

Freepost
RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY

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Dear Gatwick Airport Ltd,

Gatwick Northern Runway Project consultation

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

1. Northern Runway proposals: overall

To what extent do you support or oppose our proposals to bring the existing northern runway into routine use?

Neither support nor oppose.

1 Please explain your views

As a rail development campaigning organisation we are agnostic on the overall merits and demerits of the principle of bringing the existing northern runway into routine use. We do believe however that high speed rail has an increasingly important role to play for distances where door-to-door journey times are competitive with air (London - Edinburgh, London - Brussels as just two examples) and believe that justification for the Northern Runway proposals should recognise this. We are not agnostic on the implications of such a development for surface access for the airport.

2. Economic benefits: jobs and skills

2 Do you think we could do anything more - or differently - to maximise local and regional employment and skills benefits?

We note that in the Outline Employment, Skills and Business Strategy the Labour Market Area, as identified in Geographical Targeting of Initiatives at 1.3, appears to be largely defined by and seemingly heavily dependent on good access by rail. The Labour Market Area, and by implication the benefits of being within it in pursuit of the Overarching Objectives stated at 1.4, could be extended into more districts – those closer or no further than several of those already identified, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, and Medway for example – were GAL to seek to collaborate with its rail industry partners to support enhancements to the train service offer along the Redhill-Tonbridge route in general and with a direct link for the airport in particular.

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

3. Economic benefits: business and the economy

3 Do you think we could do anything more - or differently - to maximise benefits to business and the economy?

Similar to the previous comment, extend the catchment of the airport through targeted support for enhanced train services where they are currently weakest, which means primarily the two orbital routes extending either side of Redhill and especially the Tonbridge route which lacks a direct rail link with the airport.

4. Airport supporting facilities

1. Option 1: to the north of the cargo hall (north east of the proposed Pier 7). Do you think this location is:

Don't know.

2. Option 2: to the north west of the proposed Pier 7. Do you think this location is:
Don't know.

4 Please explain your views.

As a rail development campaigning organisation we are not qualified to offer a view.

5. Landscape and ecology

5 What are your views on our landscape and ecological proposals?

As a rail development campaigning organisation we are not qualified to offer a view.

6. Land use: overall

6 What are your views on our approach to land use?

We have no specific views.

7. Getting to and from the airport: our approach

7 Do you think we could do things better, or differently, to ensure all passengers and staff have appropriate choices for accessing the airport?

Developing the theme in responses to 2 and 3 above, the choice to access the airport by rail can be limited by for example service operating hours on some routes. GAL in collaboration with its rail industry partners needs routinely to explore and develop ways to support enhancements to the train service offer for the airport such that, in pursuit of its modal shift aspirations, rail increasingly becomes established for customers and workers alike as the mode of first choice for airport access.

8. Road improvements

8 What are your views on our proposals to improve local junctions to support airport growth as well as provide capacity for local traffic? Please specify the improvements to which your comments refer.

As a rail development campaigning organisation we have a natural aversion to road improvements especially in an era when road traffic restraint and modal shift assume greater policy priority in support of the over-arching imperative of rapid transport decarbonisation.

9. Public and sustainable transport

9 What are your views on how our proposals for increasing use of public and sustainable transport apply in your area? Please specify the proposals to which your comments refer and tell us if there are other things we could do that would be relevant to your journeys.

We welcome GAL's commitment to drive mode shift towards higher percentages of airport passenger and worker travel by public transport in general and by rail in particular. We caution however that high levels of growth can have the unintended consequence of improved percentages actually resulting in lower absolute numbers, and therefore advocate a combination of targets to avoid this.

We welcome the continuation of the Gatwick Express branding for a dedicated airport train service linking London Victoria and Brighton via Gatwick. Current calling patterns and fare structures however mitigate against this product realising its full potential, leading to distortions and inefficiencies in the rail travel market between those three principal destinations. As the train accommodation and journey times are now barely different from Southern services we contend that such distortions and inefficiencies can and should be resolved through the insertion of an intermediate calling-point at Clapham Junction (possibly pick-up only southbound and set-down only northbound) to improve network connectivity, and equalisation of fares, to more evenly distribute train loadings across both brands.

We believe that the rail travel market has changed markedly since the Gatwick Express brand was established in May 1984:

- from the airport's perspective, with more shorter-distance, low-cost airlines vis-a-vis a significant transatlantic presence (we note that the proposed Northern Runway is for take-offs for narrow bodied planes, and our limited understanding suggests that this will not include narrow bodied planes flying long distances such as the A321 XLR) with a more time rich / cash poor customer base less attracted to a premium fare for a very similar rail service;
- from the railway's perspective, since Gatwick Express was established Clapham Junction has become a much more important interchange point due for example to the establishment of two London Overground orbital services (towards Dalston Junction and towards Stratford), Thameslink services have increased substantially both in service frequency and destinations reached (and will shortly offer a direct interchange with Crossrail), and fare price transparency has also substantially increased, as has the choices for ticketing (eg Oyster).

We believe all of these factors justify a strategic review of passenger rail services between the airport and London, and including Brighton, and we would welcome GAL taking a leading role in such an exercise with opportunities for stakeholder interests to contribute.

10. Construction: managing impacts

10 Are there any particular measures or activities for managing construction impacts that you would like us to consider including in our proposals as construction details are defined?

See 11 below.

11. Construction: transport

11 What are your views on our construction transport proposals?

We have been unable to identify a specific assessment of any possibility of using rail transport for construction plant and materials; the DCO application must include one.

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12. Managing and mitigating effects: climate change and carbon

12 Do you have any comments on our approach or suggestions for specific measures to be incorporated into the Action Plan?

The significance of the contribution cannot be over-stated of securing ambitiously-high levels, by both percentage and in absolute numbers, of surface access modal shift by airport passengers and workers towards public transport in general and rail in particular. In stark contrast, the contribution of increased surface car parking runs diametrically counter to this.

It cannot be stated too strongly that this decade in which GAL's proposals are planned to be delivered is the self-same decade within which dramatic and irreversible reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are of paramount necessity in order to arrest and stabilise anthropogenic global warming at as close to current levels as can possibly be achieved and thereby limit further damage to planetary health. GAL therefore needs to ensure that anything and everything for which it can in any way be held accountable during the remainder of this decade, and beyond, contributes either directly or indirectly to that over-riding carbon reduction imperative.

13. Managing and mitigating effects: noise envelope

Do you think the proposed noise envelope is:

Don't know.

13 Please explain your views.

As a rail development campaign we are not qualified to offer a view.

14. Managing and mitigating effects: noise mitigation

14 What are your views on our approach to noise mitigation? Please specify the measures to which your comments refer.

As a rail development campaigning organisation we are not qualified to offer a view.

15. Consultation process

15 Please let us know if you have any comments about the consultation process.

We have no specific comments.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Vice-Chair London & South East regional branch
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board