

Fears Southend airport growth could close 120-year-old Rochford Hundred golf club

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Flood risk – Jon Fuller and Denis Walker of Friends of the Earth

BOSSES of a 120-year-old golf course fear for its future if plans to extend the area around [Southend Airport](#) go ahead.

Golfers and management at [Rochford](#) Hundred Golf Club say building further on to the flood plain could lead to severe flooding on the course and make it unplayable.

They gave evidence as the South East Essex Friends of the Earth group begin its planning challenge in front of a Government inspector hoping to stop Rochford and Southend councils' Joint Area Action Plan.

The plan sets out future expansion of industry and business around the airport, including plans for a new medical technology centre off Cherry Orchard Way, which could create 4,000 jobs.

Neil Wells, golf club secretary, was concerned about the general expansion of the area. He said: "It appears from the proposals a very large hangar and hard standings are planned for construction close to the boundary of the golf course.

"The entire proposed site is shown within the plan as being located within the flood zone and it would seem inevitable that further, regular, serious flooding would interrupt play at the course."

Holding a picture of the flooded golf course on a previous occasion, Mr Wells said protection of the course, and surrounding land, from flooding had not been properly considered.

He added plans to increase jets at the airport could make noise unbearable for users of the course and residents in and around the site.

Jon Fuller, coordinator of South East Essex Friends of the Earth, said: “Local residents and businesses will be affected by concreting over such a large area of the flood plain.

“The risk of flooding will put off many insurers from covering properties in the area.”

David Lister, operations director at Southend Airport said: “Government policy and the Proposed Policy in the joint plan (Policy MRO2) is clear that any proposal for development of this land would need to be accompanied by a flood risk assessment.

“This would need to demonstrate that the development would be safe and not increase flood risk to others.

The council would at that time receive advice from the Environment Agency to assure them these requirements had been met.”

He added that noise monitoring at the airport continues to be carried out to minimise the impact on local residents.

A spokesman for both Rochford and Southend councils said: “The councils are confident the Joint Area Action Plan policies address the issues of flooding. We await the Government inspector’s views.”