

Inquiry to decide on Southend Airport footpath's fate

4:00pm Thursday 7th August 2014 in [South Essex news](#)



Inquiry to decide on footpath's fate

CAMPAIGNERS have been battling plans to divert a public footpath connecting two churches, which runs across [Southend Airport](#)'s runway.

A two-day public inquiry has been held to determine whether a footpath across the Delta taxiway of the airport between St Laurence Church in Eastwood and St Andrew's Church in [Rochford](#) should be diverted across the Aviation Way industrial estate.

The path, which follows the Eastwood Brook alongside the airport perimeter for about 300 yards, was closed in 2011 to allow for a runway expansion.

The Civil Aviation Authority and the European Commission have introduced tough rules that indicate the airport could be threatened by incursions into the airport by people allowed to cross the 22-yard taxiway.

Suggestions of a tunnel or bridge have been dismissed by the airport and Rochford District Council as too costly and plans for a diversion across Aviation Way were put forward.

Campaign group Stop Airport Expansion and Noise and other campaigners launched a concerted campaign to preserve the existing footpath.

Kiti Theobald, a member of the campaign group, said suggestions for a push-button entry system used in conjunction with existing CCTV have also been rejected.

She said: "We have already lost two footpaths because of the airport expansion, one when they installed a landing system in Nestuda Way and one under the runway. There was debate

as to whether the footpath was used much, but when they did a survey they did it in the worst weather. It used to be a well trodden path.

“They say they will divert it, but instead of soft grass and a brook we have got the Aviation Way industrial estate. I regret the passing of anything that takes us off main roads to somewhere quiet and peaceful.”

She added: “No decision has yet been made, but it will be very sad if we lose a third pleasant footpath to the advance of the airport.

“We have already sacrificed the peace and quiet of 20,000 homes under or near the flight path and little by little, we are losing the small things that make life tolerable.

Ms Thoebold also criticised a lack of councillors at the inquiry, but Tory Mark Flewitt said there had been no interest from his constituents.

He said: “I have not been approached by residents about this. I didn’t think there was any point in attending the two-day inquiry with no instructions from residents. I think this is a last gasp attempt by campaigners to say we still believe we were right.”