

Airports Commission Consultation  
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing this letter to urge the Airports Commission to carefully consider a balanced approach to the future of aviation growth in the UK, and to seek to ensure that such future growth benefits all parts of the country. It is regrettable that all the options being presented by the Airports Commission are located within the South East, and that further consideration was not paid to the role and potential expansion of Birmingham Airport. Birmingham Airport has capacity for further growth, which would help relieve pressure on the congested South East and support growth in Warwickshire and the wider West Midlands area. Indeed, research commissioned by Birmingham Airport suggests that increased demand at the Airport can add £400 million to the region and beyond by 2020. Warwickshire County Council supports the sustainable growth of our regional hub and long-haul airport, as it would clearly bring significant economic value and opportunity to our area and the businesses that reside here.

Aviation growth in the West Midlands would complement our economic strengths; automotive exports, a strong supply chain network, and tourism. In regards to automotive exports, Birmingham Post reported that the West Midlands shipped £7.06 billion worth of goods in early 2014; compared to £6.81 billion from the capital. The location of Jaguar Land Rover in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull has allowed the region to maintain trade with China and contribute extensively to UK exports. By the end of 2014, nearly half of all UK exports to China were built in the West Midlands. This proves the wealth of economic potential within our region; which needs to be recognised when considering changes to future policy.

In terms of our supply chain network, it is no secret of the West Midland's scope. There is a clear dominance of manufacturing and automotive sectors in both business activity and employment. Having leading companies in Warwickshire

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such as Jaguar Land Rover, BMW, and Aston Martin means that growing a UK-wide airport network is more important than ever to improve the mobility of corporations and maximise firm growth.

With regards to tourism, the West Midlands overall had 6% growth in overseas visitors relative to the South East (3%) in early 2014. More specifically, about one in ten people in South Warwickshire now work in the Tourism sector; which is home to popular attractions such as Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick Castle. With more than five million visitors to Warwickshire annually and a local tourism fund to attract Rugby fans to Rugby town for September's World Cup; a diversified approach to aviation growth would contribute enormously to the regional economy.

However, given the options that are being considered by the Airports Commission, Warwickshire County Council would favour the extension of Gatwick Airport. We do not consider it to be healthy for us to concentrate our expected aviation growth into one "super-hub" at Heathrow. We should not be "putting all our eggs in one basket". Heathrow should be complemented by a number of supporting regional hubs, including Gatwick and, indeed, Birmingham Airport. Our view is that the expansion of Gatwick is the only option being presented that will ensure that the aggregate UK economy will benefit; by increasing passenger choice, maximising market competitiveness, and pushing the development of a strong UK airport network. This is therefore the option that will have the greatest benefit to Warwickshire, and support the growth aspirations of the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

To conclude, the economic strength of London Heathrow will benefit most if it continues to operate at its full capacity and not beyond it. Allowing Gatwick to expand and develop as an additional hub for domestic and international passengers, is necessary to push economic recovery everywhere. With Birmingham currently the second largest city in the UK, it is important that growth is not restricted and is encouraged outside of the London and South East region.

Yours Sincerely,

**Cllr Isobel Seccombe**  
**Leader of Warwickshire County Council**