

Matter 3
Spatial Portrait, Issues, Vision and Objectives
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Save Filton Airfield



**Statement to the Examination in Public of South
Gloucestershire Council's Proposed Core Strategy**

Matter 3

Spatial Portrait, Issues, Vision and Objectives

Paul D. Lee, Robert Hindle, 23 May 2012, v1.1

Question 2

Are the Strategic Objectives broadly consistent with the aspirations of organisations and the population and do they provide appropriate goals for the Council to pursue?

SFA believes that the Strategic Objectives with respect to Filton Airfield are not consistent with the aspirations of organisations or the population.

With respect to the aspirations of the population, both Filton Airfield consultations demonstrated an overwhelming majority were against redevelopment of the airfield. In the second consultation almost 75% of responses were against redevelopment.

SFA collected signatures to secure a debate at the Council meetings, for which we needed 2,500 signatures. We easily achieved our aim, amassing some 3,300 signatures in a very short space of time. At one point we were achieving signatures at a rate of more than one per minute, with people volunteering to sign, rather than being asked.

On 18 February 2012, hundreds of people turned out, in absolutely torrential rain, to march in protest against the airfield's proposed closure.

With respect to organisations, SFA believes that many would prefer the airfield to remain operational.

Je regrette que BAE Systems abandonne ce terrain, mais comme vous semblez le comprendre, Airbus ne peut en assurer seul la charge pour des raisons économiques.

(Email from Fabrice Bregier (Chief Operating Officer, Airbus) to SFA, 3 May 2012).

I consider it regrettable that BAE Systems is giving up this site, but as you will understand it, Airbus cannot take charge of it for economic reasons.

(Translation of Email from Fabrice Bregier to SFA, 3 May 2012).

Whilst SFA understands the Airbus position, we believe that if the airfield were to remain, Airbus would make a significant contribution towards its viability through usage alone.

It appears that Airbus is being forced off BAE land, as part of BAE's master plan to run down the airfield and sell it for housing.

SFA has heard that BAE has significantly increased both landing fees and rent to Airbus. SFA further understands that Airbus is now planning to move employees from BAE owned land into the new Airbus building, which sits on Airbus owned land. This will allow BAE to demolish more buildings for housing.

The Council appears either ignorant of this run down process, or willing to accept it, against the aspirations of organisations and the population.

The is evidence to suggest that operators have already been forced out of Filton by BAE.

These include Aeros, a flight training company. We spoke to their Managing Director, Tom Dunne, who had ambitious investment plans for his operation at Filton – up to a full flight training operation. We have heard rumours that Aeros were considering legal action against BAE to recover losses from being forced out, but we have no confirmation of this.

Air Livery, a company which repainted aircraft, also appear to have been forced out. It appears as though Air Livery wanted to remain at Filton, but BAE refused to give them a viable lease of the Brabazon which they were using. We asked Air Livery why they left in 2010.

As a previous occupant of the airfield we were wondering what reasons were behind Air Livery vacating Filton? We have heard rumours that BAE refused to give Air Livery a suitably long lease, and so Air Livery went elsewhere. It would be useful if you could provide details of why Air Livery left Filton.

(Email from SFA to Air Livery, 22 September 2011).

You hit the nail on the head with your information. Effectively Bae were unable to give Air Livery a vision of how long the airfield would remain open. Consequently we had to make a decision in the interest of the business, as to the future.

(Email from Air Livery Managing Director Julian Duffen to SFA, 22 September 2011).

We have heard numerous anecdotes of considerable interest from other organisations keen to operate from Filton. Whilst we acknowledge some of these may only be rumours, some come from sources we consider very reliable. The consistent theme that emerges is one of BAE not being willing to sell the airfield as an on-going concern or provide suitable long term contracts to justify initial setup investment costs.

SFA believes that the Council should have been exploring the level of interest in Filton. Sadly it appears as though the Council was pre-disposed to BAE's plans.

Question 3

Are there any Visions which the Council has put forward which are inappropriate or unrealistic?

SFA believes that the Vision for redeveloping Filton Airfield is both inappropriate and unrealistic.

To redevelop the airfield would remove, for ever, a valuable asset to the region. This is inappropriate given the forecasts for growth in aviation, and the historical importance of the site. It is also inappropriate because the plans appear to be opposed by the majority of the community.

SFA believes the number of houses being proposed is unrealistic when compared to the number of house completions over the last ten years, notwithstanding a re-evaluation of housing requirement projections in the current depressed economic climate.

The proposals for mixed-use developments on such a large site would unequivocally contribute to the chronic traffic congestion seen in the North Fringe, especially in light of any absence of new connections with the regional motorway network. Allowing for the fact that a sizeable proportion of traffic movements will occur between the proposed development and destinations outside of the Bristol urban area and will therefore not be satisfied by the proposed Bus Rapid Transit system, the Core Strategy completely ignores the practical solutions to vehicle ingress and egress issues between the North Fringe at the M5 J17 and M5 J16 pinch points. Proposed local roads connecting the site to neighbouring residential areas do not address this major problem.

Ironically, increased traffic congestion has been cited as one of the reasons for the rejection of the proposed commercial airport at Filton.

Without an operational airfield, the Council's vision of an Aerospace Centre of Excellence is not well founded, and probably nothing more than a sound bite. Airbus has its own "Centres of Excellence", and has done for years.

SFA has heard that the new Science Park is going to be filled with Airbus employees, thereby allowing Airbus to vacate BAE land. This in turn will allow BAE to redevelop yet more of the site. The Brabazon Aircraft Hangar looks set to become a distribution centre, now it has been vacated by Air Livery.

SFA would not be surprised to see this historic building destroyed for more housing. This would be ironic – demolishing the magnificent birth place of Concorde 216 while at the same time looking for a building to house her in.

Further Details

Further examples and details can be found in our EIP representation documents, the very latest copies of which can be found at the following locations:

http://www.savefiltonairfield.org/eipdocs/SFA_EIP_LEGALITY.pdf

http://www.savefiltonairfield.org/eipdocs/SFA_EIP_FOI.pdf

http://www.savefiltonairfield.org/eipdocs/SFA_EIP_VISION.pdf

http://www.savefiltonairfield.org/eipdocs/SFA_EIP_SOUND_1.pdf

http://www.savefiltonairfield.org/eipdocs/SFA_EIP_SOUND_2.pdf