission Final Report

² Airports Commission Final Report. Page 24. Carbon-capped assumption.

³ Airports Commission Final Report. Page 4. Table ES.2 on page 21 shows that by 2050 a new Gatwick runway is forecast to provide 20 new destinations compared with 73 for a new Heathrow runway.

⁴ 20,000 on-airport; 3,000 indirect; 25,000 catalytic (expansion of existing local firms and new firms attracted to the area); 15,000 induced (jobs created when employees spend their pay locally). See GACC Response on www.gacc.org.uk/the-runway-issue

⁵ Study by consultants commissioned by West Sussex County Council.

⁶ Airports Commission Consultation Document. November 2014. Page 44. [The Commission also found that a new North West runway at Heathrow would not increase the number of people affected above the present number.]

⁷ Airports Commission air quality assessment. 8 May 2015.

⁸ GACC Response to Airports Commission Consultation. February 2015. www.gacc.org.uk/therunway-issue. This figure is larger than that used by the Commission because it relates to Gatwick at full capacity not at 2030, and because it includes traffic generated by catalytic employment (new firms attracted to the area).

⁹ GAL. Connecting Britain to the Future. July 2014. Page 18.

¹⁰ GACC Response to Airports Commission Consultation. February 2015. See note 9.

¹¹ TfL letter to Airports Commission February 2015. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/ac-consult-04-surface-access-road-rail.pdf>

¹² Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

¹³ See Research Study: Heritage and Countryside. www.gacc.org.uk/research-studies