
Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee

19 January 2022

Northern Runway Consultation Task and Finish Group

Report by Chairman of the Task and Finish Group

Summary

Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) proposes alterations to bring the existing Northern Runway at Gatwick Airport into routine use alongside the main runway, enabling the dual operation of both runways. The proposal, the Northern Runway Project (NRP), is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, ultimately requiring a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State. The County Council is a statutory consultee in the DCO process.

In advance of an application for consent being submitted, GAL undertook formal consultation from 9 September to 1 December 2021 on a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which identified the likely significant impacts of the NRP and any required mitigation. It was decided that the County Council would make a formal response.

A Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group met once and scrutinised the Council's draft response.

The recommendations, once agreed by the Group, were verbally presented to Cabinet at its meeting of 16 November, by the Chairman, and are published herein.

Recommendations

See section 2.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the recommendations of its Task and Finish Group, which informed Cabinet's decision to approve the authority's consultation response on 16 November.

The Committee is further asked to consider the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change's response (on behalf of the Cabinet).

1 Background and context

- 1.1 Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) launched a public consultation on proposals to bring the Northern Runway into routine use for flight departures, to which the County Council decided to submit a response.
- 1.2 The Business Planning Group (BPG) of Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee determined that scrutiny of the proposed response would best be undertaken by a scrutiny Task and Finish Group (TFG). A TFG was duly established, and cross-party membership of five councillors appointed. The BPG decided that Chairman David Britton should act as Chairman of the TFG.
- 1.3 The TFG met on 10 November. Members in attendance were:
 - David Britton (Ch)
 - Jay Mercer
 - Simon Oakley
 - Brian Quinn
- 1.4 At its meeting, the Chairman first invited the Group to consider a written submission from Cllr Natalie Pudaloff (Northgate & West Green), and the extent to which her comments had been addressed within the draft consultation response.
- 1.5 The Group received a comprehensive presentation on the draft consultation response. Officers answered questions raised by the members about a range of technical matters. Subjects covered included:
 - Demand forecasts
 - Project delivery timeline
 - The Development Consent Order Process
 - Role of the County Council
 - Need/alternatives
 - Infrastructure needs
 - Impacts
 - Landscape/Townscape/Visual
 - Ecology and Nature Conservation
 - Traffic and Transport
 - Air Quality
 - Noise and Vibration
 - Climate Change and Carbon
 - Socio-economic
 - Health/Wellbeing/Recreation
- 1.6 Members scrutinised the evidence and the assumptions within both the consultation documentation, and the authority's proposed response.
- 1.7 At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman summarised the high-level recommendations, for agreement by the Group. These were further refined and agreed, following the meeting, via email.
- 1.8 The Chairman verbally presented the Group's recommendations at the public meeting of the Cabinet on 16 November, which informed Cabinet's deliberations ahead of the consultation response being approved, upon the rise of Cabinet.

- 1.9 The Group also raised points concerning relatively minor details, which were passed to the officers for their separate consideration. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change (on behalf of the Cabinet) responded to the Group's recommendations (as identified below).

2 Recommendations and Responses

- a) The Group was in broad agreement with the thrust of the draft consultation response and recognises the significant economic benefits Gatwick brings to West Sussex.
- Cabinet Member (CM) response: Support welcomed.
- b) The lack of evidence underpinning the consultation proposal is disappointing, as is the reliability of the evidence that was included. For example:
- The air quality assessment – the lack of base data and quality of the modelling.
 - The socio-economic assessment - the number and type of jobs created and benefits to the local economy.
 - The traffic and transport assessment – there are no suggested impacts beyond the need for highway improvements in the immediate Gatwick area.
- CM response: Agreed. The response identifies where there are concerns about the NRP because of poor quality, incomplete, late, or missing evidence.
- c) Many of the assumptions are optimistic and may prove to be unrealistic. For example:
- The proposal relies upon the implementation of strategic road and rail improvements by third parties – but these might not be forthcoming.
 - Planned housing development might not all be realised
- CM response: Agreed. The response identifies where there are concerns about the assumptions that GAL has made.
- d) More detail is needed on the forecast impact of the Northern Runway proposals, over and above forecast impacts resulting from best use being made of the main runway. For example, the nature and duration of the job opportunities forecast to be created.
- CM response: Agreed. The response identifies where GAL need to identify the 'without project' impacts separate from the 'with project' impacts.
- e) In respect of paragraph 2.40, Cabinet should consider whether the words "...cannot support the Northern Runway Project..." are appropriate, or if more neutral wording might be appropriate at this stage, given the highlighted concerns. The Group did not agree a view on this issue.
- CM response: The Cabinet considered the wording "*The County Council cannot support the Northern Runway Project because there are a number of*

matters of significant concern that need to be satisfactorily addressed by GAL” to be consistent with the Notice of Motion to County Council on 22 October 2021.

- f) The Group was disappointed that GAL seemed to be adopting a ‘do minimum’ approach to mitigation i.e. only seeking to do what is required by statute rather than being an exemplar and looking to go over and above the statutory minimum, in line with the Government’s direction of travel (e.g. in respect of ecological enhancements).
- CM response: Agreed. The County Council will encourage GAL to take a positive and proactive approach to the mitigation of adverse impacts, including delivering over and above the statutory minimum.
- g) The consultation response should highlight WSCC’s view (as expressed in the Full Council motion) on the safeguarded land to the south of the existing runway (the need for the Government to remove the requirement to safeguard this land).
- CM response: The Notice of Motion requires representations to be made to the Government, not to GAL, about the safeguarded land. Furthermore, the Cabinet considered that the suggested addition would complicate the clear message to GAL in Paragraph 2.42 of the decision report (which requests that GAL does not pursue a southern runway).
- h) GAL needs to consider and report on the worst-case scenarios. This will ensure that the scheme is ‘future-proofed’ in the event the assumptions underpinning the proposal are not met/delivered.
- CM response: Agreed. The response identifies where GAL need to identify the worst-case scenario and ensure that adverse impacts are fully mitigated.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 Given the timing of the consultation window, the establishment of a TFG was deemed to be the most effective means of undertaking scrutiny of the consultation response, the scrutiny of which being considered essential due to the far-reaching significance of the NRP.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 Advice was provided by officers from Planning Services and a local member submitted views, which were also considered by the Group.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The cost of the TFG was met from existing service budgets.

David Britton

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Background papers

[Gatwick Northern Runway - Approval of consultation response \(CAB09 21/22\)](#)