

May 2015

# Almondsbury InTouch Special

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# Proposed Helicopter Base Planning Application

Dear Resident,

As you may be aware I am very supportive of the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity and the Police Helicopter Service. However, a planning application was recently submitted for a new site for the Police Helicopter and the Great Western Air Ambulance on land next to the M4/M5 interchange. Unsurprisingly, this has met with considerable local opposition in Almondsbury.

Residents of Almondsbury are justifiably proud and protective of the greenbelt around their village. As the proposed location is on greenbelt land some residents are understandably concerned. Many also feel that the continual noise from the helicopters taking off and landing will be extremely disruptive to their lives. Added to this is the potential distraction to drivers on the motorway, which risks an increase in the number of accidents.

Initially, when I became aware that this location was being considered, I contacted BAe Systems to express my concerns about the site they were suggesting. I have included a copy of the letter that I wrote to BAe Systems overleaf. As well as putting my concerns in writing, I met with Alder King and the Chief Executive of the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity, John Christensen, to discuss the proposals and make clear my views about them.

I then called a meeting in Parliament with senior figures from BAe Systems and told them that the site wasn't acceptable due to it being on greenbelt and very near to the residents of Almondsbury. In addition, I also reminded BAe that they guaranteed in writing that they would find a new location for both helicopters on the former airfield site. I made it clear that I expected them to honour this commitment. The Great Western Air Ambulance and the Police Helicopter have a great deal of public support and I do not want this to be jeopardised by this planning application.

The application that has been submitted will need to go through the full planning process before a decision is made on it. Local residents have a statutory right to be consulted and their views are considered as part of the decision making process. Planning decisions are made, on behalf of local residents, by elected Members of Council.

Any residents who wish to contact me about this matter can do so via the contact details above.

If I am fortunate enough to be re-elected on Thursday rest assured I will continue to stand up for local residents who wish to see this planning application rejected.

Yours sincerely,

*Jack Lopresti*

Prospective MP



## How to make your voice heard

South Gloucestershire Council are accepting comments on the planning application until **Thursday 14th May**. More details can be found on the Council website: [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk), or write to Brian Glasson, Head of Strategic Planning, Dept. for Environment and Community Services, PO Box 299, Civic Centre, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 0DR.

The planning reference number is **PT15/1438/F**

**This letter was originally sent on House of Commons paper to the Head of Government Relations at BAe Systems but due to electoral law I am not able to reprint this in its original form during an election period.**

19th January 2015

Dear Mr Keen,

**Re: Great Western Air Ambulance charity**

I am writing in regards to the Great Western Air Ambulance charity with respect to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding their future at Filton Airfield. Over recent months the charity has made great progress. They have taken delivery of a new helicopter that will enable them to significantly improve the service that they provide and were given £1 million from the Libor fines by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This will cover their running costs for a year and will enable the Charity to get on a much firmer financial footing.

BAe gave a written guarantee that a new home would be found for the Air Ambulance on the airfield site when it announced that it was closing. BAe put great store by this publicly and privately. I am writing to remind you of this guarantee and to make you aware that I expect it to be honoured. I have been told that there is a possibility that a new site could be found next to the M4/M5 Almondsbury interchange. However, this site is not ideal as it is on greenbelt land and very near the residents of Almondsbury.

As a charity, the Air Ambulance has a great deal of public support, as does the police helicopter. I do not want the fantastic work they do serving our local community to be jeopardised. The closure of the airfield was a very difficult issue locally. I expect that BAe is able to honour the guarantee that a site will be found at the airfield for the Air Ambulance and the police helicopter. I believe that this is the only option.

I look forward with interest to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Lopresti