

Former Plymouth City Airport – Key Information

- 1) The site is capable of making a major contribution to meeting Plymouth's significant housing need using brownfield land. This includes approximately 10% of the 22,766 new homes that the Council needs to deliver up to 2031 as part of a planned new community, including shops, offices and community facilities. In addition, a substantial capital receipt, which could be in excess of £50m, would be realised for the City Council to invest in much needed social care and other community facilities across the City of Plymouth.
- 2) In accordance with national planning policy requirements, the Local Plan must consider the optimum use for previously developed sites. Failure to do so could result in the Plymouth Plan being found unsound.
- 3) Every independently commissioned report into the financial viability of Plymouth City Airport has concluded non-viability. This includes three reports commissioned by Plymouth City Council who authorised its closure.
- 4) Prior to its closure, passenger numbers were already in decline after the loss of services, which resulted in fewer than 100,000 terminal passengers using the airport in 2010. This is less than 1.5% of passengers from all airports in the South West. Services to and from Gatwick, the anchor route, subsequently ceased in January 2011.
- 5) The runway at the former airport is short and narrow, and its use was limited to aircraft carrying up to 50 passengers. Flight times were always severely curtailed due to noise constraints and lack of affordable well-timed landing slots available at Heathrow or Gatwick to connect directly with key international destinations.
- 6) Air Southwest, the airline started by SHH plc when British Airways pulled out of Plymouth, sustained substantial losses and was sold in November 2010. The purchaser, Eastern Airways, was also unable to sustain the Plymouth operation commercially and there has been no evidence of operator interest since 2011.
- 7) In 2010, the last full year of operation, the airport lost more than £1m. Since then costs of providing a baseline of: airport security; fire and safety services; and, air traffic control required to operate the airport will have increased and would result in even larger losses.
- 8) Taking the number of people exposed to noise, based on Government guidance classes of 'significant community annoyance', some 300 homes and 700 residents would be directly affected by a new General Aviation operation at the former airport and significant sums of money would be needed to mitigate and compensate residents affected by noise. The noise impact for a Commercial Airport rises substantially to 2,400 homes and 6,000 residents. With ever more stringent conditions to mitigate noise levels from Europe the compensation cost will only increase.
- 9) To extend the airport in the future, dozens of homes and businesses in the so called Zone of Destruction will be subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders and demolition. Residents will need to be compensated and re-housed elsewhere, possibly on a greenfield site.
- 10) Millions of pounds of public subsidy would be required to bring the airport up to current standards for reopening as a Commercial Airport, including improving safety measures and introducing radar. Neither the Council nor the Government has committed to delivering this subsidy nor any grant support. A General Aviation operation would equally require considerable investment and could be expected to generate an annual loss approaching £1million.