

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens next?

2nd Runway

Autumn 2013: The runway plans submitted by Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, the Mayor of London, Birmingham etc. will be studied by the Commission. December 2013: The Commission will assess whether there is any need for a new runway, and will publish a short-list of potential runway locations. January – June 2014: The Commission will work with each of the airport promoters to develop their plans into a draft proposal, including a draft impact assessment. Summer 2014: Draft proposals and impact assessments for each potential site will be published for public and expert scrutiny. 2015: Final proposals submitted to Airports Commission, who publishes a final report on where the new runway, or runways, should be and, as there is a General Election in 2015, the new Government will decide whether to proceed.

Flightpath changes

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will assess the airspace change proposal that is being developed by Gatwick Airport Ltd and National Air Traffic Services (NATS). The CAA will then make a recommendation to the Department for Transport (DfT) and it will ultimately be the Government, through the Secretary of State for Transport, to approve the changes.

Why is it noisy today but quiet yesterday?

The wind direction on any given day (or hour) dictates which direction the runway is used for take-off and landing. This in turn has a major influence on the traffic patterns in surrounding airspace. If the wind is from the west, aircraft take off and land in a 'westerly' direction. This means that departures take off heading to the west of the airport and arrivals line up towards the airport from the east. When the runway is used in this direction it is referred to as 'Runway 26' because the heading the aircraft fly is 260°. If the wind is from the east (less frequent) aircraft take off and land in the opposite direction using Runway 08.

How often will we to the east of Gatwick have sub 4000ft aircraft arrivals?

Because the prevailing wind is from the west the split in runway usage is 73% Runway 26 and 27% Runway 08. Therefore Kent has arrivals approximately 266 days a year.

How frequently will planes depart and arrive at Gatwick?

A one minute departure interval would make the airport more efficient in getting departures airborne, reducing delay in the busy morning period when there is high demand for departure slots. Ultimately the airspace change would enable Gatwick to plan for more departures per hour. Based on current demand profiles, this could mean around 2-5 more departures per hour during such periods of high demand. This would be attractive to airlines and customers.

Safely reducing the time intervals between departures from Runway 26 can be achieved by repositioning the low-altitude departure routes.

What is PBN?

Pilots used to use ground based navigation points, but now there is performance based navigation (PBN) technology which gives much more accuracy, but also allows flexibility in positioning flight routes. New European legislation means that airspace must be maximised by using PBN and changes must take effect from 2020. PBN will improve efficiency and reduce the environmental impact. Part of the aim of the consultation is to simplify the routes and design-out choke points.

What is the Phase 1 Airspace Consultation?

The Government wants to address the airspace around Gatwick and London City airports. The first phase has a target date of 2015. Later phases to other parts of the airspace network have a target date of 2020 when the new European legislation comes in. This consultation is part of a strategy to develop solutions for both the short and long term, assuming unchanged airport infrastructure. It is not associated with the work being undertaken by the Airports Commission. Any further proposals arising from any recommendations made by the Airports Commission would be subject to separate consultation at a later date.

- The consultation is regarding airspace as a whole, not final route positions which will be determined after feedback has been received to this consultation.
- The aim of the proposals is to have less noise. However, the proposal will permit more flights to be handled which may outweigh any noise benefits. Also it's clear that there will be less noise for some and more noise for others.
- Flight paths will change, some areas will be over-flown more than they are today, others less and others will have no change.
- Respite routes are being considered for Gatwick
- There will be fuel savings of 10,000-20,000 tonnes per year
- The average CO2 released per flight will be reduced
- The design of the proposals are flexible, feedback to the consultation can help shape a solution that optimises the benefits.
- Specific information must be included in responses – eg AONB, local economy, SSSI, historic sites etc.

Flights below 4,000 feet - the primary objective of the consultation is noise reduction
Flights between 4000-7000 feet – noise has some impact
Flights above 7000 feet – efficiency is key

What is Point Merge and where is it?

Point Merge allows aircraft to queue to land by flying an extended flight path around an arc instead of holding in circles. They fly along the arc until the next slot in the landing sequence is free, at which time air traffic control (ATC) will turn the aircraft off the arc into the landing sequence.

Point Merge will be introduced to replace the current 7000ft holding system. It will be 1000 feet higher at 8000 feet. There will be a holding system available that could be used as back up but over time will be used less and less. This Point Merge will reduce the need for tactical manoeuvre below 4000 feet as aircraft will already be on track.

Extending the flight path in this way means that aircraft queue one behind another, rather than one above another. Arcs from opposite directions are separated vertically by 1,000ft. A Point Merge structure with arcs ranges from around 15 to 40 nautical miles long. The appropriate size and precise location for the Point Merge arcs will be determined through the detailed design process to be undertaken following consultation.

What happens between 4000-700ft?

Point Merge above 7,000 feet enables the development of a more predictable route system below 7,000 feet. The consultation considers the creation of extra respite routes upon arrival and departure.

What are respite routes?

Respite routes are where more than one route is implemented for air traffic in a particular direction. This means that all aircraft would alternate use of the routes in line with an agreed schedule, for example by time and/or day of the week, which would give residents beneath the routes a degree of predictability around potential impact. Developing additional routes for respite purposes may not be practical in all circumstances, and it is not possible to vary the final approach itself. Additional routes will take up more space and make the airspace more complex which counters the benefit of PBN. It may be a possibility if it is deemed to be particularly beneficial given local circumstances. Additional routes have some disadvantages; environmentally it would mean that the area subject to regular over-flight would double compared to a single route solution, and routes would be longer, more fuel would be used and there would be greater CO2 implications.

Where should the respite routes be? Should they overfly AONBs and countryside or more populated areas. The DfT's target is to reduce the number of people affected by noise. Respite would double the number of people affected but some to a lesser extent. There are environmental and operational pros and cons.

What happens below 4000ft, above where we live?

Aircraft must line up with the runway as they begin their final approach to land. The final approach flight path descends directly to the runway and is fixed in line with the extended centreline of the runway. Aircraft today generally join final approach between 10 to 15 nautical miles from touchdown at an altitude generally no less than 3,000ft. However this in practice may be as low as 2300ft. Air traffic control must ensure that aircraft on final approach have been organised into an efficient sequence for landing. An efficient sequence is where aircraft are safely spaced, ensures the runway is fully utilised and that flights are not unnecessarily delayed in the air.

What is the 2nd consultation all about?

The 2nd consultation (public responses close on August 14th 2014) is seeking to optimise parts of the system operationally and environmentally; in particular considering the following changes to routes below 4,000ft:

Fundamental PBN redesign – and therefore repositioning - of all Runway 26 departure routes

Introduction of PBN arrival routes to join the final approach for both Runway 26 and 08; these would bring traffic from the 'Point Merge' arrival route system which is being proposed in network airspace above 7,000ft to the south of the airport (see above)

Extra PBN routes to enable 'respite' solutions; this is being considered for departures and arrivals for both runways

The PBN technology creates a very narrow route of 100m to 200m width and therefore creates much more noise for fewer people. There will still be air traffic control intervention where necessary due to other conditions. 90% of aircraft today have PBN and the remainder will be equipped when the European legislation comes into force in 2020. PBN does not improve efficiency on the runway but it improves efficiency in the airspace. Gatwick has 51-52 runway movements per hour. The current angle of descent is 3° at continual descent. If flights are higher and a steeper descent is allowed, the technology used to ensure a safe landing cannot be used in all traffic conditions. When these technical limitations change, it might be possible.

Respite routes could still be possible below 4,000 feet but there are limitations (see above).

It may be possible to consider a balance of respite and financial compensation for residents under the flight path.

The actual routes will be drawn up following analysis of the consultation feedback. NATS will only go to consultation again if the new routes affect different areas than those shown in the consultation, and even then only specific areas will be invited to submit further comments.

Please see www.londonairspaceconsultation.co.uk.

Why are we suffering from increased aircraft noise?

We are suffering from planes flying at a lower level into Gatwick and at a greater frequency. Proposals have been considered to make aircraft approach the airport at a higher level and then descend at a steeper angle, but this was declared to be dangerous as there is not enough time to abort the landings safely and the landing gear is not strong enough. Proposals have also been made to trial respite and move aircraft around the skies so that not every plane follows the same flight path, but unsurprisingly this was not popular with people who currently do not suffer from aircraft noise. The noise this summer has been worse than ever and I urge you to complain. The more complaints Gatwick receive from our area, the greater chance we have of being heard.

How do I complain about noisy aircraft?

See our 'How to complain category' for hints and tips but broadly email: noise.line@gatwickairport.com By phone to: 0800-393070 By letter to :Gatwick Airport Ltd, Flight Performance Team, Destinations Place, Gatwick Airport, West Sussex, RH6 0NP.

What are Gatwick's plans for growth?

The plans published by Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) on 23rd July show Gatwick expanding from 34 million passengers per year now to around 90 million. More than doubling the present size of Gatwick would mean more than twice as many planes in the sky, and GAL admit that there would be new flight paths over areas that are at present peaceful. It would mean more than twice as much airport-related vehicle traffic and climate change damage. Although a benefit of a second runway is more jobs – possibly 40,000 more jobs for people building the new runway and in the firms attracted to the area by an airport larger than Heathrow, this number of new jobs far exceeds the level of unemployment in the area, and would mean massive inward migration, either from other parts of the UK or from other EU countries. There would be a need to build perhaps 30,000 extra

houses, and substantial pressure on local schools, hospitals and social services. The national debate is between those who want a larger hub airport – an enlarged Heathrow or airport in the Thames estuary – and GAL who are trying to sell the concept of Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted each having two runways, with Gatwick being the first. Unfortunately, at this time, Paul Carter (Leader of Kent County Council) is supporting the proposal for a second runway at Gatwick. However, there is not sufficient space at Gatwick for an efficient new runway. GAL gives three runway options (i) a close parallel runway, ruled out because the capacity benefit is relatively small, (ii) a middle-width separation between the runways, ruled out because there would be no room for a new terminal, (iii) a wide-spaced runway which would be only a few hundred yards north of Crawley. This is GAL's preferred option. Yet previous studies have shown that this layout would still provide insufficient space for aircraft to congregate around a terminal or to manoeuvre between the runways. It is stated that a new runway would cost between £5 billion to £9 billion, which can be compared to the £1.5 billion paid by the present owners of the airport in 2009. So a substantial increase in airport charges would be inevitable.

Is there any need for a 2nd Runway?

Although the number of flights from the London airports was exactly the same in 2012 as in 2002, the number of passengers has steadily increased by 20%. The average number of passengers per plane at Heathrow and Gatwick is at present around 145. Modern aircraft can hold between 220 and 800 people and so GAL will need to prove that the average number of passengers will increase enough to warrant a new runway. There were proposals for a new runway at Gatwick in 1970, in 1993 and in 2003 but each time when it came to the crunch it was found that it was not needed. Over 50 Parish Councils belong to a group called Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, who has asked the Airports Commission to publish a 'No New Runway' option alongside their short-list of new sites.

Who are HWCAAG?

8 of our local Parish Councils have formed the High Weald Council Aviation Action Group (HWCAAG) specifically to protect residents in our area.