

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Planning Committee

Tuesday, 24 October 2023 at 7.30 pm

Councillors Present:

S Pritchard (Chair)

M Mwagale (Vice-Chair)

Z Ali, J Bounds, J Charatan, K L Jaggard, K Khan, Y Khan, S Mullins and A Nawaz

Officers Present:

Siraj Choudhury Head of Governance, People & Performance

James Freeman Planning Consultant

Sallie Lappage Strategic Planning Manager

Jean McPherson Group Manager (Development Management)

Clem Smith Head of Economy and Planning

Jess Tamplin Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor M Morris

1. Disclosures of Interest

The following disclosures of interests were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Interest
Councillor Ali	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – employed by a company based at Gatwick Airport.
Councillor Ali	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – a West Sussex County Council Councillor.

Councillor Jaggard	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – donates to, but has no direct contact with, environmental charities which have an opinion on the matter.
Councillor K Khan	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – previously employed at Gatwick Airport.
Councillor K Khan	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – has attended meetings with organisations that have an opinion on the matter.
Councillor Nawaz	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – a Gatwick Airport Community Group (Gatcom) representative. Has attended meetings regarding the matter.
Councillor Nawaz	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – a trustee of Gatwick Airport Community Trust.
Councillor Nawaz	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – employed by a company that has business relations with Gatwick Airport.
Councillor Pritchard	Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation (minute 4)	Personal interest – employed by Govia Thameslink, which serves Gatwick Airport railway station.

2. Lobbying Declarations

The following lobbying declarations were made by councillors:

Councillors Ali, Bounds, Charatan, Jaggard, K Khan, and Pritchard had been lobbied but had expressed no view on item 5 (minute 4) – Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order – Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 29 August 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Development Consent Order - Crawley Borough Council Relevant Representation

The Committee considered report [PES/441](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning which set out Crawley Borough Council's response, in the form of a Relevant Representation, to the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for Gatwick Airport's northern runway expansion proposals.

Councillors Ali, Bounds, Charatan, Jaggard, K Khan, S Mullins, Mwangale, Nawaz, and Pritchard declared they had visited the site.

The Chair invited the Planning Consultant to give a presentation on the DCO process. The timeline of the DCO and a summary of the changes proposed by Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) in its application were outlined. It was explained that, if agreed, the DCO document itself along with the accompanying plans and schedules would provide the legal framework for the development works associated with bringing the northern runway into routine use. It was heard that the Council's Constitution required the Planning Committee to agree its Relevant Representation for submission to the examining authority, via the Planning Inspectorate. It was estimated that a final decision on the matter was likely to be made by the Secretary of State in early 2025.

The Chair then invited the Group Manager (Development Management) to summarise the Council's Relevant Representation. It was explained that the Council was invited to respond as a lead host authority on the project as the area covered by the airport fell mainly within the borough's boundary. In forming its response, the Council had identified a wide range of issues and shortcomings within the DCO, and therefore had significant concerns. The topics set out in the report were then introduced one-by-one. The Committee made comments and asked questions of the officers in response to each topic, as set out below.

The drafting of the dDCO

Committee members sought clarification about several elements of the process of submitting the Relevant Representation. It was noted that multiple local authorities had been consulted at this stage and in forming their responses had used the same planning consultants. Each local authority had individual concerns which related to its specific area, but there were shared concerns about the impact on matters such as the local economy, highways, and noise levels. The Committee asked whether the feedback submitted by Crawley Borough Council, as a host lead authority, would be given extra weight by the Planning Inspectorate. Officers confirmed that the Council would be submitting an extensive Local Impact Report to set out the effects of the proposals on the local area, to which consideration would be given.

Following a further query from a Committee member, officers confirmed that the Council had been given 56 days to provide its Relevant Representation to the DCO application. The Committee heard that national aviation policy supported the expansion of airports in general, and that historically most DCO applications were approved by the Planning Inspectorate. It was therefore important that the Council set out its concerns in full to ensure that consideration was given to all relevant matters.

Planning Statement / Design and Access Statement (DAS)

Committee members noted that the DCO application made a lack of references to the Council's Local Plan in terms of the design of the development. It was commented that it seemed unusual to take little account of the Local Plan – officers agreed that there were concerns regarding this, and it was hoped that the Planning Inspectorate

would seek to investigate these matters in more detail during its six-month examination period.

Project Site and Description

It was highlighted that the plans provided by GAL seemed vague and lacking in detail; the Committee deemed it important that the design and build of the proposals were of high quality. In response to a query about the extent of the Council's control over the design of the proposals, officers explained that details of some of the plans were more thorough than others; a number were lacking in detail. Parameter plans, which would set out the maximum sizes of the development, would need to be agreed and further details provided to the Council as local planning authority.

Historic Environment

The Committee made no comments specific to this topic.

Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact

The Committee made no comments specific to this topic.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

The Committee made no comments specific to this topic.

Arboriculture

It was noted that the Relevant Representation outlined concerns about tree protection, tree loss, and ancient woodland, and the Committee was supportive of these matters being highlighted. Committee members felt that it was highly important for nearby trees and ancient woodland to be protected and preserved.

Water Environment

The Committee discussed water stress and flood risk at the site. The Relevant Representation raised concerns that the flood mitigation works proposed by GAL were not ambitious enough, and a Committee member highlighted that this was particularly relevant given that changing weather systems had led to increases in heavy rain and flooding in recent years. A concern was also raised that the proposals would reduce discharge into the River Mole by 50% and the impact this may have on biodiversity in and around the river.

Traffic and Transport

Various concerns were raised about the impact of the proposals on transport infrastructure to and from the airport. The plans to widen the access road to the airport were welcomed but concerns were raised that the DCO underestimated the amount of traffic from further afield and that the proposed measures to mitigate this were insufficient. Committee members felt that there was already significant traffic on the M23 and the proposed increase in capacity of the airport may greatly increase the number of vehicles. Officers highlighted that detailed highway improvements were proposed and traffic modelling had been undertaken, and that West Sussex County Council as local highways authority would provide detailed feedback on related matters within its own Relevant Representation. It was also heard that National Highways was a statutory consultee and had been involved in discussions with the applicant.

The Committee also discussed access to the airport via public transport. It was highlighted that the DCO made no proposals to expand the train service at Gatwick Airport railway station; significant concerns were raised that passenger footfall (particularly when taking into account those travelling with luggage) would dramatically rise with no increase in the number of rail services which was said may overwhelm the network. Committee members highlighted that the project was environmentally damaging and sought details on any proposed improvements to

sustainable transport, to which officers explained that there was a commitment to 55% of total passengers attending the airport by public transport (with an aspiration for 60%), as well proposals to improve bus services and the setting up of a Sustainable Travel Mitigation Fund. Further concerns were nonetheless raised about insufficient mitigation measures and a lack of consideration of the impact on the rail service.

Officers highlighted that railway companies would be able to make representations during the DCO process.

Air Quality

The Committee raised queries about the proposed air quality monitoring measures. Whilst it was noted that the applicant does currently support monitoring in the area immediately surrounding the airport, there was a desire to see increased monitoring and concerns remained about the potential for greater pollution caused by the expansion proposals. Committee members queried the action that would be taken if higher than acceptable levels of air pollution were found. Officers explained that if this were to occur, either the Government or the Council could take action to improve air quality, for example through the designation of Air Quality Management Areas. It was highlighted to the Committee that there were national air quality objectives in place and that GAL predicted that levels of NO_x in the area were likely to reduce over time; the Council's Environmental Health team agreed with this prediction. A query was also raised about the potential for a reduction in air quality due to increased numbers of passengers and staff travelling to the airport via car. Officers confirmed that transport modelling had been undertaken so emissions from travel to and from the airport had been accounted for in the DCO.

Noise and Vibration

Concerns were raised about the disruption to Crawley residents local to the airport caused by increased ground noise, flight 'go-arounds' and vibration. The impact of noise created during the construction period was also discussed – officers confirmed that a noise insulation scheme was proposed for those residents who would be most affected.

Green House Gases (GHG) and Climate

The Committee made no comments specific to this topic.

Local Economic and Socio-Economic Impacts

Concerns were raised that the DCO application had overstated the projected positive economic effects of the proposals. It was noted that a significant number of jobs were proposed to be created, which were likely to mostly be lower-skilled and therefore lower-paid jobs, which the Committee suggested may negatively impact Crawley's workforce. Committee members asked whether it would be possible for GAL to provide funding for or build relationships with local education establishments to encourage young people to take up higher-skilled jobs at Gatwick; officers explained that these matters had been mentioned by GAL as future possibilities but no specifics were provided as yet. Simultaneously, the Committee highlighted that Crawley's economy had been hard-hit by the Coronavirus pandemic, in large part due to the significant number of residents employed at Gatwick which ceased operating for some time, so it was important for the town not to rely wholly on one employer. Officers highlighted that GAL had created an Employment, Skills and Business Strategy to address various economic matters but the details were not considered to be specific enough.

Health and Wellbeing

A Committee member raised concerns about the impact of light and noise pollution on the mental health of people living close to the airport. The officers confirmed that this had been addressed in the DCO application.

Agricultural Land Use and Recreation

The Committee made no comments specific to this topic.

Other

Committee members raised a number of general questions of clarification.

- The Committee sought to understand how an increase of 60,000 flights per annum would lead to an increase of 38 million passengers p/a. Officers clarified that the current runway was not presently being used to maximum capacity, but could accommodate an additional 25 million passengers p/a by 2038. Bringing the northern runway into routine use would add additional capacity of 13 million passengers p/a by 2042. In total the current capacity would be increased by 38 million to 80 million passengers p/a by 2042
- The cost to the Council of processing the proposals and discharging the requirements as set out in the DCO was raised as a major concern by the Committee. Officers explained that it was hoped that the Council would recover 100% of related costs via funding from GAL and the Government, but the full cost of the resource required was not yet known as there was likely to be significant expenditure (e.g. on legal advice, planning consultants, and extra staff). Planning Performance Agreements had been agreed to cover some of the costs up to the start of the examination and these costs were being shared across the local authorities involved. Funding had also been secured from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- Officers clarified that a Section 106 agreement would be required. It was hoped that discussions and negotiations on this would begin as soon as possible.
- In discussing the future of the DCO process, officers clarified that the matter would not be revisited by the Planning Committee as the Council's Constitution gave delegated authority to the Head of Economy and Planning. Councillors would be kept up-to-date with the process, in the main through the Council's Economic Regeneration Working Group and DCO Working Group.

Committee members conveyed their thanks to the officers involved in the drafting of the Relevant Representation and recognised that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to meet a short deadline.

The Committee concluded that it did not wish to make any amendments to the Relevant Representation, and moved to a vote on the recommendation.

RESOLVED

That the Committee agrees to the submission of the Relevant Representation to the Planning Inspectorate (as attached in Appendix A to report PES/441) as a HOLDING OBJECTION due to the significant concerns raised, subject to any non-material amendments to the final drafting of the Relevant Representation made by the Head of Economy and Planning.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Planning Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.54pm.

S Pritchard (Chair)