

High Court verdict throws Carlisle Airport plans into disarray

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Stobart Group is to submit new plans for the development of Carlisle Airport despite a legal set back today.



Gordon Brown

The company has expressed frustration and disappointment at the High Court's decision to back a challenge from a farmer but says it is determined to provide passenger flights from the airport.

Mr Justice Collins, one of the country's most experienced planning judges, allowed the challenge by Gordon Brown, from Irthington and [quashed the latest planning permission for a new freight storage and distribution facility](#) at the airport.

The judge said that Mr Brown's claim succeeded, though only on one ground put forward by him. That was failure by the planners to properly consider the viability of the expansion plans.

In backing Mr Brown, the judge said that the decision allowing planning consent could only be justified if the planning committee was properly entitled to conclude that there was a reasonable prospect of achieving commercial use of the airport.

But, he added, a key issue involving a subsidy was “not properly dealt with” by the planning committee.

He said that he had to consider whether the short-comings in the “socio-economic considerations” were sufficient to show that the decision could not stand.

He continued: “This was such a border line decision that any material defect is of greater importance than it might have been otherwise.”

The claim was, he said, “by no means straight forward” and had a substantial history which had “generated enormous amounts of paper” with more than 4,900 pages put before him. He branded that as “excessive.”

In a statement issued following the hearing, a Stobart Group spokesman said: “We are disappointed in what the court found was a borderline decision but obviously respect the court’s findings. However we are encouraged that the vast majority of Mr Brown’s arguments were rejected by the court.

“We have worked so hard to build a bigger and better Carlisle Lake District airport. Through our Stobart airline investment [formally Aer Arann, this week renamed as Stobart Air] our plans would have created a huge opportunity for the region.

"These plans included a daily flight to Dublin (and via customs clearance in Dublin, to the United States) and two daily flights to London and the South-East through our London Southend Airport. This would have been fantastic for the people of Carlisle and the surrounding region and would have allowed tourists from London and the South-East and the USA direct access to the Lake District, Carlisle and surrounding area.

“We still firmly believe that a thriving Carlisle Lake District airport will provide economic growth and jobs for the people of Carlisle and the surrounding area and to that end we intend to submit a new application taking into account today’s finding.”