

New evidence on Gatwick cannot be ignored, say councils

Councils opposed to Heathrow expansion have welcomed new evidence which confirms that an extra runway at Gatwick provides greater economic benefits and less damage to health and the environment.

The Government has been forced to consult for a second time on its proposed National Policy Statement (NPS) for airports following complaints from the councils that the original consultation had withheld important new information including the UK Air Quality Plan and new aviation demand forecasts.

In the new consultation package it is conceded, for the first time, that over the full 60-year period of the calculation the benefits from a second Gatwick runway would exceed benefits from Heathrow. The government argues that Heathrow could deliver economic benefits more quickly, but given there is no evidence that it can ever meet air quality limits these benefits would never be achieved.

Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead councils all oppose the expansion of Heathrow and pointed out in their original submission that there was no case for rejecting Gatwick.

Hillingdon Council leader Ray Puddifoot said:

“While the Secretary of State still seems wedded to expansion at Heathrow it is clear that any rationale for his preference is disappearing and

the case for Gatwick is much stronger on both economic and environmental grounds. It is also clear that Ministers still cannot produce anything to show that Heathrow can be developed consistently with healthy air quality and legal limits on pollution.

That is not surprising - it is obvious that a new runway in London would produce more pollution. Anyone who would be threatened with more noise from a 3rd runway at Heathrow should be able to use the new evidence to persuade the Government to abandon Heathrow expansion.

The only problem is that they don't know who they are because the Government still cannot say where the planes are going to go. As local authorities we have a duty to highlight the health risks from poor air quality and increased aircraft noise. We ask the Secretary of State to review the evidence with an open mind - if he does this there will be no expansion at Heathrow.”

The Government's revised consultation document also reports that more than 80 per cent of responses to the first consultation had been prompted by organisations supporting Heathrow expansion. Of 72,239 responses 58,277 were identified as using an organised campaign response. These were from two groups - Back Heathrow and Your Heathrow.

Councillor Puddifoot was speaking on behalf of the four councils.

The eight-week consultation ended on 19 December.

