

# Aircraft Holding Stacks westerly

**1** When a plane begins its descent into Gatwick they are positioned in sequence by Air Traffic Control (ATC) depending on their direction and point of origin. They all follow a prescribed route known as a Standard Arrival Route (STAR). Sometimes that STAR will allow for a 'straight in' approach while at other times they will follow their STAR into a holding stack.

**2** Aircraft enter a holding stack usually during particularly busy periods or when there is poor weather or visibility meaning aircraft movement rates decrease.

**3** Gatwick Airport has two holding stacks, known as WILLO and TIMBA and their location is shown here. The stacks have been in the same location since the 1960s and were decreed by the Department for Transport. They cannot be moved without a public airspace change consultation.

**4** Aircraft kept in holding stacks circle at different heights around a central point before being directed by ATC to start their final approach.

**6** There are no set heights or noise limits once arriving aircraft have left the stack. This is because of the random pattern in which they arrive in the UK airspace and the need for ATC to separate and sequence them safely and efficiently on to the Instrument Landing System for the final approach.

**5** Each aircraft in the stack is separated vertically by 1,000ft. The lowest level of the stack is 7,000ft but aircraft in the vicinity can and do pass them at a lower altitude.

How and why aircraft enter a holding stack on their approach to Gatwick



This map is a graphical representation, actual flight tracks may vary

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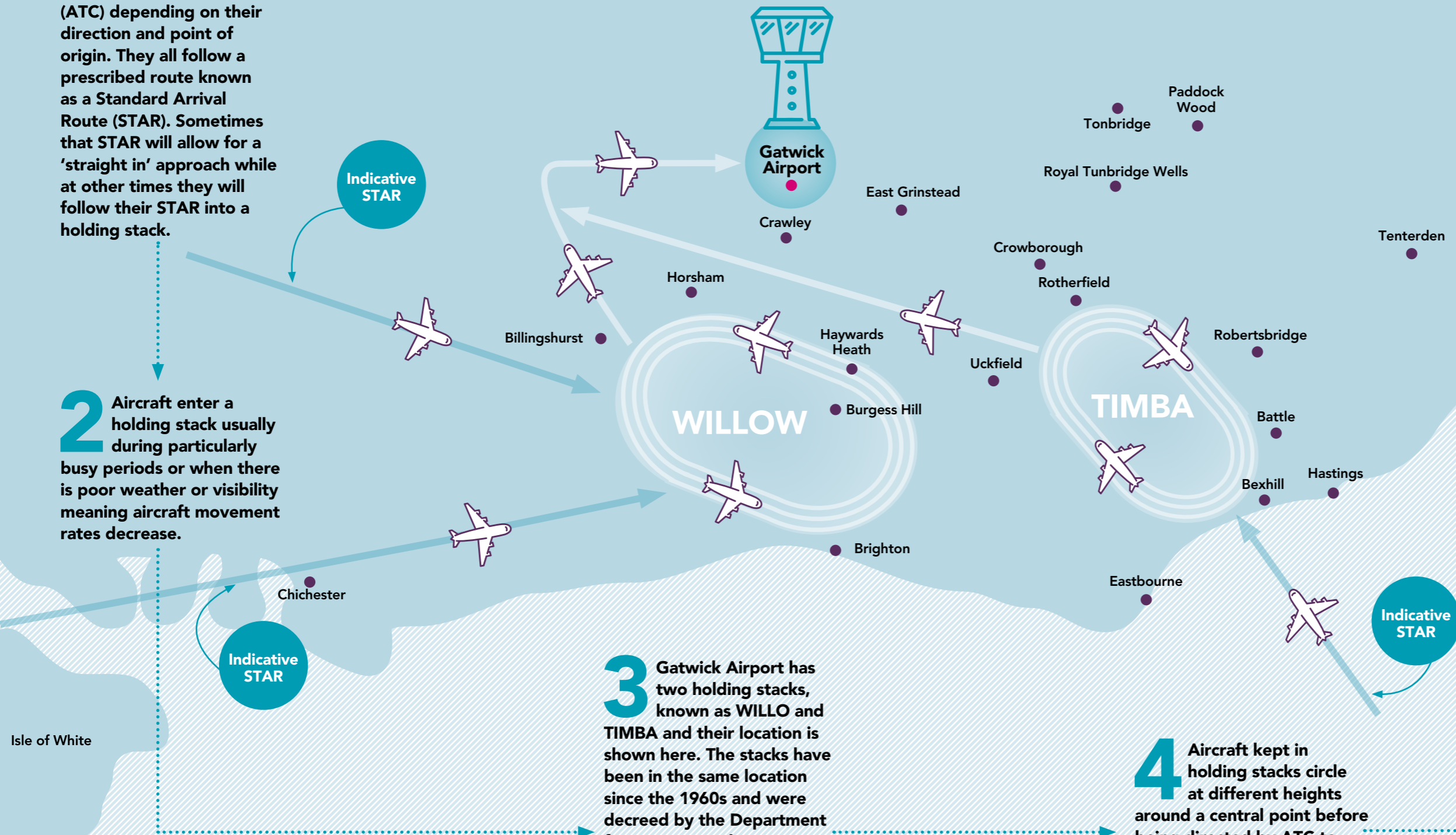
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