



Development Management Plan (Regulation 19)

Airport Noise

October 2017

1. Policy Context

- 1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) states in paragraph 123 that planning policy and decisions should aim to:
- Avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development;
 - Mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through the use of conditions;
 - Recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land uses since they were established; and
 - Identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.
- 1.2. Planning Policy Guidance (Reference ID: 30-005-20140306) (2014) separates the effects of noise into four categories:
- Unacceptable adverse effect level – this is when noise has such an adverse impact on health and quality of life that it should be avoided at all costs, no matter the economic or social benefits of the noise source;
 - Significant observed adverse effect level – this is when noise has a significant adverse impact on health and quality of life, and should be avoided wherever possible, balanced against the social and economic benefits of the noise source;
 - Lowest observed adverse effect level – this is when noise has an adverse impact on health and quality of life which is noticeable, but below the level of ‘significant’, and should be mitigated and reduced to a minimum; and
 - No observed adverse effect level – this is when noise has no noticeable adverse effect on health or quality of life.
- 1.3. Planning Policy Guidance (Reference ID: 30-010-20140306) also notes that Local Plans can include noise standards for “various forms of proposed development and locations in their area”, but that these should ideally not include fixed thresholds because “specific circumstances may justify some variation being allowed”.

- 1.4. The Noise Policy Statement for England (2010)¹ sets out three aims. These are to:
- Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life;
 - Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and
 - Where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.
- 1.5 The Noise Policy Statement also explains that, unlike for air pollution, there are no national standards that set a fixed threshold at which noise has an adverse effect. Noise is a contextual and subjective phenomenon, which only exists in relation to a specific human reaction to sound – it is impossible to have a fully objective measure of when sound ends and noise begins.
- 1.6 The proposed DMP policy on airport noise (sub-clause 4 of Policy DES10) is fully compliant with these three sources of national policy. It is clear that residential development near Gatwick Airport will be permitted in circumstances where noise levels will not have a significant adverse effect on residents, and that in circumstances where a significant adverse effect would normally be present, mitigation measures must be included to reduce the effect below the significant adverse effect level. This is in line with the first two bullet points of the relevant NPPF paragraph, which states that significant adverse effects of noise should be avoided, while noise below that level should only be minimised and reduced where possible.
- 1.7 Planning Policy Guidance suggests that a fixed threshold should not be used in setting noise policy. Policy DES10 does not set a fixed threshold for what is considered a significant adverse effect level of noise. Instead, it sets out a fixed threshold for the Gatwick Airport area at which the issue must be explored through a full noise impact assessment. This provides certainty for developers around the issue of when airport noise will be a major consideration; while allowing for some flexibility in the definition and understanding of significant adverse noise effects.

2. The Use of a 57dB Noise Contour

- 2.1 The threshold at which a noise impact assessment is needed for development around Gatwick Airport has been set at the noise contours of 57dB L_{Aeq} (07:00 to 23:00) or 48dB L_{Aeq} (23:00 to 07:00).

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69533/pb13750-noise-policy.pdf

- 2.2 These contours are commonly used in publications by Gatwick Airport and the Civil Aviation Authority as thresholds for noise annoyance. Gatwick Airport Ltd also made clear in their representation to Crawley Borough Council's local plan examination (2015) that they consider 57dB to mark the onset of the lowest observed adverse effect level of noise (and 48dB at nighttime)².
- 2.3 The now withdrawn PPG24 document on Planning and Noise (1994)³ noted that a considerable amount of research has been carried out on airport noise, and 57dB L_{Aeq} is well established as the point at which noise annoyance generally begins.
- 2.4 The Aviation White Paper (2003)⁴ also considered the onset of community annoyance to occur at 57dB LAeq16hr, a figure that was taken from the 1982 Aircraft Noise Index Study (published in 1985)⁵. The more recent Survey of Noise Attitudes (2014)⁶ that attempted to update this research found that aircraft noise annoyance had become more sensitive in the intervening years, with the percentage of respondents reporting themselves to feel 'highly annoyed' at exposure to 57dB increasing from 9% in the 1982 study to 13% in 2014.
- 2.5 The Aviation Policy Framework (2013)⁷ notes that the government will continue to treat the 57dB LAeq16hr contour as the approximate point of onset of significant community annoyance from aircraft noise, while also noting that this is not a perfect measure and that some people within the contour will not suffer significant adverse effects from noise, while some outside the contour will.

3. Use of a Specific Noise Contour Source

- 3.1 There are a range of available noise contours setting out where the 57dB noise threshold is reached. For the purposes of the Development Management Plan, the set of contours to be used are those found in the Civil Aviation Authority Environmental Research and Consultancy Department ERCD Report 0308, Figure 3.2. These are not the most recently published contours, having been published in 2003. However, after discussion with

² <http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/web/PUB243804>

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<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120920010607/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/156558.pdf>

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272086/6046.pdf

⁵ <https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/ERCD%208402.PDF>

⁶ <https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201506%20FEB17.pdf>

⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/153776/aviation-policy-framework.pdf

Crawley Borough Council (the borough that contains Gatwick Airport) about their approach to airport noise, some compelling reasons have emerged to use these older contours rather than any of the more recently-published ones.

- 3.2 The contours in ERCD 0308 include forecast noise contours for 2015 based on two-runway scenarios at Gatwick Airport. The exact contours that are used in the DMP, in Figure 3.2 of the report, are for a wide-spaced parallel runway scenario. Although this forecast is for 2015, current noise contours from Gatwick Airport, which measure actual noise in the current one-runway scenario, do not show the 57dB contour reaching as far north as it does in Figure 3.2 of ERCD 0308. It is believed, therefore, that Figure 3.2 still represents a reasonable minimum assumption of where the contour might move to in a future two-runway scenario. The government has announced that a third runway will be built at Heathrow Airport, rather than a second at Gatwick Airport, but it is understood that Gatwick Airport Ltd are still very interested in building an additional runway, and it is believed that a second runway at Gatwick is still a possibility for the future. Consequently, by using the ERCD 0308 contours, developments within locations that may fall within a future two-runway 57dB noise contour will be subject to the requirements of the airport noise policy, ensuring development during the plan period is future-proofed against the emergence of a second runway.
- 3.3 In addition to these reasons, using the ERCD 0308 contours will provide cross-boundary consistency with Crawley Borough Council, providing clarity and certainty for developers in the region. The ERCD 0308 contours are also understood to be favoured by Gatwick Airport Ltd.
- 3.4 The ERCD 0308 contours will be used until such a time as another Civil Aviation Authority report is published that presents forecast contours for a two-runway scenario. If such a report contains forecast contours for a number of different two-runway scenarios (for example, close spaced and wide spaced), the 'worst case scenario' (i.e. that with the widest contours) will be taken as the new standard.