



Ministry
of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref: FOI 2015/03099

16 April 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 18 March requesting the following information:

The priority order of considerations that went into deciding the future of RAF Marham.

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. We have completed a search of our records and I can confirm that the MOD does hold information within the scope of your request. This is provided below:

A. Priority order of considerations used to determine the most suitable basing options for the Joint Combat Aircraft (JCA) in 2005 were:

- 1st: Flight Safety; Personnel
- 2nd: Strategic Development Plan issues; Sustainability; Noise
- 3rd: Migration Issues; Birdstrike Rate
- 4th: Training; Hardened Aircraft Shelter or Hangar Implications

B. These considerations remained unaffected by later events which altered the range of available basing choices. Three further considerations were selected as discriminating factors in the subsequent Basing review conducted in 2012 following the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and these were:

Base Capacity; Infrastructure; and Operating Surfaces.

Section 16(1) of the FOIA requires the public authority to provide advice and assistance wherever possible. Consequently, you may wish to note that the SDSR conducted in 2010 provided the context in which the RAF undertook several reviews to inform MOD and

government decisions about the future uses of its bases. As part of this work, the 2005 JCA Basing study was reviewed; all UK military airfields were considered as potential bases, with RAF Leuchars being discounted as it was to be transferred to the Army. This work concluded that RAF Marham was the preferred choice for the basing of Joint Combat Aircraft, now known as the F-35 Lightning II.

The recent United States Air Force announcement concerning their withdrawal from Mildenhall was not a factor in the decisions to base Lightning II at RAF Marham or transfer RAF Leuchars to the Army.

If you are not satisfied with this response or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Air Command Secretariat