

New Fire Station Project **Consultation Results** **Report**

Introduction

The public consultation for the new fire station project was launched with a press conference on January 24th 2007, and ran for 12 weeks until April 13th, 2007.

The process included press coverage, paid-for advertising, a series of six public consultation evenings, staff briefing sessions and staff newsletters, electronic questionnaires and fact-sheets on both the Internet and Intranet site, and information packs sent to stakeholders.

This report provides a detailed breakdown of the consultation process and the results received, to form part of the Business Case for the project.

This report also contains three Appendices giving full text responses from consultees:

- Appendix 1 – the answer to Question 3 – Any fears or concerns?
- Appendix 2 – comments made at the end of the questionnaires
- Appendix 3 – comments sent in via direct e-mail

Executive Summary of Results

- 185 packs were sent out to key stakeholders in Gloucester and Cheltenham.
- Six public meetings were held at Cheltenham and Gloucester fire stations attended by a total of 30 people
- Extra meeting at Churchdown attended by 20 people
- Uckington Parish Council attended by a dozen members of the public to hear our presentation.
- Staff briefings were held at Cheltenham and Gloucester fire stations, with every Watch visited at least twice.

A total of 91 questionnaire responses were received:

- 27 via the external web site
- 32 sent in the post/at meetings
- 22 via the internal Intranet site
- 10 email responses sent directly

Age ranges of respondents:

- 15 – 30 year olds – 11 responses
- 31 – 40 year olds – 17 responses
- 41 – 50 year olds - 11 responses
- 51 – 60 year olds – 15 responses
- 61 – 90 year olds – 13 responses

Gender breakdown of respondents:

19 female
56 male

Ethnicity breakdown of respondents:

Asian – Indian – 2 responses
White British – 66 responses
White, Other, English – 1 response
White, Other, European – 1 response

Methodological Details

The consultation process was launched on January 24, 2007, with a Press Conference held at Fire Service Headquarters. This was attended by:

- ITV local news
- BBC Points West
- BBC Radio Gloucestershire (live at 12.30pm)
- Echo/Citizen reporter and photographer

On the same day, 185 consultation packs were sent out to key stakeholders and a further 20 were sent to Cabinet members and key politicians. The electronic version of the pack went live on the web site and on the Intranet site for staff. Radio interviews were carried out all week and an article was put into Sword – the staff internal magazine.

All the media who attended the launch, gave the project very favourable and extensive press coverage, including featuring the meeting dates. Advertisements were run in The Echo and The Citizen, promoting the meeting dates and posters were put up in all the libraries in Gloucester and Cheltenham.

The six public meetings were held at a variety of times – morning, afternoon and evening – to encourage as wide a cross-section of the public as possible to attend. They all ran with the same format – a display board outlining the plans for people to look at, a short presentation on PowerPoint by two officers outlining the project, followed by a question and answer session. All those attending were given information packs to take away and encouraged to fill in the questionnaires.

As well as the six planned public meetings, the team responded to requests to attend Uckington Parish Council and give a presentation there, and to run a further public meeting in Churchdown.

The total cost incurred to the Fire Service for the whole process was £2,200, largely due to the advertising costs in the newspapers. A private company which runs consultation processes for Fire Services nationally, quoted £12,600 just to run six public meetings.

Summary of Consultation Questionnaire Findings

The main issues of concern to those consulted and the main topic for discussions at the meetings held, were the financing of the project through the Private Finance Initiative, and the exact locations of the new stations.

It was explained that at the moment we don't have exact locations for the proposed new sites but under the planning process there would be further consultation once the exact sites had been chosen and secured, and the majority of residents were happy with this and requested to be kept fully informed throughout the process.

Appendices 1 and 2 list all of the comments and concerns raised by people in their questionnaires, and details the issues which were raised about the Private Finance Initiative – their biggest source of concern in the whole project. The question about the funding through PFI is the only one where the second most popular response was to Definitely Disagree.

However, in general, the consultation was very positive, with support for the overall project proposals from both internal and external consultees, with the following results calculated as totals for all of the questions:

243 – Definitely Agree
225 – Tend to Agree
55 – Tend to Disagree
65 – Definitely Disagree
60 – Don't Know

Detailed consultation findings: Consultation results from Questionnaires

= most popular response = second most popular response

Q1. To what extent do you agree with the overall proposal to invest £21 million in community safety for Gloucester and Cheltenham?

Question One	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	13	9	1	3	1
Internal consultees	12	7	2	1	0
Postal results	16	11	3	1	1
Total	41	27	6	5	2

Q2. To what extent to you agree that the project should be funded through the Private Finance Initiative?

Question Two	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	7	10	3	6	1
Internal consultees	3	8	1	8	2
Postal results	11	8	8	2	3
Total	21	26	12	16	6

(Q3. Do you have any fears or concerns about the proposals? – See Appendix 1 attached)

Q4. To what extent do you agree that the current fire station at Eastern Avenue should be replaced?

Question Four	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	11	9	3	1	3
Internal consultees	10	7	3	1	1
Postal results	9	11	5	2	5
Total	30	27	11	4	9

Q5. To what extent do you agree with the proposal for a new fire station at Elmbridge Court, Gloucester?

Question Five	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	13	6	2	3	3
Internal consultees	4	13	3	2	0
Postal results	12	10	3	4	3
Total	29	29	8	9	6

Q6. To what extent do you agree with the proposal for a new fire station at Shepherd Road, Gloucester?

Question Six	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	9	12	0	3	3
Internal consultees	4	12	2	4	0
Postal results	12	10	0	2	8
Total	25	34	2	9	11

Q7. To what extent do you agree with the proposal to rebuild the existing Cheltenham Fire Station at Keynsham Road?

Question Seven	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	12	9	2	1	3
Internal consultees	10	12	0	0	0
Postal results	10	13	1	3	5
Total	32	34	3	4	8

Q8. To what extent do you agree with the proposal for a new fire station at Uckington, Cheltenham?

Question Eight	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	10	7	2	3	5
Internal consultees	4	13	1	3	1
Postal results	8	10	1	6	7
Total	22	30	4	12	13

Q9. To what extent do you agree with the idea of a Life Skills Centre?

Question Nine	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
External Consultees	16	2	3	4	2
Internal consultees	9	8	4	1	0
Postal results	18	8	2	1	3
Total	43	18	9	6	5

Summary of views expressed by people at meetings

- Discussions held with members of public around traffic issues in Gloucester.
- What are the exact locations of the stations?
- Why do we need new ones?
- Generally positive reaction from the public and supportive statements from councillors.
- One suggestion from a member of the public to close all 20 of our current fire stations and build a super-fire station in Gloucester manned by Westland helicopters, as a future vision of the fire service.
- Exactly where will the station in Uckington be built, from residents in the village, mainly Homecroft Drive?
- Concerns about a large fire station ruining their country views.
- Station being built on Green Belt.
- Station disrupting their lives.
- Concerns over parking issues.
- They mistakenly believed the Life Skills Centre would be in Uckington bringing in coaches full of children so this was clarified.
- Issues around joint working with ambulance stations.
- Where will the Gloucester-based ambulance would go?
- Co-responding as a way forwards.
- Good to see a real consultation delivered by frontline staff in uniform before any final decision has been made.
- Issues raised around PFI funding.
- How does PFI work and whether or not it's cheap?
- The public wrongly believed Keynsham Road was being demolished and got rid of so that was clarified to satisfaction.

Appendix 1.

Answers to Question 3. Fears and Concerns

Private Finance Initiative/financial cost

- Overspend is common on these types of projects. How much money will be paid to consultants for this project?
- PFI is all part of the Government's strategy to privatise public services through the back door.
- Yes - Private Finance is an expensive option.
- Need to ensure no cost over-runs and that the PFI partner is penalised for delays.
- Running costs exceeding current spending as we are then at the mercy of the private sector. This has been shown time and time again in various studies. These additional costs will have to be found from already tight budgets. This may threaten the level of emergency response that GFRS can offer by reducing fire cover/staff cutbacks.
- PFI projects have on occasion given their tenants little control/choice and become expensive one sided commitments.
- That PFI costs ten times as much over the lifetime of the building and public money can be exploited by the private sector. You may not be able to work on your own buildings, will be charged £50 to change a light bulb by the PFI contract owner, and so on.
- PFI - what will be the real cost over 25 years?
- PFI leaves no room for flexibility. How often is a building built right first time and how much have the stations changed over the past 25 years? A lot of good work on station is done by self-help and this would not be possible under the PFI project. It appears to be costly and riddled with too much paper work and bureaucracy. I believe we should have 2 new stations at their current central locations, as if 1 appliance is out the distance required to travel from the other station increases significantly.
- PFI not the way forward. Gloucestershire County Council should fund project.
- The eventual cost of using PFI. Increased response times in the city centre
- £21 million does seem a lot of money for what is proposed. More detail is required to properly evaluate this investment.
- So long as the build does not keep exceeding the proposed monies agreed for it.
- Rather expensive especially as the intention is to use land already owned by GCC. Sale of land at Eastern Avenue should recoup a substantial amount of money as it is prime building land. There is a need for a station in the Quedgeley area of Gloucester but should be extra to what we have at present
- Mortgaging the financial future with PFI. Finance rather than public interest taken priority.
- Fire Brigade must be in control not the PFI partner.
- Government should fund these projects through our taxes.
- PFI s though giving the buildings will lead to greater expense further on in the years to come. Your information assures the public of ownership in 25 years and no runaway costs on the public purse with today s contracts. Do you have any examples?
- Real concerns as to whether PFI offers value for money for taxpayers. It is unclear what the total costs will be over the 25-year-period – during which time the service will have to carry a considerable debt.
- Am not sure to what extent projects funded through the PFI have a proven track record.

Locations

- All these answers are based on WHERE IN UCKINGTON? No one seems to know this answer or will not forward this information. So how can this survey be accurate when it is a guessing game? What will the rates do increase again?
- If one station is located on the Elmbridge roundabout this may have an impact on the traffic levels running through Churchdown.
- Why downsize at Eastern Avenue when the location is acknowledged by the fire service as satisfactory? The facilities may require improvement so improve them by loan. It appears that the real attraction is the opportunity of a PFI buy, part sale/offset to fund many locations diffused citywide in all singing all dancing community stations. Is it a functioning fire and rescue station the people of Gloucester and Cheltenham need or a few more places to hold weddings and kids parties at?
- Cheltenham Road East site - swift and safe entry onto the carriageway and Elmbridge Court roundabout - maybe a separate lane if space allows.
- Traffic congestion is the main concern. Location on Elmbridge Court may be the ideal area but it will clog up the roads without a serious change on the roundabout like flyovers and underpasses. Electricity pylons do not help the problem.

Operational issues

- How will the present levels of appliances be split between the new sites and then staffed?
- Why does it always appear the location of Fire Headquarters, Fire Stations or associated venues are always decided on financial grounds rather than operational requirements?
- It would appear from the press that the people of Gloucestershire would be getting increased fire cover (more fire stations therefore more firefighters). Should this not be the case I feel that a more detailed report of exactly how the resources are to be spread out should be provided. This information should be delivered to all concerned not just via the local press. The response to your public meetings may be greater if the public understood they are about to get less not more. Telling half the story is doing the public who effectively pay for the service a huge injustice. By spreading the fire cover more thinly you will increase the danger to the first firefighters on the scene as surely their resources will be halved. This I believe has happened in other areas where one fire engine turns up well before its back-up leaving firefighters without sufficient support to safely enter a building. Blaina was, I feel sure a case in point and as we all know ended in tragedy. Please don't let's travel that path in Gloucestershire. The reason I have ticked the definitely disagree boxes below is because my concern is more safety and effectiveness-based rather than location.
- Little thought has gone into staffing the new stations and the placement of special appliances.
- Speaking to senior members of your staff, no one can say for certain that exactly the same level of cover for fire or road accidents can be guaranteed. I would expect that for the money being put into the project that the level of cover would be at least equal if not better.
- Seems a lot of money for no additional cover.

General Concerns

- Is this just a paper exercise with no thought gone into it?
- No major concerns other than industrial relations at the latter stages of the project.
- Yes, many!
- Only that the Retained in Gloucester are looked after and not disbanded.
- No. I think it is good that the Fire and Rescue Service are thinking with a long term vision and in particular that they are seeking the safety of schoolchildren in a wider context than just fire through the Life Skills Centre.
- Noisy sirens operating all day and night. We also have the ambulance headquarters - sirens - also in the parish of Churchdown. Quality of the PFI contract – future-proof, known debt.
- Yes, many, these have been conveyed by my husband by email.

Appendix 2.

Comments given at the end of questionnaires

- TV and newspapers reported the knocking down of the Eastern Avenue station and no news of a rebuild on this site for a retained station but the web site quotes this is the plan. Could you confirm the rebuild of a retained station on this site?
- As above please tell me WHERE! Sadly any building projects in this area have been sanctioned regardless of local reactions.....! Green Belt means.....GO!
- I think it is a good initiative that Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue are thinking of new strategies to make Gloucestershire safer. I think that some of the current stations need to have improvements when it comes to space and storage. I currently live in the Avon area and Avon Fire & Rescue had £6.2 Million spent on them to improve their service for the local community. I wish the best of luck for Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue in the near future.
- I cannot see how the proposed sites at Elmbridge Court and Uckington will be community fire stations there are no houses in the vicinity. Surely to reduce fires and educate people the fire stations should be at the centres of communities where they can be readily accessed. In your analysis how many people have you anticipated walking from their homes into a fire station at Elmbridge Court or along the Tewkesbury Road to Uckington. If this analysis has not been done maybe it should be done before proceeding any further or you could end up with ideally placed fire stations for attending fires but not accessible to the public - or is this what you want?
- It would be nice if the new stations reflected the diverse communities possibly through welcoming signs in community languages/posters etc. The future fire stations are also potential community venues and it is important to ensure they are affordable and easily accessible during evenings and weekends.
- These questions should be asked to the firefighters that are expected to work in these new buildings. They have the knowledge and skills to answer this questionnaire. This is not a decision that should be made by Joe Public or management who are not directly affected by the changes. Ask the firefighters what is best for them.
- Please provide the whole picture.
- I am concerned about the building costs of the Life Skills Centre and its running costs day to day. More detail is required to properly evaluate this centre.
- Your web site questionnaire does not function properly - having completed the questionnaire online and having answered all questions it insists that I have not answered question 1. The time this form is left on the web site should be extended to allow for this.
- The public information meeting on 26th February, 7pm at Cheltenham Fire Station was well presented by the two officers. Gives those outside the service an opportunity to voice their concerns and possible problems proving the service is moving with these ever changing times.
- It is hoped in the very near future that the Fire Emergency Support Service (Red Cross) will be operational once again and that the appliances can once again be stationed within one of the proposed stations as it was during the past 9-10 years when it was operational (Gloucester Eastern Avenue rear garage). Excellent presentation, very informative, such a shame it was poorly supported by the general public who always moan they are not kept informed of progress and why.
- The proposal is for 4 one-pump stations which in my opinion is reducing the cover for both Cheltenham and Gloucester. As I understand it all buildings etc.. are categorised and some would be in the category that requires a two-pump attendance. The second pump would not be able to attend within the 8-minute rule. Also I believe that at one pump plus a special appliance station the staffing would probably be 7 firefighters. with minimum staffing of 5. When staffing is at full strength and a call comes in for the special appliance, such as the RA, this would respond with 2 personnel leaving 5 for the pump. But if two personnel were off on leave/sick/courses etc.. and the special appliance was called out this would then leave only three firefighters on the pump. My understanding of the fire service is that a pump cannot respond with only 3 riders. If

these stations also had a retained appliance then this would help towards alleviating this problem. The retained staff could be called in when the special appliance goes out and the first two retain firefighters could ride the pump alongside their whole time colleagues. From the information given out at the public consultations the new stations would not have a retained presence. At the moment the thoughts are to leave the retain appliance at Eastern Avenue or somewhere within the vicinity. As previously stated in point 3 of this questionnaire I feel that there is a need for another fire station within the Gloucester catchment. Quedgeley would seem to be an excellent location due to all the housing and future build in that area. I would have thought that with all the extra housing within the Cheltenham and Gloucester area and an increase in population the fire cover for the county should be increased.

- I wonder how all this will fit in with an Elmbridge Court Railway Station? The forced amalgamation of the FRS with neighbouring areas? The future emasculation of local Government?
- The Town Council's agreement with the project as a whole is provisional upon there being no reduction in manpower, vehicles or associated resources at Tewkesbury Fire Station.
- Nothing other than I found the recent meeting very informative. Thank you.
- My one concern is if there is a station in Shepherd Road in rush hour traffic in Cole Avenue if going into the city that way.
- My only concerns are access to the Cheltenham Road East station. Traffic system must be designed to give fast access for fire engines but also must take account of safety for local traffic. Since the ambulance station has moved to Staverton I frequently have to pull over for them (almost daily) and not everyone knows what to do with an emergency vehicle on their tail! Perhaps leaflets locally might help to train us locals!!
- Please keep the community informed.
- Now too keen on Elmbridge site - using GreenBelt. Greenbelt should be kept between Glos. and Cheltenham. Gloucester city council cannot wait to get their hands on Churchdown, they have already tried.
- I write as a private individual and as chairman of the Uckington and Elmstree Hardwicke Village Hall. The location of a new station in Uckington is a good one but the Village Hall is available for public information exercises. The location ideally would be next to the proposed Park and Ride at Gallagher Park. This site is probably visited at least once during the year by the residents of Cheltenham and surrounds and the new station located further along the Tewkesbury Road if it is built would require more effort and thus be unlikely for a visit.
- I am in favour of the proposals for new fire stations. All aspects of the proposals to be examined in due course by the appropriate authorities.
- I live in Churchdown and it only has two access roads in and out which are very difficult. Two large comprehensive schools and four other schools with nearly 3000 children come in and out of this village every day. In the morning rush hour especially traffic on Elmbridge Court is awful and with the proposed parkway station, park and ride and a fire station the infrastructure is not in place to deal with that amount of traffic. Also it is proposed to have more than 1200 houses on Innsworth plus all the other mini estates that are being dotted around the village.
- Cheltenham Road East is close to an electricity pylon. Suggest practical communications equipment test in wind, wet and dry conditions on the site. Can the equipment manage lightning strikes?
- My husband and I have talked to many people effected by the Uckington decision and they all think it to be wrong and badly thought out. This is a huge waste of tax payers money. We are yet to meet anyone who agrees.
- I am totally against the proposal for a new fire station at Elmbridge Court. It would be much better within the Business Park at Brockworth. The land is available for development and not in the Green Belt as at Elmbridge Court. There is also easy access onto the local road network and the A417/motorway. Traffic congestion is not a problem unlike Elmbridge Court.
- I appreciate that Gloucester is growing and there is a need to ensure all areas can be reached quickly in the event of an emergency, however £25 million (as alluded to by

Peter Thorp) seems a high price to pay to just spread out the existing resources. We were not presented with the costs of maintaining existing stations over the last decade or predicted costs of keeping the status quo for another decade so true comparison of proposals not really possible.

- I have discussed your consultation document with the City Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for crime and disorder. Our view is that the plans are excellent and would provide a better service for the city as the two stations would provide better cover. The Life Skills Centre would also be an excellent idea and would help prevent fires and accidents. Our concern is that PFI funding would financially shackle and restrict the service for a long period of time.
- 1. While the current trend for other emergency services, police and ambulance is to centralise their services and activities with a reduction of police stations and hospitals it is surprising the fire service is looking to decentralise and increase their places of operation. 2. I am appalled at the proposal of Uckington as a potential site. Uckington is part of the countryside, rural and largely agricultural and horticultural land. It is also predominantly within designated Green Belt. The environmental impact of a fire station in such a location would be devastating. Uckington is NOT part of Cheltenham.

Appendix 3.

Comments sent in by direct E-mail

(Responses were sent to all emails requesting further details or asking specific questions)

1. Following on from "rumours" and now with confirmation in our local press that a new Fire Station is to be built, (Echo Newspaper), could you please confirm or deny that the Green Belt land adjacent to the West of Homecroft Drive is earmarked for this project? I must assume that there are outline plans at the very least, already in existence?

Would it be possible for me to see plans or be enlightened as to what constitutes "Community Buildings"? Is the new station (artists drawing) in the Echo, factual, or some psychic vision?

2. I do have many concerns and some, I admit, are close to NIMBY views. Nevertheless we and others would have to live close to this and it is bound to impact on our lives. The tenant farmers of the land you propose to use do not seem to know anything about your plans. The proposed site is close to houses where HUMAN BEINGS live. No matter how you describe the value of the land, on the open market, with planning permission, it is worth a small fortune. If therefore it is owned by the council, it will be the residents of Cheltenham that are cheated of the true value.

These are just some of the concerns I share with most people in the area. One can think of many more sites around the perimeter of Cheltenham that are infinitely more suitable and, at the same time, do not impact on peoples lives. At this very early stage we would ask that you reconsider the site if, that is, a new site is required at all.

3. I am the County Councillor for Barnwood which includes the location of the Eastern Avenue fire station. I will try to visit one of the exhibitions but having looked at the web pages and read the literature I am unclear on some aspects.

I have no objection in principle to relocation. My questions mainly relate to the Eastern Avenue site. It appears that a retained fire station will be kept on Eastern Avenue - can you please confirm. It says elsewhere that the land will be sold. Is that the land not required for the above? I assume that the land at Eastern Avenue will be sold to the PFI partner who can do with it whatever he wishes as long as he can gain planning permission. The document talks about a Community Life Skills Centre - where will that be located?

4. MAD Young People's Council, the youth council of Cheltenham, discussed the Fire Station plans at their last meeting and would like to submit the following feedback to your consultation:

- MAD reps thought that the new community fire stations and the revamp of the Cheltenham Fire Station were good ideas.
- MAD would like to know why the proposed new Life Skills Centre is to be built in Gloucester and not Cheltenham?

5. I was pleased to have the opportunity of speaking to you on Saturday morning and to give you my thoughts regarding the established fire stations and the fire service in Gloucestershire. I am a Chartered Surveyor and I suppose could be regarded as one of the silent majority.

I'm mature and I believe have a lot of common sense and do not go on tub-thumping on issues such as this. I've never been in local politics. However latest statistics must demonstrate there are fewer and fewer domestic fires with fewer open sitting room fires these days and less deep fat frying. I anticipate the majority of incidents covered by the fire service are road traffic accidents where ease of access is paramount.

My office is in Gloucester and each evening I travel home to Painswick past the fire station in Pullens Road. I am not aware of the statistics but I anticipate this fire engine very seldom goes out on active service. If it did it would get stuck between the cars in Tibbiwell. Knowing the number of fire stations that exist in the towns and villages in Gloucestershire I took the opportunity of speaking to your colleagues at the County Council who confirmed there are approximately 20 fire stations situated in the North of the county. This seems a huge number of established stations and I know of the locations of stations in Nailsworth, Wotton under Edge, Newent, Cirencester and of course the major sites in Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud. In our conversation we agreed that a large number of the fire engines based in the smaller towns these days very seldom go out on incidents.

I have given some thought to a future plan. Instead of building the proposed three new fire stations (I'm looking forward to attending the consultative meetings) a major new fire station, with training facilities, offices etc to be located adjoining the planned Parkway Railway Station near the Elmbridge Roundabout at the end of the Golden Valley. There may however be alternative sites but the new station must be close to the M5 motorway. At this new station 8 - 10 of the latest fire engines in the County are relocated to the new building.

Now for the blue-sky thinking! The ambulance service and the police service have helicopters. I suggest it's time the fire service consider acquiring their own helicopter - a very large Westland helicopter or similar - how about a second hand Chinook from the USA! These aircraft are of course used regularly by the army and can lift very heavy-duty equipment. The fire service helicopter maybe able to land at an incident i.e. on the motorway but if not it hovers and lowers a pod with the required generators and equipment together with a skilled team of fire fighters. That is one location attended to but an easy matter for the helicopter to move on to another incident with ease and delivering another team and equipment in a very short time. The required number of fire engines from the new station follow up by road shortly after, as necessary.

All this is funded by the closure of all 20 fire station sites in Gloucestershire. These sites are established in prime locations. Change of planning use of the existing stations throughout Gloucestershire to residential would create a substantial fund for the construction of the new station, the acquisition of the helicopter and pilots and pay redundancies to the large number of administrative staff and firemen. An example of an inappropriate station location is the site in Keynsham Road, Cheltenham. The

logistics of emergency vehicles careering down the adjoining residential roads in this area is ridiculous. This site and the office buildings on Bath Road should have been moved years ago. What a valuable site for residential development. How will your Chief Fire Officer or more the point the strong brigade union view my thoughts? Something like I have described above has to be the future.

(NB: these views were also sent in as a letter as part of the consultation, by the same gentleman)

6. I'm trying to find out more about the plans to build a new fire station at Elmbridge Court. Are there any plans showing where exactly it is proposed to be located and what will be the access arrangements?

7. Thank you for your reply to my email regarding the above. Having taken a fairly high percentage of views from those who live in and around the proposed site I can assure you that everyone is against it. In fact I am yet to find anyone in agreement or even a 'don't know'.

Maybe I should carry out a more scientific survey covering all properties - if I do I will report back. You have missed my point on land values. If the land in question, owned by the council and currently valued at say? 60,000 as agricultural land, is given planning permission for your scheme then, it stands to reason, that the same planning permission for houses would generate for the tax payer a small fortune. Your financial planning may seem sensible for the fire service but for the taxpayer it represents day light robbery!

It is also fair to say that houses in a residential area are far more appropriate than a fire station. Having said all of that however the land is GREEN BELT and should be protected as such. You made no mention in your reply to the fact that as at 3 weeks (ish) ago the tenant farmers who work hard on this land were blissfully unaware of your plans. Please remember that this land contributes to their livelihood.

What does seem however painfully obvious to me is that:

- The station, if needed, must be able to cover its patch in an efficient and fast manner.
- Because of the nature of its day-to-day work it needs to be away from areas of housing.
- It needs to be near a 2 way junction on it's nearest motorway. As a matter of interest what percentage of calls for the fire brigade are to motor-related incidents compared with domestic house fires?
- It should surely seek sights within trading estate type areas, close to motorways where houses cannot be built due to noise/air pollution and more derelict areas where the impact on a community is minimised.
- It should at very least avoid green belt areas.

One last point, you mention some kind of community centre being provided as, I personally believe, some kind of sweetener to local residents. Well, as almost everyone I have spoken to has pointed out, we have a wonderful village hall that is currently under-utilized. In simple words, it is waste of public money to build another!!!!

8. Members of the Hucclecote Parish Council have read with interest the information pack provided and wish to make the following comments:

- Providing an educational centre should help to make people more aware of risks but will it be manned by the fire fighters themselves. Surely this is not what they are trained for.
- Using private monies to finance the buildings is the first step into privatisation. This has not worked for the railways or many of our other public services.
- We endorse the need for new premises and modern fire fighting and rescue techniques.
- The siting of the new station is also a difficult matter. If the new Parkway station is built at Elmbridge, with its Park and Ride, the bypass at peak times will be extremely congested.