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The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
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14th July 2023

Dear Sirs

**GATWICK AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER APPLICATION:
ADEQUACY OF CONSULTATION**

We are writing to set out our views on the adequacy of Gatwick Airport Limited's (GAL) consultation in relation to its application for a Development Consent Order to authorise alterations to its northern runway and associated works.

GACC is the principal environmental group seeking to protect and improve the environment in the areas affected by Gatwick Airport's operations. Founded in 1968, GACC has particular regard to noise, congestion, air quality and light pollution and seeks to diminish any wider environmental impact of the airport's operations, and the activities it facilitates, including climate change impacts.

Although we are not a statutory consultee for Adequacy of Consultation purposes, we note from the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Notes and Frequently Asked Question guidance that you can consider comments from third parties in addition to the statutorily required Acceptance tests when making a decision about whether or not to accept an application under section 55 of the Planning Act 2008. We request that you do so on this occasion given the serious reservations we have regarding GAL's consultation, as set out below.

For the avoidance of doubt we wish to put on record the fact that GACC has engaged extensively with the consultation process operated by GAL. We drew the airport's attention to the deficiencies in its consultation repeatedly during the consultation periods, both in our responses and in separate correspondence, but did not receive meaningful responses to many of the issues we raised. We have also, as advised by the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Notes informed all Host and Neighbouring Local Authorities of our concerns.

Our principal concerns regarding GAL's consultation are as follows:

The economic analysis in the consultation documents contained material errors and omissions. In particular the Autumn 2021 consultation used out of date values for the carbon emissions projected to be generated by the proposed development. Gatwick's consultation used old government carbon values of £69 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in 2020 rising to £231 in 2050.

The government carbon values at the time Gatwick's consultation was published were £241 per tonne in 2020, rising to £378 in 2050. In addition Gatwick's Autumn 2021 consultation failed to quantify the non-CO₂ climate change effects of the air travel that the development would facilitate and the climate impacts of arriving flights. Government guidance requires all these costs to be monetized and taken into account in project appraisals.

As a result of these errors and omissions the climate costs set out in the Autumn 2021 consultation were understated by many billions of pounds. If government guidance had been followed accurately and correct carbon emission values had been used the overall net present cost of the climate impacts arising from Gatwick's proposed expansion would be at least £13bn, rising to £25bn with arriving flights fully accounted for whereas the figure disclosed in Gatwick's consultation was £2bn. This difference is highly material in the context of the overall economic benefits claimed for the proposed development. These errors were not corrected in the Summer 2022 consultation.

The effect of Gatwick's uncorrected economic analysis errors is that respondents to the consultations were misled about the costs of the proposed development and its overall economic benefits and were therefore unable to respond to the consultation in an informed manner.

The air traffic projections in the consultation documentations gave an erroneous and misleading impression of the need for the development and are not consistent with the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) because they assume there will be no development at Heathrow Airport. The ANPS requires airports, other than Heathrow, that are seeking to expand to demonstrate sufficient need for their proposals, additional to (or different from) the need which is met by the provision of a Northwest Runway at Heathrow.

GAL's failure to provide an appropriate and policy compliant assessment of the need for the development taking account of the government's preferred Heathrow Northwest runway development means that respondents to the consultations have not been able to evaluate Gatwick's proposals in a policy-compliant market context. Responses to the consultation cannot therefore be relied on in this respect.

The consultation documents (and the additional noise envelope engagement carried out in 2022) mischaracterised the noise impacts of the proposed development, made unsupported assertions on noise matters and did not provide sufficient information to allow respondents to evaluate noise impacts in specific areas.

The additional noise envelope engagement process was itself defective in numerous material respects including the time allowed and Gatwick's refusal to provide additional information that was central to a proper understanding of the suitability of alternative noise envelope metrics. As a result this engagement did not in our view comply with the CAA's advice on noise envelope engagement or the Government's requirements as set out in the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS). Nor did it comprise "*another appropriate method*" of engagement as advised by the Planning Inspectorate in cases where the CAA's guidance is not followed. The engagement GAL has carried out therefore does not, in our view, provide a sound basis for noise envelope proposals and GAL's proposals cannot be considered to have been "*defined in consultation with local communities*" as required by the ANPS.

The effect of these issues is that respondents to the consultation were misled and not able to understand the likely noise effects of the Proposed Development and were therefore unable to respond to them in an informed manner.

In each of these areas GAL's consultations were misleading because they were not "*based on accurate information that gives consultees a clear view of what is proposed ...*" as required by the Planning Act 2008 Guidance, did not provide sufficient information to allow informed responses and did not permit the "*intelligent consideration*" required by the Gunning Principles for consultations.

We emphasise that each of these concerns relates to the consultation process itself and not to the merits of the application.

We further note that Gatwick's Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) committed the airport to "*ensuring the local community has the opportunity to understand ... our Northern Runway Project proposals*" and that its objectives included "*ensuring thorough, open, and transparent engagement and consultation on our proposals*", "*ensuring proposals are clearly presented, and issues easily understood*" and "*providing sufficient opportunities for interested parties to understand and influence our plans*".

We do not believe that those tests were met in relation to the issues raised above and therefore consider that the application should be rejected because the consultation did not conform with the airport's SOCC.

We request that you take these views into account when making a decision about whether or not to accept GAL's application and accordingly that you reject the application.

We are copying this letter to all Host and Neighbouring Authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Barclay
Chair, Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign