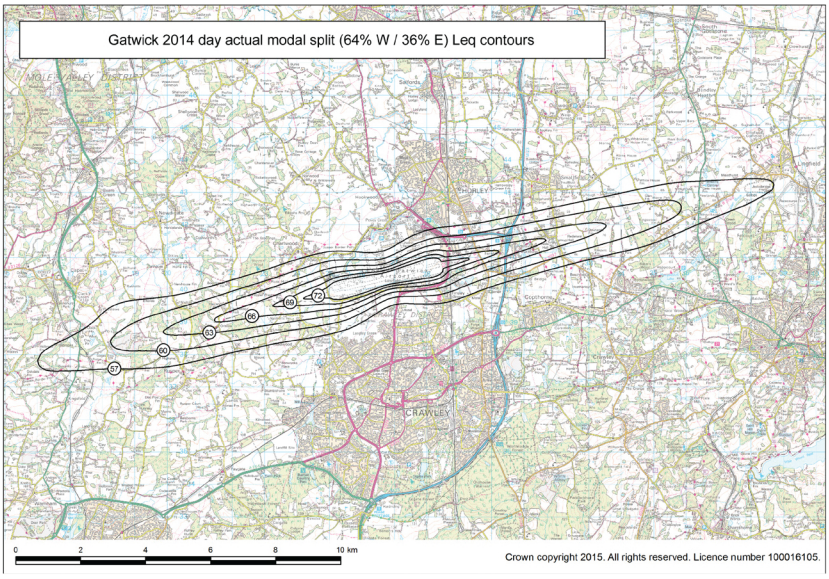
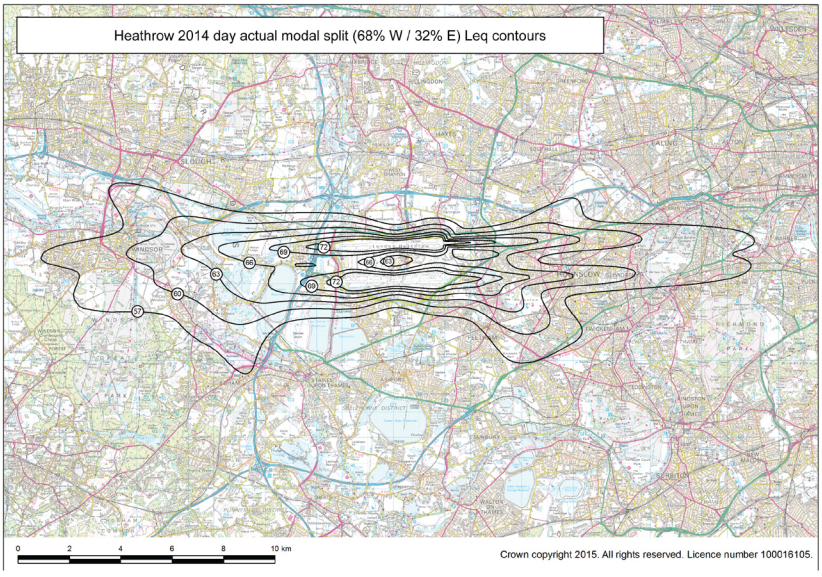


Gatwick airport



Heathrow airport

Figure 5.2 Noise patterns (in isobels) for Gatwick and Heathrow airports in 2014

The UK aviation situation

wIncreasing demand

In 2015, Heathrow was the EU's busiest airport, Gatwick was 8th, Stansted 20th and Luton 30th, with the UK's smaller airports increasing their passenger traffic at a faster rate than both Heathrow and Gatwick. As demand grows, the airports will fill until they reach the limits of either terminal or runway capacities. Over 90 per cent of national passenger capacity is expected to be reached by the early 2040s. Forecasts suggest that all the airports in the South-East will be at capacity by 2030 and the larger airports outside the South-East from 2040. The first airports to fill by 2020 will be in the London area, especially Heathrow and Gatwick.

The UK government commissioned a report to recommend where to expand airport capacity in the South-East of the UK. Three options are available:

1 Expand Heathrow airport to the west of London.

2 Expand Gatwick airport to the south of London.

3 Build a new Thames Hub airport to the east of London.