



LONDON
BIGGIN HILL
AIRPORT

BUSINESS | TRAVEL | COMMUNITY

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To: All Residents Associations

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Dear Green Street Green Village Society

You will have seen the leaflets being distributed by Bromley Residents Against Airport Development (BRAAD). These leaflets contain a significant number of false claims and inaccuracies, all without supporting evidence.

We welcome a full and open debate about the future of Biggin Hill Airport. Much is at stake. We could secure our future now, as a small, quiet, business and general aviation airport. Or we could accept the status quo and risk becoming a pawn in the broader chess game of increasing London's runway capacity. As a Biggin Hill resident, I know which one I'd prefer.

Our proposal is to moderately change opening hours - without increasing flights, without additional runways, without extending beyond the existing boundary and without accepting scheduled holiday airlines. By doing so we will open the door to global service companies whose aircraft customers value flexibility above all else. Aircraft owners don't always want to fly later - but they need to know they can if need to. This is the only way we will be able to attract more companies and create 2,300 new jobs.

We undertook one of the biggest and most transparent consultations in Bromley's history, undertaken with the full knowledge and support of Bromley Council. Over 15,000 people had their say, including on the crucial question of extending opening hours, which 12,473 people supported (see full results [here](#)).

As you would expect, by far the largest number of responses came from people living nearest the airport - where a majority also backed the changes.

These results are backed up by an independent survey undertaken by leading polling firm Populus, which clearly showed that overall 79% of Bromley residents supported the proposals.

However, we accept that not everyone will agree with our proposals. What we cannot accept are misleading claims. All Bromley residents should have the chance to have a proper informed debate based on the facts, before making up their minds.

Leaflets such as those sent out by BRAAD should not be distributed without challenge. Therefore, I attach a short paper taking each claim in turn and setting the record straight. I hope you will distribute our response amongst your members so that they can make their own judgment based on the true facts of the matter.

Doubtless your members will have questions and concerns. I am happy to answer those at any time and in any forum that is convenient for you.

Yours sincerely

Will Curtis
Managing Director



Biggin Hill Airport Ltd is a subsidiary of Regional Airports Ltd
Registered Office: 6 St. Andrew Street, London EC4A 3AE
Registered in England and Wales No: 2891822

Attachment

False Claim 1: It is claimed that the airport intends to stay open; *'24.5 hours per week longer, or a 27% increase to 114 hours per week.'*

Reality: This is incorrect and is overstated by at least ten hours a week. There is no evidence for how this claim has been calculated. If the council approve our application, there will be an increase of only 5 hours during the week and 9.5 on weekends, equating to an additional 14.5 hours a week, not 24.5.

This can be easily calculated:

- Between Monday and Friday the current opening hours are 6.30am - 10pm. Our proposal is to extend the day by one hour, to 11pm, with a strict, maximum limit of 8 aircraft movements during this period (although in reality few customers will need to travel at this time - it's about knowing they can if they need to, which is crucial in attracting the service companies that will create the extra jobs). This is a total of 5 additional hours during the week.
- At the weekend, the current opening hours are 9am - 8pm. Our proposal is to change this to 6.30am - 11pm on a Saturday, and 8am - 11pm on a Sunday, again with strict limits on aircraft movements as described above. This is a total of 9.5 additional hours on the weekend.

False Claim 2: A comparison is often made between our opening hours and that of a small number of selected other airports, such as RAF Northolt, London City and Farnborough airports, in order to claim that our proposed new hours exceed those of our competitors.

Reality: This is highly misleading on two points.

1. Our competitors are multi-national and not limited to a cherry picked selection of U.K airports. We compete for global service companies who look for a European base of operations. This means we compete with airports across Europe, not just in the U.K. Many of these competitors are open 24 hours a day.
2. The list in the leaflets omits three U.K competitors which, together account for 40% of the London market for the business jet traffic we are competing for - Luton, Stansted and Southend. Again, these competitors are open 24 hours a day.

False Claim 3: Aircraft using Biggin Hill will *'increasingly be of 737 - or equivalent - size'* as a result of the proposed changes.

Reality: This is incorrect and there is no evidence to support this claim. We are not trying to attract bigger aircraft, or even more flights. Indeed, we have pledged that there will no more than flights than 2010 levels (50,000 per annum) and there will be no scheduled holiday airlines. Our target is the global service companies that will create new local jobs.

False Claim 4: It is claimed that our commitment to cut noise by 50% is *'smoke and mirrors'* because we aren't legally bound.

Reality: We are already taking action to reduce noise, and we ask residents to judge us by those actions. By April, we will have:

- No fly zones for light aircraft flying over Biggin Hill, Downe, Keston, Farnborough, Hayes and Orpington.
- Circuit training limits by light aircraft - the airport will not allow circuit training after 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays in British Summer Time
- Landing fee discounts for aircraft owners fitting approved exhaust silencers to their aircraft thereby reducing noise on the ground

- Ensuring landing aircraft use only idle power at reverse thrust unless operationally essential

We are prepared to be held to account by the Council for our noise action plan that will reduce noise by 50%, and has been put together by one of the U.K's leading noise experts.

False Claim 5: It is claimed that aircraft using Biggin Hill Airport cannot fly above 2,500ft above sea level because they must be separated from traffic using larger London airports. Therefore, it is suggested we cannot deliver our pledge to reduce noise by having aircraft stay higher for longer.

Reality: This is incorrect. All business jet and turbo prop aircraft both arrive and depart using airspace common to all major London airports (the London Terminal Control Area), which in our vicinity contains airspace above 2,500 ft.

Today, all business jets and turbo prop aircraft arriving and departing Biggin Hill already climb well above 3,000 ft on departure. Only the smallest leisure aircraft do not immediately climb above 2,500 ft. So it is possible to amend the height of all flights under our control (subject to any statutory procedures) in order to reduce noise. We are already working on that process today in order to improve the noise profile of the airport and its flight paths.

In actual fact, most business jets are often far more technologically advanced than airliners and can fly considerably higher - at altitudes of up to 51,000 ft in some cases.

False Claim 6: It is claimed that the flight path can be changed *'only with the consent of Gatwick Airport'*.

Reality: This is not true. Gatwick has no jurisdiction over Biggin Hill airspace and we don't need their permission to change the flight path.

False Claim 7: It is claimed that if Bromley council approve our application, they will *'legally bind'* residents for the *'remaining 104 years of the lease.'*

Reality: This is not an application to permanently change the terms of the body of the lease. It is an application to vary the operating criteria (which includes opening hours). The lease allows for this flexibility without harming the underlying protections afforded to local residents about the scope of the airport's activities.

False Claim 8: It is claimed little additional local employment would result from our proposed changes.

Reality: This is incorrect. The global service companies we are trying to attract have repeatedly told us that our hours are too inflexible. By opening for marginally longer we will attract these companies to make Biggin Hill their European base - in many cases they will be new investors in the U.K. Therefore, they may start with a small core of existing staff but they will soon grow to hire local staff.

Our plans will create 2,300 jobs by 2030. This is modest, steady growth that the council and the Mayor of London agree is appropriate for the area. Consultants appointed by Bromley Council have independently verified this figure. This takes into account jobs created by new companies moving to Biggin Hill and new jobs created at existing companies who will need to cater for more demand.

This claim is, in effect, saying that no company will want to hire local people because they won't be good enough. This ignores the fact that the vast majority of the 1,000 employees supported by the airport are local. It also ignores the fact that many companies prefer to hire local. We have complete faith that Bromley residents and young people will fulfill the vast majority of the new jobs created, as they do today, and particularly with the help of the proposed Bromley College Training Centre now under active discussion.