

The National Police Air Service



NPAS commits to providing an air service to 98% of the population of England and Wales within 20 minutes. NPAS aircraft are placed at 16 strategic locations in England.

There are two NPAS bases in the South West – one in Bristol and one at Exeter Airport. The closest alternatives are in Oxfordshire and Birmingham. As a result, it is critical that this essential air support continues to be delivered from a Bristol base.

A helicopter takes around 12 minutes to search a square mile at a cost of around £160 – an operation that would take 12 police officers 454 hours at a cost of around £4,680.

The helicopter is involved in crime reduction, counter terrorism and searching for people who are missing, vulnerable or at risk. It is able

to cover a large area, helping to assist units on the ground. The helicopter's thermal imaging camera is a valuable tool that can be used to locate people very quickly by their body heat which in some circumstances means the difference between life and death.

NPAS publishes details of each flight made through social media, so you can easily find out why the flights are being made and to where.



GWAAC

GREAT Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) provide an air ambulance service for the counties of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, North Somerset and parts of Wiltshire.

GWAAC receives no funding from the government or the National Lottery. That means they rely entirely on the generosity of you, the people we serve. Ours is one of few air ambulances who work to the "gold standard" Critical Care Model. Put simply, it means rushing a specialist doctor and paramedic to the scene. We are a flying Accident & Emergency Department.



A new base for the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity and National Police Air Service



The Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) and the National Police Air Service (NPAS) need to move from their current base at the former Filton Airfield.

After looking at hundreds of sites in the West of England region, the Almondsbury Interchange site is the only one that meets the needs of both helicopter services.

90% of the site would remain as grass, with 10% providing a small area of hard standing, a hangar for the helicopters and a new access road.

If you would like to know more, contact our community relations team on 0800 073 1047 or mail@filtonairfield.co.uk.

Finding the right site

The air ambulance and police helicopter services need a very specific site in order to comply with aviation guidelines.

There are also many other requirements for the site, meaning it needs to be:

- Able to accommodate a flat grassed take-off and landing surface of at least 19 acres in size, orientated east to west so that helicopters can take off in the direction of the prevailing westerly wind.
- Within 3-5 miles of the Bristol urban fringe to maintain existing response times and provide visibility needed for night-time flights.
- Linked to the strategic road network for the air ambulance's ground-based rapid response vehicle.
- Free from overhead lines, turbines or obstructions to provide clear flight lines for pilots.

- Not subject to frequent adverse weather or other conditions, such as fog, dust and high winds.
- Outside of the main flood zone.
- Outside of highly urbanised areas.
- Outside of Bristol Air Traffic Control Area to help maintain current response times (8 minutes for the air ambulance and 20 minutes for the police).

Alder King has carried out a comprehensive review of sites, considering hundreds in the area of search. This was narrowed down to 35 potential sites, of which only the Almondsbury site met all the criteria and was agreed upon by both the police and air ambulance.



- Overall area of search
- Preferred area of search



What would the base be like for neighbours?

The base would be used by the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity and National Police Air Service, who each operate a single helicopter. Both of these services only fly in an emergency, and in the case of the air ambulance only to save a life.

It would be situated as close as possible to the Almondsbury Interchange.

Some key points about the base:

- Around 90% of the site remains grass.
- Based on the last three years of flight data, there are an average of five to six flights a day, including one between 11pm and 3am.
- The air ambulance only flies in daylight hours, while the police operate between 7am and 3am.
- The base itself is separated from the village of Almondsbury by high ground, woodland and other trees, meaning it would not be visible to most local residents.
- The location allows helicopters to follow flight paths along the M4/M5 Almondsbury Interchange, which is the main source of noise in the area.
- The only building would be a hangar for the two helicopters, which would look a lot like an agricultural building.
- The air ambulance's rapid response vehicle would not use its blue lights and sirens until it had left the site.

What exactly would be on the base?

The base would include everything that the police and air ambulance need to operate their vital emergency services, including:

- A new, single storey hanger building located in the south eastern corner of the site providing storage for two helicopters, two rapid response vehicles and accommodation for the team operating the air ambulance and police air service.
- An area of hard standing along the main elevation of the hanger, known as 'the apron', which serves as a parking area for helicopters on standby.
- A flat, grass take-off and landing surface, which includes ground-level lighting to help pilots land. This would involve some levelling of the ground to make it flat.
- A new bunded fuel tank.
- 17 permanent parking spaces and 16 overspill parking spaces on asphalt and reinforced grass.
- A new private access road leading to the A38 (Gloucester Road), with a left-in, left-out only junction.
- Landscape planting, fencing and CCTV.