

Sir Howard Davies,
Airports Commission,
Sanctuary Buildings,
20, Great Smith Street,
London SW1P 3BT

3rd September, 2013

AIRCRAFT NOISE - GATWICK AIRPORT

Sir,

I am writing to express my views on the ever increasing nuisance from noise generated by aircraft using Gatwick Airport and its detrimental effect on local residents including on health grounds.

This has gone beyond the point for acceptable tolerance and when aircraft are landing to the west (nearly 70% of the time) they frequently fly over and to either side of my property at 3,500 to 4,500 feet all day and every day with little respite. No sooner has one passed (which can still be seen, and sometimes even its predecessor) than the whine of the turbines of the next can be heard. This unremitting intrusion ruins enjoyment of this area and is so bad that at times interrupts conversation when one is outside.

I make the following observations which perhaps you could consider?

1. There is an excellent website <http://flighttracking.casper.aero/lgw/> which tracks aircraft individually and shows type, speed, height etc., how they assemble near the south coast and, for those landing to the west at Gatwick, coming up near Crowborough and "funnelling" mainly over this Parish of Speldhurst and neighbouring parishes to join the finals flight path for Gatwick at Hever. At times they join the finals path projected further back to the east of Tonbridge. Observing this site really brings home the sheer volume of air movements over Kent and Sussex.

I wonder why more aircraft can't join this finals path east of Tonbridge more frequently and give our area some respite? I regret this would result in people there having more flights than present but it is a much wider area and why should only we bear the brunt? We benefit no more from Gatwick.

Perhaps the undue pressure on our area has not been fully realised whilst aircraft numbers have increased gradually over the years, although I was reliably informed yesterday there is a guidance from some authority that this pathway over us should be kept narrow so as few people as possible in the general area are inconvenienced. If this is true then it is absolutely outrageous and totally unfair that one sector of the public should be deliberately treated in this manner. In the current climate, perhaps even a breach of our human rights?!

2. Gatwick's website states average daily arrivals and departures for August 2011 were 404 aircraft for each - which no doubt, have increased since. That's a lot of arriving aircraft flying over one small area

and, if Gatwick ever gets the second runway they hanker for, this number will double in a short space of time

3. We are in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is covered by various Acts of Parliament and White Papers and I see from "Guidance for Assessing National Park or AONB" one of the elements calls for "Tranquillity". And continues:

"Detractors from tranquillity. Presence and/or perceptions of traffic noise, large numbers of people, urban development, overhead light pollution, low flying aircraft, power lines and similar influences."

I accept aircraft have to take off and land, but surely more consideration should be given to people in their catchment areas.

4. Regulations requiring quieter aircraft would greatly assist.

5. Gatwick's wish for a second runway should be declined. Its advertised flight paths follow the current runway's which cause too many problems already.

6. Regional airports should be expanded instead as it is ludicrous for people to travel vast distances to major airports in the south east. Airlines endorse large airports to concentrate resources and reduce costs.

7. Mr. Boris Johnson's idea of a new airport to the east of London should be given serious consideration. I initially dismissed this but the more I am aware of how so many people in the Home Counties are severely inconvenienced by aircraft noise the more it is plausible.

8. The formation of an Aircraft & Airports Regulator and a similar Ombudsman would give the little man a chance against large corporations and vested interests which presently at best pay lip service to complaints whilst continuing their desired objectives. Many locally feel resigned to further expansion of Gatwick and increasing noise intrusion as they have no voice and nothing can be done against big business. However the mood is changing and a number of organisations are making representations, including to you, and are supported by their MPs, and Greg Clark, MP for Tunbridge Wells, kindly agreed to chair a public meeting in this parish in July.

I live in a rural aspect with little background noise. Some, like those in more noisy urban areas or near busy roads may consider additional noise from aircraft not an issue, and indeed the International Organization for Standardization acknowledges noise levels should be set higher in urban areas.

I very much hope your commission can find a satisfactory resolution to this major problem as it is certainly an unwarranted and uninvited blight on the lives of so many people affected by Gatwick's operations. I sincerely hope you recommend against a second runway which although creating more jobs, even more will be created by Mr Johnson's idea which I hope you recommend be investigated.

Thank you for giving people the opportunity of expressing their views to you

Yours sincerely,