

## Review of the Gatwick Diamond Local Strategic Statement

### Summary:

The Gatwick Diamond Local Strategic Statement (LSS) was one of the first examples of inter-authority cooperation, but is now becoming dated. It supports duty-to-cooperate obligations, demonstrates support for the economic ambitions of the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), and provides a mechanism for collaboration on cross-boundary issues. Without it, cooperation would become more ad hoc, and the focus for individual authorities would move from the Gatwick Diamond to neighbouring strategic groupings such as Coastal West Sussex and Surrey/London fringe. If it is to remain valid as a means of addressing cross-boundary issues and demonstrating cooperation between authorities it has been agreed that it will be reviewed.

The Gatwick Diamond Strategy Project Group<sup>1</sup> (GDSPG) wishes to appoint consultants to undertake this review.

### What is the LSS?

The Gatwick Diamond Local Strategic Statement was prepared in 2012 and sets a framework for Gatwick Diamond authorities<sup>2</sup> to work together to address common issues across the Gatwick Diamond area. Its objectives are:

- To provide a strategic direction for the Gatwick area on planning and economic issues
- To translate the strategic direction into change and development
- To establish mechanisms for inter-authority co-operation
- To identify and prioritise areas for joint working

The LSS is accompanied by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Gatwick Diamond authorities. The MoU acknowledges the cooperative nature of the relationship, with statutory powers for plan-making and decision-taking remaining with individual authorities.

### Why is there a need to review?

The LSS was published in March 2012. It included a work programme, timescales for which have now largely expired. While setting a broad strategic direction, it recognised that further work was

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<sup>1</sup> The Group comprises the Planning Policy Managers of the Gatwick Diamond local planning authorities.

<sup>2</sup> The LSS was endorsed by Surrey CC; West Sussex CC; Crawley BC; Horsham DC; Mid Sussex DC; Mole Valley DC and Reigate & Banstead BC. It was prepared before Epsom & Ewell joined the Gatwick Diamond and although Tandridge DC did not endorse the LSS it was a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding which established a framework for the signatory local planning authorities to co-operate on strategic planning and development issues.

required to translate that direction into planning and development. The age of the LSS and lack of an on-going work programme has been questioned at the most recent Local Plan examinations and the LSS is now carrying decreasing weight in such situations.

There have also been a number of changes since 2012 that need to be incorporated into the LSS. These include: publication of Coast to Capital's Strategic Economic Plan and Coastal West Sussex's LSS; discussions with the London Mayor on alterations to the London Plan; Epsom & Ewell joining the Gatwick Diamond; and most recently a proposal to develop a Gatwick Diamond/West Sussex Infrastructure Plan. In addition the Surrey local authorities agreed in 2014 to develop a separate but complementary LSS for the County and the preparation of a Surrey Infrastructure Plan is being considered.

Lastly, there is the work of the Airports Commission, which is due to publish its conclusions about future airport expansion in the South East during this summer. If it recommends the provision of a second runway at Gatwick and this is subsequently agreed by the Government there will be major consequences for the Gatwick Diamond area.

Initial scoping on a more detailed work programme was begun in 2014 with the support of Planning Portfolio Holders but has since stalled due to withdrawal of resources and uncertainty over the purpose of the LSS in the Gatwick Diamond.

### **What benefits would accrue?**

An up-to-date LSS would:

- Help meet the duty to cooperate, providing a consistent strategic planning direction across the Gatwick Diamond area. The extent to which it tackles more challenging cross-boundary issues is a matter for discussion, but it will at least show an up-to-date position which has been collectively agreed. It will also provide an opportunity for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to be involved in the review.
- Support economic growth in the Gatwick Diamond, responding at a sub-regional level to the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan using evidence-based goals.
- Support infrastructure funding bids, by complementing infrastructure plans and identifying strategic priorities. This will help compete with demands for funding from other sub-regions in the LEP
- Support a collective response to development pressures from London. The Mayor has prepared an Infrastructure Plan for 2050 and begun a review of the London Plan, which will include engagement across the wider South East about if / how London's development needs can be met in the wider region. An updated LSS would provide a collective Gatwick Diamond voice for responding to those pressures.
- Address issues associated with the expansion of Gatwick Airport, with or without a second runway. A second runway at Gatwick would have major implications for development and infrastructure in the area, which would need to be planned collectively at a sub-regional level. Even if Gatwick remains as a one runway/two terminal operation, it will continue to

be an economic driver in the Gatwick Diamond with consequent implications for housing and employment and a need for agreement on cross-boundary issues. In either case an LSS will help address issues of mutual interest. Since a second runway would be a 'game changer' in terms of future development needs, it would be sensible to link a review of the LSS to the recommendation of the Airports Commission, expected later this summer.

- Inform future reviews of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, from a collective perspective. A revised LSS would provide a stronger voice in the process based on tested evidence and integrated with social and environmental aims.

### **What would it involve?**

Gatwick Diamond Local Authorities would continue to provide a suitable governance structure for review of the LSS. Initial discussions about the content and ambition of the revised strategy would be for Portfolio Holders with overview provided by Gatwick Diamond Joint Leaders.

Review of the LSS will require a dedicated officer/consultant resource. The original LSS was drafted using a modest resource of approximately one day/week of professional time over a period of around a year and was funded by the Gatwick Diamond Initiative. This funding has since been withdrawn. If work is to progress on a review, a similar level of resource will be needed to coordinate work and provide draft documents for discussion and agreement. Consideration could be given to each Gatwick Diamond local authority making an equal contribution to funding a resource.

The extent and direction of strategic planning in the Gatwick area will be heavily influenced by a decision on whether Gatwick Airport is allowed to build a second runway. The housing, employment and infrastructure implications of an expanded airport would be of a different scale in a two runway scenario to a one runway scenario. The Project Steering Group therefore considers it would be sensible to await the recommendation of the Airports Commission before embarking on a review of the LSS. Equally, it will be important that an updated LSS takes account of other strands of work being undertaken in relation to these strategic issues.