

Comments Received on the Filton Airfield Position Statement

Position Statement

1. On 14 April 2011, BAE Systems announced its intention to close Filton Airfield in December 2012. This announcement comes at a time when the planning framework for development in South Gloucestershire over the next 15-20 years is being established through the Core Strategy Development Plan Document. This document is at an advanced stage and is shortly to be subject to independent Examination. Therefore, in June the Council issued a [Position Statement](#) that set out possible options for how the planned closure of the Airfield could be dealt with in the Core Strategy.

2. 3 options were put forward for dealing with the Airfield through the Core Strategy:

OPTION 1 – No change to the Core Strategy

As the Core Strategy has made adequate provision for employment and housing, defer consideration of the development potential of the Airfield site until the Core Strategy is reviewed.

OPTION 2 – Add as a contingency site in the Core Strategy

Recognise the Airfield as a contingency site in the Core Strategy that is suitable for development should additional land be required. This would enable the site to be available for infrastructure provision, but other development on the site would not be brought forward unless required.

OPTION 3 – Identify as a development opportunity in the Core Strategy

Recognise the Airfield as a development site, in addition to the existing sites identified in the Core Strategy, and identify it for development that should be integrated with the Cribbs/Patchway New Neighbourhood. However, development would not proceed until sufficient community consultation and engagement with BAE Systems and other interested parties, as well as technical assessment, had confirmed the most appropriate development option for the site. The Core Strategy would set out a project management style policy together with a number of guiding principles for development.

3. The Position Statement was subject to public consultation for six weeks ending on 29th July, although comments received after this date have also been accepted. The Statement posed six questions for consultation responses to focus on. All the comments received have been collated and sent to the Inspector who is conducting the Core Strategy Examination. They are also available to view [here](#).

Summary of Responses

4. 125 responses have been received to the consultation on the Filton Airfield Position Statement, of which about two thirds are from members of the public. The other responses are from parish and town councils, local councillors and political groups, statutory consultees, interest groups, developers and agents. These include BAE Systems, West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Bristol City Council, Filton Town Council, ward councillors and South Gloucestershire Council political groups.
5. The responses fall into 5 categories:

No. of Responses		Category
54	43%	Opposed to the closure of the Airfield in the absence of any justification or evidence
39	31%	General support for Option 3
26	21%	Points of detail/suggested alternative uses for Airfield
4	3%	Opposed to reliance on Airfield to address perceived housing shortfall in Core Strategy
2	2%	No comments

6. Opposed to the closure of the Airfield
43% of respondents, mainly members of the public, but including Bristol City Council and local town councils, are opposed to the decision of BAE Systems to close the Airfield, in the absence of evidence to show that every effort has been made to find a new owner, or to develop the airfield as a viable commercial operation. Understandably, particular concerns have been raised as to the longer term viability of the aerospace industry in Filton without a runway close by, and the consequent impact this would have on the local economy.
7. General support for Option 3
31% support the Option 3 approach, which is that the Airfield should be identified for development in the Core Strategy, although 14 responses consider that the Airfield should be a replacement for the North Yate New Neighbourhood and development in rural areas / Green Belt .
8. Developers of various parts of the Cribbs/Patchway New Neighbourhood are generally supportive, provided that their development is not delayed or prejudiced.

9. Points of detail/suggested alternative uses for the Airfield
21% of responses didn't respond to the questions in the Position Statement, but rather made specific comments about development under Option 3 or suggested other forms of development for the Airfield. Similar comments were also made by a few of the respondents supporting Option 3.
10. Comments made include:
- Principal use of Airfield should be for employment
 - Provide for high quality jobs and consolidate the aerospace cluster (LEP)
 - Airfield not appropriate for large scale manufacturing/warehousing
 - Look at variations of development options including higher proportion of employment (Bristol City Council)
 - Principal use of Airfield should be for housing
 - Opportunity to provide affordable housing
 - Support for an aviation heritage museum to house both Concorde and the Bristol Aero Collection
 - Support for the Great Western Air Ambulance retaining a base on the site
 - Require passenger use of Avonmouth-Henbury rail line and other rail improvements (e.g. Filton to Avonmouth rail link)
 - Opportunity to create and enhance GI network
 - Take account of impact on existing communities including Southmead and Henbury/Brentry
 - Protect existing rail infrastructure (Network Rail)
 - Surface water drainage strategy and contamination remediation strategy required (Environment Agency)
 - Support provision of gypsy and traveller pitches (National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Support Groups)
 - Maintain a walking link across the site between Bristol and The Mall
 - Alternative uses for the site - exhibition/concert venue, wind farm, woodland/GI, park and ride.
 - Recognise East Works site as key employment site (Rolls-Royce)
11. Opposed to reliance on Airfield
Four responses were made by developers promoting alternative Core Strategy sites. They oppose reliance on the Airfield by the Council to address the perceived housing shortfall in the Core Strategy in the absence of a proper review of all sites, lack of evidence to demonstrate that the Airfield is suitable and deliverable, and concern about the level of development now being proposed for this area of the North Fringe.

Role of Policies, Sites and Places DPD

12. There was a mixed response to Question 3, with those opposed to the loss of the Airfield not agreeing with the question, while those who agreed with Option 3 generally agreeing that the detail of the development of Filton Airfield should be set out in the Policies, Sites and Places DPD. Of those who qualified their reason for agreeing, the main reason was to allow time for the necessary technical work and consultation to be undertaken.

13. Of those who don't agree, BAE Systems consider that the Airfield should be identified as a strategic mixed use allocation with details to be set out in a Concept Statement and SPD, consistent with the approach being taken in the Core Strategy for the new neighbourhoods.
14. Bristol City Council considers that the Core Strategy should establish the broad principles for development of the Airfield and that there should be greater clarity and certainty in the Core Strategy than is currently shown by Option 3, particularly in relation to defining proposed land uses and setting clear priorities.
15. Persimmon Homes and Ashfield Land question the need for a DPD instead of SPD, as there appears to be little difference between the way Policies CS26 and CS26A are being defined.

Suggested changes to the Core Strategy

16. As with Question 3, those opposed to the loss of the Airfield and its identification for redevelopment do not agree with the suggested changes to the Core Strategy. Specific comments on the suggested wording changes were mainly from interest groups, statutory consultees, agents and developers. These comments include:
 - Retain principles behind deleted para 12.17 (Natural England, CPRE)
 - Add more references to GI (Avon Wildlife Trust)
 - Add commitment to joint working with Bristol City Council and Bristol wards
 - Combine Policies CS26 and CS26A (BAE Systems)
 - Clarify status and purpose of Figure 6
 - Amend Policies CS26 and CS26A to bring forward redevelopment of Patchway Industrial Estate first, then the Airfield, and reference to the farmland to the south and west of the airfield accommodating new housing should be removed (Jones Lang LaSalle).
 - Be more explicit about timescales for delivering development under Policies CS26 and CS26A with land to south of Airfield first, and Airfield and land at Cribbs Causeway later (Persimmon Homes & Ashfield Land)
 - Refer to Filton Airfield as an extension to the Cribbs/Patchway New Neighbourhood, rather than as an integrated part
 - Remove references to Policies, Sites and Places DPD
 - Remove Filton Airfield from the New Neighbourhood boundary on Figure 5
 - Re-establish Charlton Village – add to Policy CS26A the aim of establishing a new “village” within the development area with its own special sense of identity and stand alone facilities and infrastructure (CPRE)
 - Policy 26A guiding principles specific enough to provide a clear picture of the development to be delivered, but doesn't reconcile the potentially conflicting objectives of addressing the housing/jobs balance, supporting the aerospace industry and diversifying the employment base (Bristol City Council).

- Change to the status of Land West of A38 (inc. runway and Royal Mail) from “Safeguarded” to “Interim Safeguarded” site creates uncertainty by neither safeguarding the site, nor allocating it for a specific use.
- References to town centre at Cribbs Causeway and leisure/cultural facilities on Airfield likely to expand the role of Cribbs Causeway as an out-of-centre regional shopping destination - liable to divert trade from established local, district and town centres and from Bristol City Centre.(Bristol City Council).
- Development of Airfield presents many opportunities – this should be recognised in policy wording (Environment Agency)
- Query why gypsy and traveller residential pitch provision has been increased in para 10.66

Other Comments

17. There is widespread support for further public consultation on proposals for the Airfield, and for this to include the communities within Bristol, specifically Southmead, Henbury and Brentry. Also there are calls for the Council to involve Bristol City Council in any decisions on the Airfield.

Next Steps

18. In his [letter of 15th August](#), the Inspector conducting the forthcoming Core Strategy Examination set out his view on how the Core Strategy should be dealing with the Airfield in the event that it comes forward for redevelopment. The Council has responded in a [letter dated 2nd September](#), setting out the following actions to be taken prior to commencement of the Examination:

- Further public and stakeholder engagement
 - Drop-in Exhibitions during October
 - Workshops early November

The details of this engagement programme are available [here](#).

- Make changes to the Core Strategy
 - Set out the role and approach to redeveloping the Airfield
 - Set out the Vision and spatial objectives for the development
 - Identify the form, scale and delivery of the development
 - Re-cast Policies CS25 and CS26 (combine with Policy C26A)
 - Prepare a supporting Concept Plan
- Public consultation on changes to the Core Strategy December 2011/January 2012