

Gatwick Airport Ltd

By email:

Route4@gatwickairport.com

Our ref: P&R/cmr

Your ref:

Date: 17 October 2016

Dear Sir,

Re: Route 4 modification trial

We are writing with respect of the current Route 4 flight path modification trial.

Our comments relate to the impact of recent changes on Reigate and Banstead borough, which lies immediately to the north of the airport, and includes the settlements of Horley, Salfords, Redhill and Reigate.

We recognise that the modifications have had the positive impact of reducing flights straying to the north of the defined Route 4, over Redhill and Reigate. However, we are seriously concerned at the impact that the recent modifications in relation to Route 4 are now having on residents in Salfords and Horley.

Impact on residents in the Salfords and Sidlow ward

The villages of Salfords and Sidlow lie directly under the 'Route 4' Noise Preferential Route (NPR). As a result of the revised P-RNAV route, there has been a notable concentration of flight paths (and therefore noise for many individuals) within a narrower corridor than pre-2012/13 when Standard Instrument Departure (SID) was in operation.

We recognise that the aim of the modification has been to minimise the risk of aircraft flying outside the NPR to the north (and thus overflying other parts of the borough such as Reigate and Redhill), however as things currently stand, affected residents in the Salfords & Sidlow ward are experiencing a much greater degree of disruption than has previously been the case.

It is clear to the Borough Council that the current modifications to Route 4 are not achieving the stated Civil Aviation Authority's intention of revised routes replicating (as closely as possible) conventional SIDs whilst not contravening NPRs.

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We therefore fully support calls from the local MP Crispin Blunt, and Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council, for additional measures to be implemented to ensure that future flights replicate previous patterns of dispersal (pre 2012/13) across the NPR.

Impact on residents in Horley

The town of Horley does not lie under the Route 4 NPR. However in recent months, our residents have reported a dramatic increase in aircraft overflying Horley. This overflying is also evidenced in the airport's April-June 2016 flight performance report. We understand that this may be an unintended consequence of the Route 4 modifications, but whether or not this is the case, the volume of aircraft overflying Horley is both unacceptable and contrary to agreed noise abatement procedures to avoid flying over the congested areas of Crawley and Horley.

Conclusions

When Gatwick Airport consulted on the early implementation of P-RNAV, an integral part of this was a post implementation management oversight process, such that should any change be deemed to be of detrimental effect, it could be withdrawn.

The 2014 DfT guidance is clear that "While the CAA should follow a policy of concentration in most cases...there may be local circumstances where the advantage lies in dispersing traffic, such as for the purposes of providing noise respite over areas which may be considered particularly noise sensitive. It is important that any decisions about whether to concentrate or disperse traffic take account of the local context alongside the operation and generic environmental objectives... This local context may become apparent through appropriate consultation with the local community"

There is now clear evidence that some local residents are being disproportionately impacted by aircraft noise as a result of modifications to Route 4. We therefore strongly urge the CAA and GAL to implement measures to ensure that pre-2012/13 patterns of dispersal are resumed.

We look forward to working closely with GAL, the CAA, NATS, Horley Town Council and Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council to resolve the issues highlighted above. On a separate issue, we would also welcome further conversations about how the disturbance that night flights cause to local residents can be kept to a minimum as the airport continues to increase its air traffic movements.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr James Durrant
Executive member for Enforcement

Cllr Eddie Humphreys
Executive member for Economy and Jobs

Cllr Tony Schofield
Executive member for Planning Policy

Cllr Alex Horwood
Reigate & Banstead GATCOM Representative