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**Representations raised on behalf of HX Properties Ltd to  
Matter 4: Economic Growth**

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## **MATTER 4: ECONOMIC GROWTH**

### **Issue 4.34 – Matter 4: Economic Growth**

Q4.34 Is Policy EC7 justified and consistent with national policy in identifying Gatwick Airport as a location for hotel and visitor accommodation, such that proposals at this location would not be subject to a demonstration of need or a sequential approach?

Policy EC7 : “*Hotel and Visitor Accommodation*” taken from the Draft Crawley Borough Local Plan 2024-2040 (hereinafter referred to as DCBLP 2024-2040) is unarguably a form of development which in accordance with Chapter 7 of the NPPF 2023 along with the NPPG on “*Town Centres and Retail*”, is expected to be focussed in town centre locations first, and then if no town centre locations are available, to edge of centre locations and, if neither town centre locations or edge of centre locations are available, to out of centre locations (with preference for accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre). It is this underlying policy aim which should form the starting point of any SA/SEA.

This approach is accepted by the Borough Council as the reasoned justification set out in paragraph 9.89 of DCBLP 2024-2040 concerned with Policy EC7 reveals, viz:

*“9.89 Hotels are an NPPF main town centre use, and support Town Centre vitality and viability. The Town Centre is the preferred location for hotel and visitor accommodation, as it is here that linkages with shops, restaurants and other town centre uses can best be facilitated.”*

The LPA has adopted an approach which misapplies and conflates the sequential test as it relates to hotel and visitor accommodation, preventing town centre locations from being afforded the necessary priority, with London Gatwick Airport occupying an out of centre location given equal status in term of providing the same development. In this way, there is no basis for seeking to exempt the sequential test from being applied to hotel and visitor accommodation on land at London Gatwick Airport., and to this extent Policy EC7 forming part of the DCBLP 2024-2040 is considered to be unsound.

Recent developments granted planning permission by the Borough Council for hotels on-airport have been allowed without any car parking or with a car parking deficiency. It necessitates those staying at the on-airport hotel having to rely on either on-airport passenger car parking spaces or off-airport car parking facilities. In the case where passengers have to rely on on-airport passenger car parking means that hotel accommodation on land at London Gatwick Airport constitutes a mixed or composite use.

The requirement to meet on-airport car parking associated with on-airport hotel development in situations where no dedicated car parking is, or has been made available, or there is a deficiency

in respect of car parking relating to on-airport hotels, will have a consequential impact particularly in respect of long-term passenger car parking.

Furthermore, to the extent that a demonstrable need is required for on-airport passenger car parking on land at London Gatwick Airport; the same provisions must equally apply to a mixed or composite use of hotel and airport related car parking, especially where one of the components of the same mixed or composite use is airport related car parking. The contention advanced on behalf of my clients, namely that hotel and visitor accommodation is required to demonstrate a need before planning permission is granted, is given support through the wording of Policy EC7: *“Car parking related to on-airport hotel development must meet the requirements of Policy GAT3.”*

It is recognised that the Airport Owner and Operator enjoy permitted development rights in accordance with Schedule 2 Part 8 Class F of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended). However, the phrase *“operational building”* is defined in Schedule 2 Part 8 Class O as meaning *“a building, other than a hotel, required in connection with the movement or maintenance of aircraft or with the embarking, disembarking, loading, discharge or transport of passengers, livestock or goods at a relevant airport.”* In short, hotels do not benefit from permitted development rights, reinforcing the point that not only should the sequential test be applied in accordance with national advice, but similarly so too should a demonstrable needs test be required to be met in respect of on-airport hotel development as part of Policy EC7.

The importance to be attached to the sequential test in Crawley Borough Council’s administrative area cannot be divorced from the aims set out in the *“One Town Crawley’s Economic Recovery Plan 2022-2027”* being to secure a vibrant neighbourhood and sustainable economic future for the town centre via significant qualitative investment, at a time when considerable funding is to be directed to delivering necessary infrastructure to improve the town’s connectivity and skills base. Policy EC7 through its dilution of the sequential test is inconsistent with the aims of re-invigorating the vitality and viability of Crawley Town Centre, to the extent of discouraging valuable investment at a time when government policy is actively seeking to support investment in town centres to arrest their decline.

It is for these reasons that Policy EC7 is not justified or consistent with national policy in identifying Gatwick Airport as a location for hotel and visitor accommodation.

