

LONDON SOUTHEND AIRPORT

Information Leaflet.

5 *Briefing document.*

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Foreword by

Andrew Walters
Chairman
London Southend Airport Company Ltd

Dear Residents

There has been an airfield at Southend since 1915 and, after its early RAF days, it reached its heyday for passengers in 1967 when nearly 700,000 people passed through its doors. Later on in 1989, when express parcel services were booming, there were 110,000 flights through the airport. Today our passenger flights are reduced to just a few summer flights to the Channel Islands that can only be operated with 50 seat type aircraft until the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) are satisfied that the airport has been upgraded to meet current safety standards.

It may seem strange to non-aviation people to see Boeing 737's coming to and from the airport all the time, and to learn that we cannot allow them to carry passengers. They can only come and go empty until we have the proper runway end safety areas.

I know that the community want passenger flights again and the airlines want to operate them again. So we need to modernise the airport and this briefing document explains what we must do, why, and what happens if we don't.

The underlying aim of our proposals is to maintain a safe environment, promote economic and environmental sustainability, act as a catalyst for employment and investment, and be recognised again as a regional airport of which everybody can be proud.

The history is that in 1997 we brought forward our plans to develop more passenger flights, so that we could meet the needs of local people and bring the

Airport income up to an economically sustainable level. Outline planning consent was granted for an airport railway station and a new passenger terminal, which would link the airport into the regional rail network. This is consistent with the Government's sustainability and transport policy and would be extremely convenient for passengers.

However, before we could allow passengers to fly in the very same planes that come to the airport empty for maintenance, the CAA - the Industry Regulator notified us that we would be required to modernise the airport with a range of measures, particularly by the provision of longer Runway End Safety Areas (RESAs) at each end of the main runway. For the Airport to comply, we must adjust the position of our runway, which is constrained at one end by the main Southend-London railway line and at the other by the 11th Century St Laurence Church, Eastwood.

These new regulations, apply to all licensed UK airports. They make sense: they provide high levels of safety for both those on the ground, for passengers and they are based on research both in the UK and worldwide.

Every option and alternative method of meeting the new CAA Regulations has been considered. Unfortunately, as I will explain, we are between a rock and a hard place and the only solution requires the help and understanding of St Laurence Church and its congregation.

The airport is invaluable to the community. St Laurence Church is invaluable to the community. The Southend-London railway line is invaluable to the community.

Something has to change and this has led to the proposal for the Church building to be lifted and moved 110 metres to the north. This would:

- preserve the building in an even safer location.
- preserve the present use of the Church by its members.
- allow the airport to continue to serve the community.
- ensure that passengers could use the airport completely confident that it met the latest international safety standards.

I certainly recognise that proposals to move the Church raise emotional and historical concerns in the community. The proposal is to move the Church building only from one side of the Churchyard to the other, whilst leaving the existing graves untouched.

Above all, I recognise the importance of not disturbing the graves in the Churchyard, absolutely every care will be taken to ensure that that does not happen, and it is our firm objective to ensure continued access to the graveyard for family and friends.

To consider the works, we have engaged the advice of one of the best engineers in the country who have already moved many old and listed buildings before and have worked with English Heritage. They have assured us they can do it again, without any damage to the fabric of the building. Indeed the building will be provided with foundations for the first time.

Please remember, this is not about bigger planes. We only want to deliver the freedom to fly from Southend again, in modern aircraft that already come to the airport, like the Boeing 737 with 140 seats which can then operate to Malaga, Palma, Alicante, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Geneva.

I would emphasise that there will not be passenger flights at night.

Finally, to place Southend Airport in context, it is small, being of a similar size to London City and Southampton Airports – characterised by being environmentally friendly, efficient and convenient, not like the large intercontinental airports at Gatwick and Stansted.

I hope you will support us in what is a very important decision for the local community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Walters', with a horizontal line underneath.

Andrew Walters

Chairman

1. Introduction

Since taking over the airport from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council seven years ago, regulations for the airport have changed. We have shared these changes with the Council, the community and the 43 companies based on the airport, employing over 1,500 members of staff [Airfield Employment Survey 1999]. In the 1960's, Southend Airport was a hugely successful passenger airport offering some of the first package holidays operated by Jack Jones of Channel Airways and scheduled services by Freddie Laker. Later, once Gatwick, Stansted and more recently London City Airport opened up, the range of destinations and frequency of services made them more attractive options to both passengers and airlines.

Airport activities were initially redirected towards existing maintenance and refurbishment facilities. Together with the operators of these businesses, the new airport company concentrated on becoming a full service centre for the commercial and general aviation industry. That strategy has led to a steady improvement in the financial performance of the airport year on year.

Benefits of this improvement have been seen in employment numbers, reinvestment by companies in their facilities, and in the overall appearance of the airport.

Subsequent consultations with the community and government have shown that people would, once again, like to be able to take passenger flights from the airport. Our objective remains to meet local community and regional demand for air services within Europe. However, in the meantime CAA Regulations have changed too.

The Airport in the Region

Southend Airport is recognised as a vital employment generator. A study by Oxford Economic Forecasting (OEF) on behalf of the Government [published in 2000], established that airports are a vital catalyst for new investment and employment with at least one new job being created for every 1000 passengers.

Business surveys and Regional Development Agency strategies confirm that companies believe good air links are a very important factor in business location and growth.

In 2001 the Government announced the extension of the Thames Gateway Regeneration Area, which effectively extends the London Docklands zone right out to the east including London Southend Airport. This is the largest regeneration area in Europe and is expected to generate considerable growth in inward investment and new jobs.

Already, proposals to develop an engineering training centre at the Airport are being considered in a move to ensure that engineering companies can recruit locally from a pool of skilled people, particularly as the airport grows.

The development of the airport will be financed both by private sector money and by European and UK Government initiatives. There will be no charge on local ratepayers, who in turn will receive the benefits of the proposals. To take the words of the Chairman of the East of England Development Agency:-

“Our goal is to make the East of England a world class economy, in the top 20 wealthiest European regions by 2010, bringing greater prosperity and opportunity for everyone who lives, works, invests and does business here”

Vincent Watts OBE

The airport plans play an important part in meeting this goal.

What Other Options Were Considered?

The following four main options were considered and each was rejected. Remember that the runway must be directed into the prevailing South West wind and, of course, any changes to the existing flight path would be liable to cause disturbance to areas presently unaffected so there are many other factors and people to consider.

Option 1 – Shorten the Existing Runway to Accommodate the Additional Safety Areas

This would shorten the runway so much that most of the existing, as well as future maintenance aircraft could not land. Only the very smallest passenger aircraft and small

training aircraft could continue to use the airport with any certainty and that is not enough to meet the running costs of the airport.

Option 2 – Realign along the Roach Valley or to the South East

The present runway was laid to avoid rising ground and hills in the surrounding area. Any realignment would require the hills and a number of houses to be removed and the realigned flight paths would cause disturbance over larger populated areas.

Option 3 – Extend at the Railway End

This proposal was considered by specialist rail engineers who reported that the railway line would need to be sunk by up to 11 metres (36 ft) for up to 800m either side of the runway. This would take up to two years to complete during which time Southend, Prittlewell and Rochford stations would be closed. In fact, the works would cause very considerable disruption and inconvenience to the whole community, particularly commuters. Significant compensation payments, on top of the actual costs of carrying out the works over this extended two year period would have to be paid. This would place an impossible burden on the Fenchurch Street line and the surrounding roads.

Option 4 – Adjust the Runway Centre Line

This option would require the runway to be moved 110 metres away from the Church, and would result in many homes being demolished at each end of the runway together with part of a hill and many homes to be demolished in Southend.

With the benefit of the experience of a range of professionals, and in consultation with the CAA, each option was carefully considered against all of the relevant criteria, specialist reports were commissioned and opinions and regulations challenged. Ultimately, there is no doubt that the solution with the minimum impact on the lives of those living and working in the community was for the Church to move 110 metres.

Our Proposals for St Laurence Church [View Drawings below](#)

Firstly, why must there be a change when the Church and the runway have been close to each other ever since the airport was built in the early 1900s?

The answer is simply new safety regulations from the CAA. All runways being used for public transport flights must now have long Runway End Safety Areas (RESA's) in the event of aircraft overruns and/or undershoots.

For the past three years negotiations have been taking place with the CAA, engineers, consultants, and specialists to try to find a solution to the problem.

Amongst the many factors that need to be considered were disruption to everyday life for those in the community, present and future jobs, demolition of homes, shops and offices, noise disturbance, history, local planning legislation, government policies and more.

Having arrived, reluctantly, at the conclusion that the additional Safety Areas can only be added by effectively sliding the runway towards the South West end we resolved to approach the Church directly. We recognised the religious, historical and emotional importance of the Church and we needed to establish whether the Church authorities would agree to the building being moved from one side of the Churchyard to the other (see plan) in order that the necessary Safety Area could be installed at the airport.

At the outset the airport appointed one of the leading specialists in the country, Abbey Pynford. This company has a wide range of experience in moving historic and listed buildings successfully, many in conjunction with English Heritage and including the Grade II * listed building – St Christopher’s Chapel at Great Ormond Street London. Following a feasibility study, which included a Ground Condition Survey, they confirmed that the Church can be physically relocated without any part of the structure being disturbed.

www.abbeypynford.co.uk

The key elements of the operation, which lift the whole building and move it 110 metres are:-

- A concrete raft is constructed beneath the Church.
- The Church is jacked up four to six feet above the ground.
- The Church slides over the top of the existing Churchyard, which remains undisturbed.
- The Church is lowered on to the new site with the concrete raft remaining as a permanent foundation.

In order to move the Church to a safer location and reduce peak noise, the airport has agreed to finance the moving operation. There are also a number of other positive aspects, which the Church, its congregation and community would benefit from. These include:-

- The structural integrity of the Church would be secure on its new foundation for many centuries to come.
- A full “conservation plan” would be prepared, providing a far greater understanding of the historical evolution of the Church and grounds.
- Minor outstanding repairs already needed to the building would be carried out before the move takes place.
- A new Church hall would be provided alongside the Church, which would be suitable for weddings, meetings, and other associated uses and which would include a new Church Office.
- The graveyard would be able to remain open to families, friends and visitors.
- The whole area would be landscaped and the existing car park extended.
- Additional land would be given to the Church as an extension to the existing graveyard, which is already nearing capacity.

What Happens if the New Safety Areas Are Not Added to the Existing Runway?

The option of being able to continue to operate as we are today does not arise, as the CAA has made very clear to the Airport and reinforced by our own Duty of Care obligations. There has to be a change and although we have been given time to seek a solution, this point about change cannot be made too strongly.

The Alternatives are not attractive :

Alternative 1. Downgrade and shorten to a Category 2 Airport

If the additional Safety Areas cannot be added to the existing runway then the CAA Regulators will require the already comparatively short runway to be further shortened to provide the required safety areas within the existing airfield boundary. However the Church would continue to be an obstacle to flight safety so the critical runway distance would have to be reduced to less than 800 metres, too short for any commercial passenger services and too short for almost every aircraft that currently uses the airport as their maintenance base.

In theory the runway would comply with the CAA regulations and the Church could stay where it is, but in practice there wouldn't be any business left at the airport except for the flying clubs. It would not be possible to replace the lost business and the airport would close.

Alternative 2. Become an Unlicensed airport

The Airport is currently Licenced and inspected annually by the CAA to ensure that it operates to the proper safety standards, all the staff are kept up to their training levels and the equipment is all up to scratch and operating accurately. Unlicensed airports do not have to have either CAA approval, these Safety Areas or even the same Air Traffic Control staff and Fire and Rescue equipment and crews.

In theory the airport could drop the Licence requirements and become a disused runway and still accept maintenance flights but no passenger flights or flying training. But in practice very few airlines would be prepared to allow their aircraft to land at a disused airfield even for maintenance. So although the Church could stay where it is, the airport would not have any business left and the community would worry that the present high standards of staffing, equipment and safety had been lost.

Neither of these alternative outcomes could possibly be acceptable in social, economic or environmental terms. In recognition of this the CAA have given the Airport a period of time to meet the regulations provided that there are no material changes to the activities in the meantime. Doing nothing is not realistic and failure to react soon to the new standards introduced by the CAA and International Civil Aviation Organisation could be considered irresponsible.

If a decision is not reached on a timely basis therefore, the outlook is bleak for those employed at the airport and their families, the businesses on the airport and those off the airport who depend on them, and the local economy.

Where would the Church and Church Hall Be?

At this early stage and prior to detailed discussions with the Church and English Heritage there is no definitive plan.

The location that would be acceptable for the Civil Aviation Authority, together with a location for the Church hall is shown on the artist's impression on the front cover and plan attached to the back of this document.

What Happens Next?

Modernising the airport so that it can meet the needs of the whole community as a safe passenger airport is a complex process. Agreement with the Church on a possible solution is just the first step in that process. An outline of the process is explained in the chart attached.

What are the Views of the Church?

Each week the Church is regularly attended by over 100 people and its congregation plays an active part in the community, including organising Church Hall activities. The Airport recognise that this is an important decision both for the Church members and all of those whose jobs and families depend on the Airport. We have asked the Church Council for their help in working with us to find a way forward and are hopeful of a positive response.

Can the Church Building Withstand Being Moved?

The specialist engineers who have moved many listed buildings are confident that the building can be moved without any damage and will provide insurance to that effect.

2. What About the Future?

Community Benefits

When the Council transferred the loss-making Airport in 1994, the new operator accepted the responsibility for all future costs. This not only removed the financial burden on ratepayers, but today we also pay an annual rent to the Council and a share of profits and/or turnover, so the community benefits as the Airport grows.

In 2000 the Airport launched a Community Chest to support local amenities and facilities.

The Community Chest is a fund into which the Airport pays agreed amounts that are distributed by the Airport Consultative Committee, for the benefit of local amenities and in support of local projects. Funding of the Community Chest ranges from fines on aircraft operators to contributions when special disturbance has been caused to residents. For example, Stansted and Luton airports were recently closed suddenly due to fog and some 15 aircraft were redirected into Southend Airport in the early hours of the night. A percentage of the landing fees were paid into the Community Chest as a gesture of good will.

In addition to direct benefits for the community there is a range of indirect financial benefits created by the 1,500 locally employed people and their spending power within the local economy. As the Airport grows, improved public transport services and other benefits will follow.

Future Flight Numbers and Aircraft Size

In the past there were between 60,000 and 110,000 local and commercial flights each year with a range of noisy and inefficient engine aircraft carrying almost 700,000 passengers, cars and freight. Today commercial aircraft are much quieter and the noisy aircraft (known as Chapter 2) are being banned from the UK this year (such as the old BAC1-11's and Boeing 707's).

The regular passenger flights we want to start will not be operating at night and will be the modern range of jet aircraft with 70, 100 and 140 seats that already come into the airport, but currently without passengers such as the Bae 146 whisper jet and the even quieter modern Boeing 737's . These are the types of aircraft being used by the successful European scheduled and charter airlines, who we want to attract to use the airport and who can offer seats at competitive prices and provide a good service.

Southend airport could be similar to London City and Southampton airports in terms of size and operations. A small Community Airport with a range of short passenger flights to European resorts and cities, some cargo flights supporting local industry, and flights for maintenance companies. It is NOT going to be an international airport like Stansted or Gatwick and it is not going to have big aircraft because they won't fit here, now or in the future.

The details of future operations will be addressed in full as part of the town planning process with the Council and perhaps an independent Inspector at a Local Inquiry, once an agreement in principle can be reached with the Church on how to proceed.

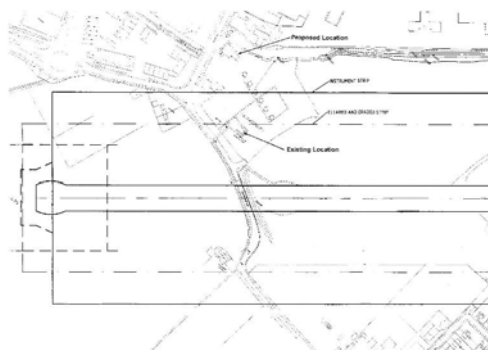
Outline of Process



St Laurence Church, Eastwood.



An artist's impression of how St Laurence Church, Eastwood could look if it was relocated. Alongside is a new Airport funded Church Hall



Runway and Church Proximity



Proposed new location for St Laurence Church

The Technology.

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