

Portfolio Holder Report

London Airspace Consultation

Summary

The London Airspace Consultation covers proposed changes to flight paths over south eastern England, specifically in the vicinity of Gatwick and London City airports. The south of Sevenoaks District is currently affected by noise from aircraft approaching and departing Gatwick Airport. Primarily, flights over this part of Sevenoaks District are made by aircraft landing at Gatwick. At this stage, the consultation focuses on general principles and large area 'swathes' that could be affected rather than specific flight paths. Amongst a number of points made in the proposed response to the consultation, it is suggested that the objective for this exercise should be to balance the desire to make best use of the existing runway with reducing the number of people and businesses significantly affected by aviation noise and the impacts on those people and businesses that will remain affected. Any opportunities for aircraft to climb and descend on steeper trajectories should be taken to ensure that areas further from the airport will be less affected by higher levels of noise from lower flying aircraft.

Recommendation

That the proposed response (appendix 1) is sent.

Background

The London Airspace Consultation covers proposed changes to flight paths over south eastern England, specifically in the vicinity of Gatwick and London City airports. The consultation is split into sections, which contain different proposals for different areas depending on the airport in question and the height of aircraft over those areas. The section of interest to Sevenoaks District is part B of the consultation, which considers flights at below 4000ft arriving or departing Gatwick Airport. Whilst the consultation considers flights arriving or departing London City and Biggin Hill airports, it does not consider them at the heights that are relevant to Sevenoaks District. Appendix 2 contains maps of the consultation areas (reproduced from the consultation document).

The consultation considers flight paths from two configurations of Gatwick Airport. These are 'runway 26', where aircraft take off to the west and land from the east, and 'runway 08', where aircraft take off to the east and land from the west. The south of Sevenoaks District is currently affected by noise from aircraft approaching and departing Gatwick Airport. Primarily, flights over this part of Sevenoaks District are made by aircraft landing at Gatwick (in 'runway 26' configuration), due to the direction of prevailing winds. It is proposed, therefore, that the Council's primary concern in responding to this consultation is the flight paths within the 'below 4,000ft' area and particularly approach routes for

'Runway 26' configuration and departure routes for 'Runway 08' configuration, which would see aircraft departing Gatwick over the south of the District.

At this stage, the consultation focuses on general principles rather than specific flight paths. Appendices 3 and 4 show existing arrival and departure routes from Gatwick Airport in the two configurations. Appendices 5 and 6 show the consultation swathes for the two airport configurations.

The key points raised in the proposed response are:

- The primary objective of this review should not be making best use of the existing runway. Instead, it is considered that the objective must be to balance this with reducing the number of people and businesses significantly affected by aviation noise and the impacts on those people and businesses that will remain affected.
- Any opportunities for aircraft to climb and descend on steeper trajectories should be taken to ensure that areas further from the airport will be less affected by higher levels of noise from lower flying aircraft.
- The general approach in 'below 4,000ft' areas, which is to prioritise reductions in the number of people significantly affected by aviation noise, is supported.
- It is noted that there are no proposals to change 'runway 08' departure routes. This should include no greater use of the departure route to the north of Edenbridge, as it would increase the number of people subject to significant levels of aircraft noise, contrary to the stated general approach.
- Further consultation on detailed routes take place as soon as possible, as the current consultation has the potential to cause significant concern to residents and businesses over a wide area.
- Providing respite periods by increasing the frequency of flights along other existing and currently used routes during quieter periods for the airport should be considered.
- Severe limitations on all night flights (arrivals and departures) should be introduced with the introduction of a meaningful night-time respite period.
- Aircraft noise should be avoided, as far as possible, at major tourist attractions in Sevenoaks District.
- Independent noise monitoring and regulation are required, along with meaningful penalties for exceedance, to enforce height restrictions for landing aircraft and these should be introduced as part of these changes.
- The consultation indicates how affected residents in the District are by aircraft noise currently. It is, therefore, disappointing that the Council's recent application to join the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee was rejected.

Appendix 1: Proposed Response

1. Gatwick Airport is seeking to realign all Runway 26 departure routes below 4,000ft to help make best use of the existing runway.

Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose this objective to realign all Runway 26 departure routes below 4,000ft to help make best use of the existing Runway.

Please state the reasons why you support or oppose this objective.

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) does not consider that the primary objective of this review should be making best use of the existing runway. Instead, the objective must be to balance this with reducing the number of people and businesses significantly affected by aviation noise and the impacts on those people and businesses that will remain affected.

SDC understands that the primary concern of local residents in the south of the District, in respect of aircraft noise from the airport in 'runway 26' mode, is not departure routes of aircraft but arrival routes. Nevertheless, figures B4 and B5 show existing departure routes that are directed over Edenbridge and over Crockham Hill, both in Sevenoaks District. Without information on the height of these aircraft and the noise generated by them, it is difficult for SDC to comment on whether flights should be directed away from these areas as part of this process. SDC does, however, support a requirement for aircraft to climb faster, which, it is assumed, would reduce the noise from departing aircraft in Sevenoaks District when the airport is in 'runway 26' operation.

Sevenoaks District is affected by noise from aircraft departing Gatwick in 'Runway 08' configuration. It is noted that no changes are proposed to 'runway 08' configuration departures. Figure B3 shows a 'NPR outline' of a route over the north of Edenbridge, which is rarely used. SDC would object to any substantial increase in the use of this route, as it would increase the number of people subject to significant levels of aircraft noise. Again, SDC would support a requirement for aircraft to climb faster, which, it is assumed, would reduce the noise from departing aircraft in Sevenoaks District in those areas that are currently affected.

There are no specific arrival or departure routes for SDC to comment on. It supports the calls for these to be consulted on further and wishes to be involved in these consultations. SDC supports the general approach in 'below 4,000ft' areas, which is to prioritise reductions in the number of people significantly affected by aviation noise. SDC would like to see the further consultation on detailed routes take place as soon as possible, as the current consultation has the potential to cause significant concern to residents and businesses over a wide area.

2. This proposal is considering extra routes to enable periods of respite. This would mean implementing two routes in a particular direction instead of one, with a schedule for using each route to provide periods of relative respite for people living in the area beneath the routes. While this would provide respite, it would also increase the geographic area regularly exposed to noise.

Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose this objective of providing respite routes, given that it potentially impacts more people in order to offer respite. Please state the reasons why you support or oppose the objective of providing respite routes.

NB a separate question is provided later to identify specific local considerations.

In respect of the possibility of offering respite for those affected by noise from departing aircraft in 'runway 08' configuration, SDC considers that doing this by increasing the frequency of flights along other existing and currently used routes during quieter periods for the airport should be considered.

SDC considers that severe limitations on all night flights (arrivals and departures) should be introduced along with meaningful night-time respite period, for the benefit of all affected by aircraft noise.

3. Please indicate which, if any, place(s) or area(s) within the consultation swathes you think require special consideration in the on-going design process.

Please describe the characteristics of these locations, stating whether they should be considered due to concerns about noise impact, visual impact and/or any other impact.

Please refer to the consultation swathes highlighted on the maps in Figures B8 and B9.

Sevenoaks District contains a number of national and regional tourist attractions, including, but not limited to, Hever Castle, Penshurst Place, Chartwell and Knole Park. The tranquillity and setting of these attractions is an important aspect of their appeal to the public and, therefore, their ability to contribute to the economy and provide jobs. Aircraft noise should be avoided, as far as possible, in these areas.

In order to avoid significant numbers of flights over Edenbridge and Dormansland, arrival routes in 'runway 26' operation are currently predominantly directed over the largely rural, northern part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. SDC supports the general approach in 'below 4,000ft' areas, which is to prioritise reductions in the number of people significantly affected by aviation noise. However, it also considers that

the impact of noise should be reduced as far as possible for those people that will remain affected and that noise in AONBs should be reduced.

The consultation document states that alternative arrival routes can only be considered for the points at which aircraft will be above 3,000ft because below this level aircraft will need to be closely aligned to the runway. By ensuring that approaches to Gatwick are steep as possible there will be the greatest possible flexibility to consider routes. This will also reduce the noise impact of those routes until aircraft are near to the airport. SDC believes that this has the potential to benefit those currently affected by aviation noise in Sevenoaks District. Independent noise monitoring and regulation are required, along with meaningful penalties for exceedance, to enforce height restrictions for landing aircraft and these should be introduced as part of these changes. SDC also supports Edenbridge Town Council's view that measures to produce a more noise-sensitive culture among airlines and their flight crews are required.

There are no specific arrival routes for SDC to comment on. SDC would like to see further consultation on detailed routes take place as soon as possible, as the current consultation on large arrival 'swathes' has the potential to cause significant concern to residents and businesses over a wide area.

- 4. In what, if any, geographic locations should options be considered for altering routes for respite purposes?**

What should the criteria be?

SDC's comments on respite are set out above.

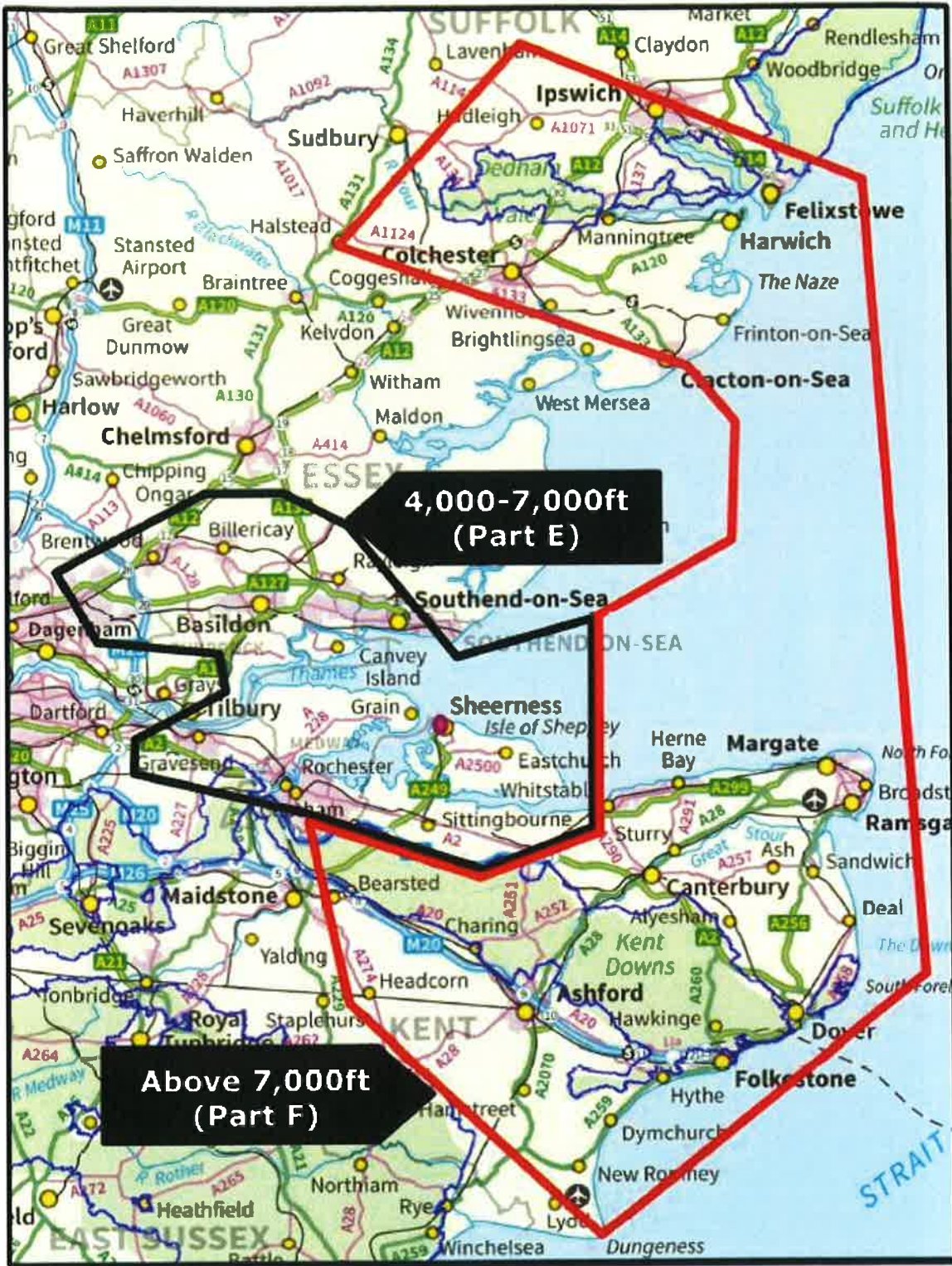
- 5. Please provide any other information that you feel is relevant to the on-going development of the airspace covered by this consultation.**

SDC considers that this consultation indicates how affected residents in the District are by aircraft noise currently. The Council is disappointed that its recent application to join the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee was rejected.

Appendix 2: Consultation Areas



Figure B1: Consultation Areas



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Figure A2: Consultation areas for London City, London Biggin Hill and London Southend routes

Appendix 3: Gatwick Airport Flight Paths in Runway 26 Operations

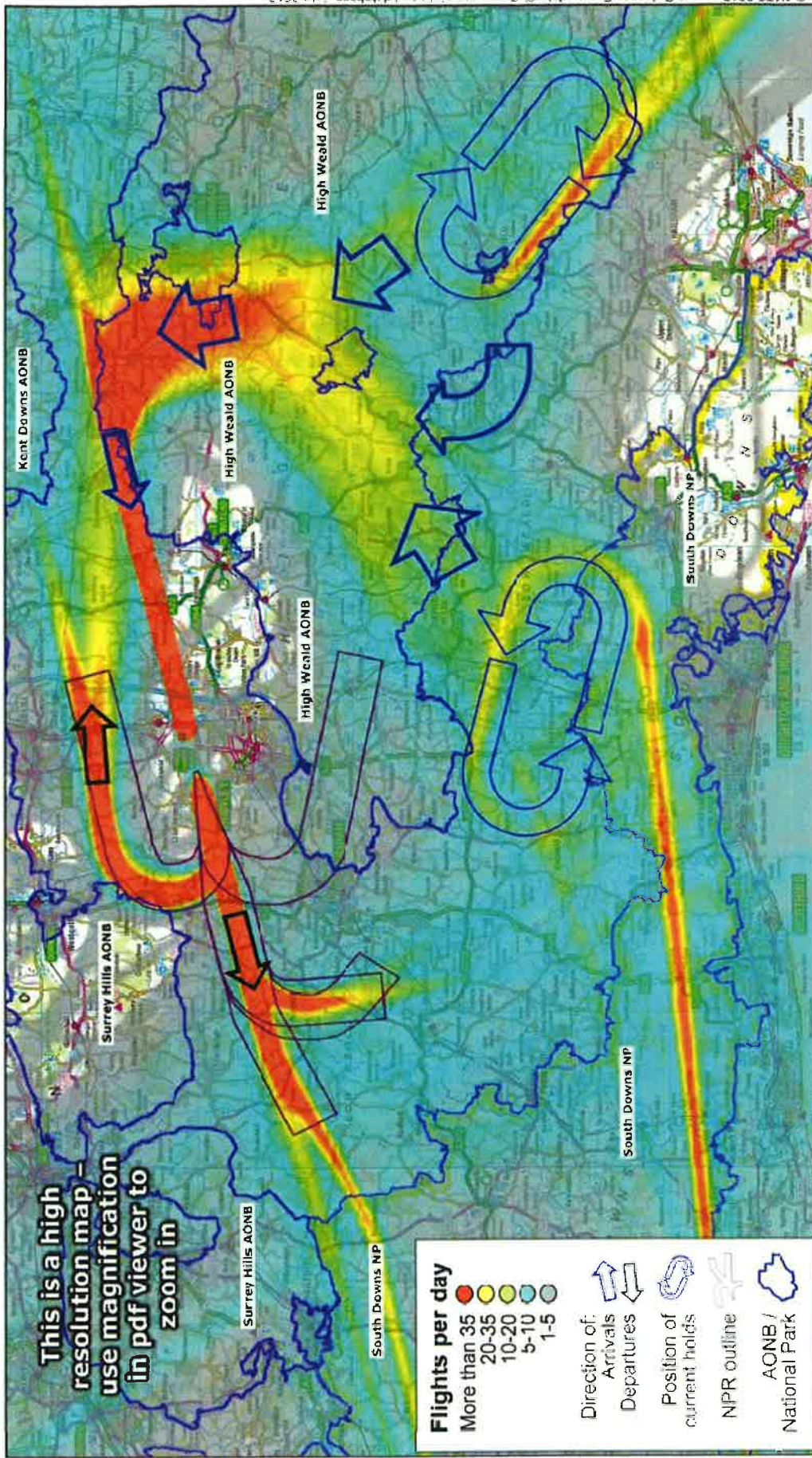


Figure B5: Gatwick Airport flight paths with AONBs and National Parks (Runway 26 operations)

Appendix 4: Gatwick Airport Flight Paths in Runway 08 Operations

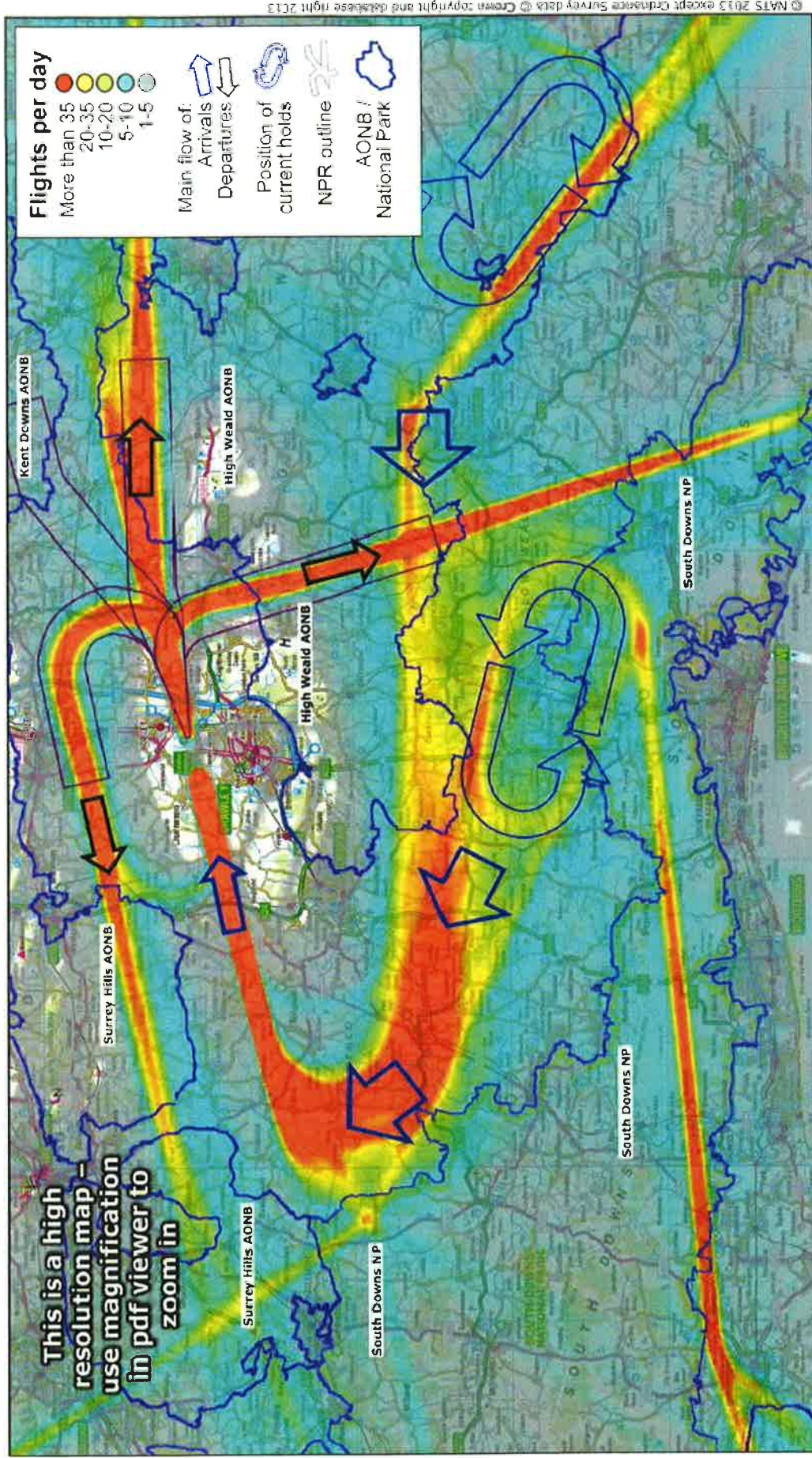


Figure B3: Gatwick Airport flight paths with AONBs and National Parks (Runway 08 operations)

Appendix 5: Consultation Swathes for Runway 08 Operations

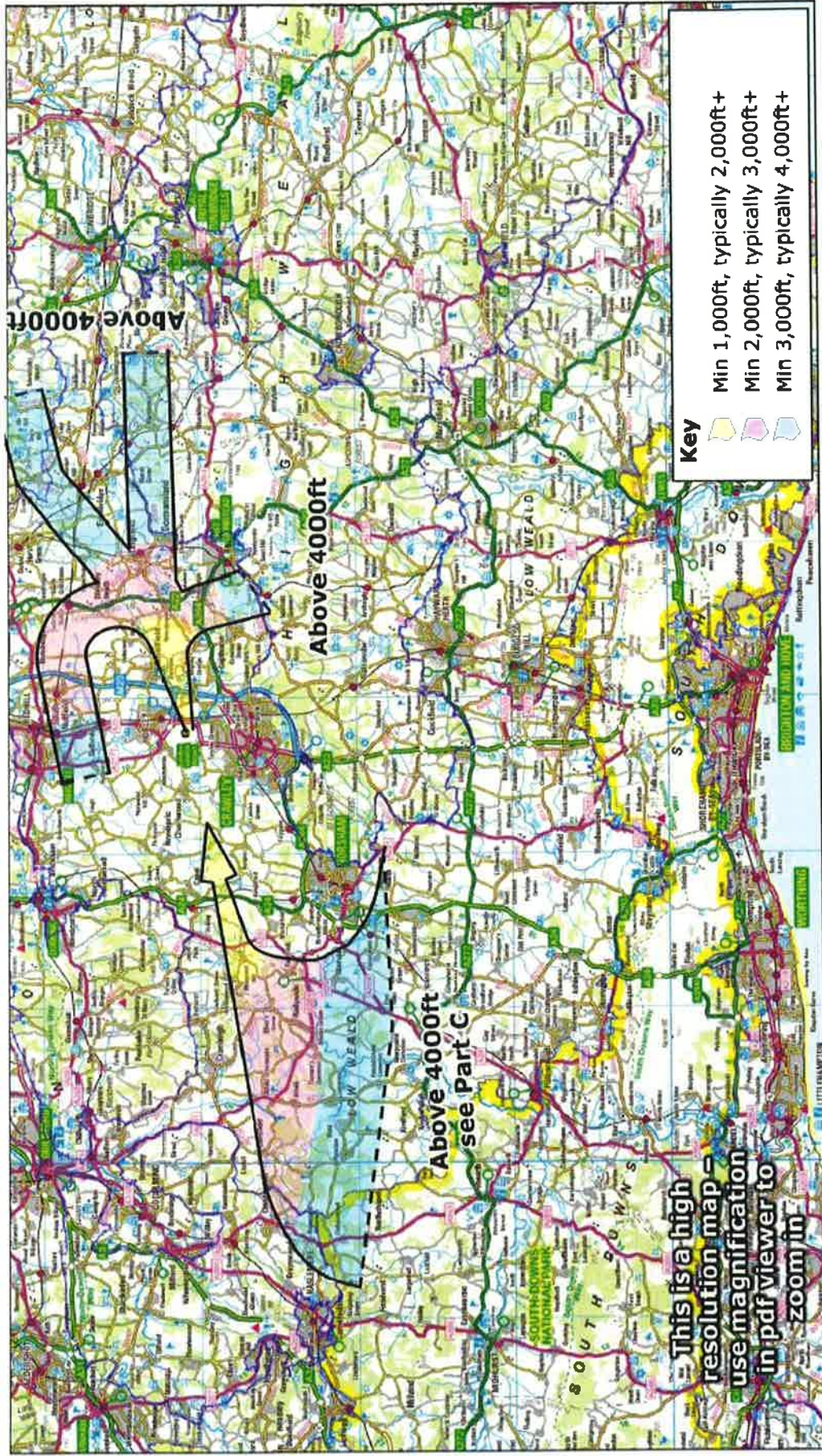


Figure B8: : Consultation swathe for Gatwick Airport Runway 08 Arrival and Departure Routes below 4,000ft

