

# TOM TUGENDHAT MBE MP



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

28 July 2021

Robert Courts MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Dear Robert,

You will be aware of the extensive correspondence you have had with Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) regarding the proposed main runway growth at Gatwick. I have been copied into much of it and have seen responses from the Department to GACC.

Two things are clear from that correspondence. First that government policy requires any significant growth at an airport to be robustly scrutinised so that both its benefits and its adverse impacts can be assessed, and an informed decision made. That is clearly right and I welcome it.

Secondly, that there has been no such scrutiny in relation to Gatwick's proposed main runway growth, of some 16 million passengers per annum. Furthermore the government appears to have no current plans to ensure the scrutiny its policy requires will happen. That cannot be right.

I understand of course that Gatwick's planning position is different from other major airports, and therefore that no automatic planning enquiry is triggered by its main growth plans. However, that does not excuse the government from ensuring its policy is delivered.

I also understand that Gatwick's separate standby runway growth plans will be reviewed through a Development Consent Order process, and I welcome that. However, unless its scope is changed, the standby runway DCO process cannot refuse consent for main runway growth. It therefore will not achieve the scrutiny of main runway growth that is required.

Those circumstances mean that some imagination will be needed to find a different way of achieving the government's policy in Gatwick's unique circumstances and I'd be grateful if we could meet as soon as possible to explore how that could be done.

This is an important issue in Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Malling and, I understand, for many other communities near the airport and under flight paths. 16 million passengers of growth will have very significant noise, climate, congestion and other impacts. It is more than the aggregate growth at the five other UK airports that are currently seeking expansion. In each

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of those cases the proposed growth has been robustly scrutinised and communities have been able to have their say. The government cannot simply ignore the greater impacts at Gatwick because it has a different planning position.

I look forward to meeting to discuss these important issues.

*Best wishes,*

*Tom Tugendhat*

**TOM TUGENDHAT**