

Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR  
By email: [night.flights@dft.gov.uk](mailto:night.flights@dft.gov.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

### **DfT Consultation – Night Flight Restrictions**

Please find enclosed a response from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to the Department for Transport's consultation on proposals for night flight restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick, and Stansted airports from October 2025.

Residents in Tunbridge Wells borough (located in West Kent) experience overflight from aircraft predominantly arriving but also departing Gatwick. The Council regularly hears of the negative impact of the airport's operations on local residents (both daytime and night flights).

The Council notes the continuing studies, such as the Aviation Night Noise Effects (ANNE) study, and also the Department for Transport's commitment to examine the adverse health impacts of night flights. However, we do not agree that the existing movement and noise quota limits should be maintained to 2028.

Rather, the Council wishes to see a reduction in the current level of night flights to reduce the impact on local residents and bring airport operations at Gatwick more in line with those at Heathrow.

Please note that this response only relates to Q2 and the issue of night flights at Gatwick. As the issues related to Heathrow and Stansted Airports are not relevant for the borough, we will leave detailed comment to those representing the communities located within the vicinity of those airports.

Yours faithfully



**Cllr Justine Rutland**  
**Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Response: Q2. To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with our proposals for the next night flight regime at Gatwick Airport? Provide evidence to support your view.**

**Strongly Disagree**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) understands that for the purpose of the regime, the Department for Transport (DfT) intends on maintaining the existing night noise restrictions until October 2028. However, TWBC has serious concerns about the current movement limits and supports the position on this matter taken by Kent County Council (which has significant expertise in aviation matters) in its response to this consultation.

It is noted that in the summer months Heathrow is permitted 3,250 movements whereas Gatwick is permitted 11,200. In addition, Appendix A of the consultation material shows that night flight movements at Gatwick are already exceeding the movement limit in the summer period.

TWBC considers that it is unreasonable to expect the communities surrounding Gatwick to have an unfair burden from night flights compared to the remainder of the London airports system. This is particularly true in Tunbridge Wells where the disadvantages of the proximity of the airport are felt but the direct economic benefits are limited, when compared to other local authority areas closer to the airport.

The Council is aware that the other airports included in this consultation have additional agreements in place relating to night flights, that protect local communities. Heathrow Airport has a voluntary agreement in place that sees no flights scheduled between 23:30 and 04:30. It also prevents flights scheduled between 04:30 and 06:00 from landing before 04:30. Meanwhile, Stansted Airport has an additional night noise limit on operations for the 8-hour night period (23:00 to 07:00) as a result of a recent planning condition.

This means that Gatwick will be the only airport of the three, without additional night noise limits and therefore, in line with KCC's Policy on Gatwick Airport, TWBC considers that there is a strong case for lowering the movement limit so that it is comparable with that for Heathrow.

In relation to the impact of dispensation flights on local communities during the night, TWBC considers that allowances should only be made in the case of emergencies and that all parties (airport and airlines) should seek to reduce the number of avoidable night flight dispensations.

KCC has stated in their response to this consultation that:

*In April 2024 it was reported that London Gatwick Airport was the worst performing airport for UK flight delays, according to a Press Association study of*

*Civil Aviation (CAA) data. Any delay risks a knock-on impact to subsequent scheduled flights and increases the chance of dispensations.*

Therefore, TWBC agrees with KCC that the ability to carry over a proportion of unused noise quota and movement quota should be removed in the next regime as the current system results in a higher summer limit at Gatwick (due to peak holiday season traffic).

TWBC recognises there may be a need for some night flights, but asks that night movements and noise quota limits at Gatwick be reduced in order to give residents under the flight paths a degree of respite overnight.

In addition, TWBC wishes to support KCC's concerns below and the request for further research on the health impacts of airport operations:

*There is continually emerging evidence on the impacts of aviation noise that strongly demonstrates the real health costs felt by individuals, including evidence that people are becoming more sensitive to noise than they have been before. Additionally, research is now being carried out on areas of air quality that have previously had limited research in an aviation context, such as ultrafine particulate matter. Ultimately the financial burden of health impacts due to the aviation sector are picked up by the Public Health England (PHE) and National Health Service (NHS), and there are additional economic costs in terms of reduced productivity.*

TWBC regularly receives correspondence from local residents about the impact of Gatwick daytime and night flights, including concerns about the health impacts of night flights. For example, residents have highlighted the following 2023 study:

[Airplane noise linked to next day heart health hospitalisations | Imperial News | Imperial College London](#)

Below are some excerpts from the feedback that the Council has received from local residents:

- 1. I take the view that it is logical that the same ban as at Heathrow should apply to Gatwick rather than living with the status quo. There are limited night-flight restrictions at Gatwick, but much less than Heathrow. It is also interesting to note that some airports - including Frankfurt - have banned night flights and continue to be viable and major hubs.*

*Gatwick is now one of the busiest airports at night. The nuisance caused by night-time flights is made worse by Gatwick being allowed to concentrate in the summer months their annual quota of night-flights. In the height of a summer there can be over 150 flights between 11:30pm to 6:00am - equivalent to an aircraft landing or taking-off every 5 minutes and*

*sometimes more frequently. It is during the summer months that people have their windows open to get air circulating.*

*All this is against a background where the area to the east of Gatwick contains one of the most heavily populated areas south of London.*

- 2. The evidence is clear: night flights impact on people's health.*