

## Briefing Note

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**Our ref** 15328/05/DG/TK  
**Date** 31 October 2018  
**To** Dave Harris, Jenny Hill, Nicki Mableson  
**From** Tabitha Knowles  
**Subject** **Aeronautical review of planning applications MC/18/2556, MC/18/2505 and MC/18/2509**

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This note, prepared for Medway Council by Lichfields, sets out the conclusions of an aeronautical review of EIA screening opinion request MC/18/2556 and planning applications MC/18/2505 and MC/18/2509, all relating to proposed development at Rochester Airport.
- 1.2 This note is intended to assist Medway Council and the planning case officer by providing an assessment of aeronautical impact that could arise from the proposed development, along with recommendations of whether further information is required or, if the Council is minded to grant permission, any planning conditions.
- 1.3 Consideration has been given to statutory comments received relating to aeronautical matters.

### 2.0 Proposed development

#### **MC/18/2556 and MC/18/2505**

- 2.1 Application MC/18/2556 is an EIA screening opinion request and application MC/18/2505 is a planning application. Both applications relate to the same proposed works:
- Demolition of existing buildings (including control tower, old clubhouse two portacabins housing the airport office and Skytrek office) and construction of a new control tower and hub building, ancillary car park, family viewing area and associated engineering operations, at Rochester Airport Maidstone Road Chatham Medway ME5 9SD.*
- 2.2 The extent of the application redline boundary is south of both existing runways, within existing airport operational areas. The applicant states that the proposed development would not result in a change to aircraft type, numbers, flight lines or operational hours. There is no runway infrastructure development proposed to either Runway 02/20 or Runway 34/16.

#### **MC/18/2509**

- 2.3 The applicant has also submitted a further application for works to its helipads:
- Relocation of two helipads within the airport to include the provision of landing pads together with the decommissioning of an existing helipad, at Rochester City Airport Maidstone Road Chatham Medway ME5 9SD.*
- 2.4 The extent of the application redline boundary is south of both existing runways, within the airport's operational area. The relocated helipads would be located north of the proposed hub building. The applicant states that the proposed development would not result in a change to aircraft type or numbers. There is no runway infrastructure development proposed.

### **3.0 Statutory comments received relating to aeronautical matters**

3.1 Highways England (HE) has a holding objection to the hub building scheme noting concerns relating to traffic impact and safety. This note relates to its comments on safety impact.

3.2 HE in responding to the application proposals states:

*'The Planning Statement submitted to support this application states that "Since the submission of MC/17/3109 it is understood that Medway Council will serve notice on RAL to take back a piece of the site to release land required for the development of Innovation Park Medway. As a consequence of this, Runway 16/34 will be closing. This certified closure will occur, irrespective of whether or not this application is approved and is likely to occur between December 2018 and April 2019, subject to three months' notice". The development of Innovation Park Medway is not significantly progressed, nor is it a committed development, nor have Highways England reviewed or accepted any safety information in relation to the impact of the closure of Runway 16/34 (as requested for MC/17/3109).*

*We note that the application does not specifically include the closure of Runway 16/34, presumably for the above reason. However, from the positioning of the proposed buildings the use of Runway 16/34 would not be possible in conjunction with the relocated Tower and Hub. The consequence of the proposals rendering Runway 16/34 unusable / obsolete would be an increase in use of the remaining runway.*

*Regardless of other (non-committed) developments which may come forward, the development proposals would require the closure of Runway 16/34 and therefore our conclusions in respect to the safety impact of the proposals remain the same as for the previous application (MC/17/3109). On the basis of the material changes that would need to occur to facilitate the proposals, Highways England requires the applicant to carry out a Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB) compliant risk assessment and, as appropriate, put forward proposals to avoid or mitigate any risks to the safe operation of the SRN. Until we have received and agreed the safety impact information, we will not be able to properly assess how this development is going to impact our network and the safety of its users / workers'.*

3.3 HE has raised no objection to the helipad application.

3.4 NATS has been consulted and raises no objection to the helipad application from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective.

3.5 There are no other statutory consultee comments relating to aeronautical matters than have been received.

### **4.0 Aeronautical review**

#### **Closure of Runway 34/16**

4.1 The airport is required to close its cross runway in accordance with the terms of its lease with Medway Council. It is understood that the airport has already received Preliminary Notice from Medway Council of the closure. As such, the closure will occur, irrespective of whether or not either application is approved. The closure is likely to occur between December 2018 and April 2019, subject to three months' notice (in accordance with the Preliminary Notice).

- 4.2 The airport operates in visual conditions rather than instrument. Runway 34/16 is a cross runway and Runway 02/20 is the main runway. There is also a relief runway adjacent to Runway 02/20.
- 4.3 The cross runway currently provides the airport with a greater usability factor during periods of changing wind conditions, by providing an alternative runway to support aircraft with a certain maximum cross wind component that are unable to land or take-off on the main runway.
- 4.4 The airport is not required to define the split of traffic between the two runways to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) nor is it currently subject to any planning controls by the local planning authority.
- 4.5 Closing the cross runway will reduce the airport's usability factor. It would not be the case that all cross-runway traffic would be diverted to the main runway: of the aircraft that are less susceptible to changing wind conditions, these aircraft can already opt to use either runway; and those aircraft types that are susceptible to changing wind conditions may not be able to use the airport to land and take off, meaning as a consequence a possible reduction in total aircraft movements.

### **Spatial and geometric layout of proposed development**

- 4.6 The new location for the airport control tower would be a more appropriate location compared with the existing location, providing an improved clear and unobstructed view of the entire movement area of the airport and of air traffic in the vicinity of the airport. The tower would be a contained site and not immediately accessible from public areas such as the Family Area or the approved Memorial Gardens.
- 4.7 The new location for the helipads would be a more appropriate location to the existing location, providing more immediate access to airside facilities such as the airport's Final Approach and Take-off (FATO), the KSSAAT facility, airport apron areas and access to the airport. The helipads are of an appropriate separation from the control tower and hub building.
- 4.8 The applicant proposes greater demarcation than currently exists, by way of a combination of the proposed layout and fencing between operational airside areas and landside areas, which will improve public safety throughout the site.
- 4.9 The proposed development, contained within both planning applications, meets civil aviation airport design guidance.
- 4.10 Overall, the upgraded facilities would be an improvement to the existing operational environment, providing a safer and more efficient airport operation.

### **Impact on airport operations**

- 4.11 A portion of the application redline, where the hub building, and helipads are proposed, would encroach into the southern end of the existing cross runway.
- 4.12 Continued use of the cross runway would not be possible with the proposed development encroaching into the runway end. The airport has already received Preliminary Notice from Medway Council to close this runway via the terms of the lease.
- 4.13 The applicant notes that the southern end of the cross runway is already used as a parking area for helicopters when not in use as a cross runway. A paved helipad, for helicopters to park, would be an operational improvement.

- 4.14 It is considered that there would be no impact to the main runway (the runway to remain open) as a result of the proposed development.

## **5.0 Need for a public safety and risk assessment**

- 5.1 It is considered that a public safety and risk assessment, to understand safety impact, is not required to support an application for the proposed rather modest works for the following reasons:

- The proposed development would not result in any change to aircraft type, numbers, flight lines, operational hours and therefore an elevated incidence of risk, including to users of the motorway.
- The proposed works relate to airport and airport-related facilities only. There is no runway infrastructure proposed to either Runway 02/20 (the main runway) or Runway 34/16 (the cross runway).
- It is considered that the upgraded facilities will improve the existing operational environment, providing a safer and more efficient operational airport.
- The applicant proposes greater demarcation than currently exists, via the proposed layout and fencing between operational airside areas and landside areas, which would improve public safety throughout the site.
- The airport intends to close Runway 34/16 to accord with the terms of its lease and has already received Preliminary Notice to do this. Closing the cross runway would reduce the airport's usability factor. It would not be the case that all cross-runway traffic would be diverted to the main runway: of the aircraft that are less susceptible to changing wind conditions, these aircraft can already opt to use either runway; and aircraft that are susceptible to changing wind conditions may not be able to use the airport to land or take-off, meaning as a consequence a possible reduction in total aircraft movements.
- It is considered that there would be no impact to the main runway as a result of the proposed development.
- There is no potential for significant environmental effects associated with public safety and risk giving rise to a need for EIA, which has been confirmed by way of two Screening Opinions undertaken by Medway Council.

## **6.0 Aerodrome Safeguarding**

- 6.1 The airport holds a CAA Permanent Ordinary national licence and as part of this is subject to regular audits by the CAA to ensure it accords with the terms of its licence, CAA CAP 168 and its agreed Safety Management System (SMS).
- 6.2 The airport is not officially safeguarded and subject to Statutory Direction by DfT circular 1/2003. There is no explicit aerodrome safeguarding policy in the Medway local plan, meaning the airport does not have a voluntary aerodrome safeguarding status in accordance with DfT 1/2003. The proposal has, however, been examined from an Aerodrome Safeguarding perspective.
- 6.3 The DfT circular is a planning matter and the CAA licence is a civil aviation matter.
- 6.4 Aerodrome Safeguarding is a process of checking proposed developments so as to:

- 1 Protect blocks or air through which aircraft fly, by preventing penetration of surfaces created to identify their lower limits.
- 2 Protect the integrity of radar and other electronic aid to air navigation, by preventing reflections and diffraction of the radio signals involved.
- 3 Protect visual aids, such as Approach and Runway lighting, by preventing them from being obscured, or preventing the installation of other lights which could be confused for them. In brief lighting for the site should be designed in such a way that it is not confusing or dazzling to pilots or air traffic control. Generally, all lights should be directed away from approaching aircraft and the air traffic control tower with no light spill above the horizontal.
- 4 Avoid any increase in the risk to aircraft of a birdstrike by preventing an increase in hazardous bird species in the vicinity of the aerodrome and, whenever the opportunity arises, to reduce the level of risk.

6.5 The CAA considers the airport to be the expert on matters relating to Aerodrome Safeguarding, who in this case is the applicant, however the following comments are made:

- The proposed development, 6.8m at its maximum height, would not encroach into the airport's safeguarded Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS).
- The proposed landscaping, both hard and soft landscaping, should be in accordance AOA Advice Note 3, such to not give rise to the attraction of birds and an increase in bird hazard risk on the application site.
- The management of waste should be in accordance AOA Advice Note 3, such to not give rise to the attraction of birds and an increase in bird hazard risk on the application site.
- Lighting on site should be in accordance with AOA Advice Note 2, such to not give rise to creating a distraction for pilots and occupants of the control tower.
- A Construction Management Plan should set out how dust, waste and lighting impact arising from construction shall be managed such to not give rise to the attraction of birds and an increase in bird hazard risk on the application site.
- If crane use is proposed this should be in accordance with AOA Advice Note 4 and the British Standard Institute Code of Practice for the safe use of Cranes, BS 7121: Part 1.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The extent of the planning application boundary is south of both existing runways, within existing airport operational areas. The proposed development would not result in any change to aircraft type, numbers, flight lines or operational hours from the current operation and hence no elevated incidence of risk. There is no runway infrastructure development proposed to either Runway 02/20 (the main runway) or Runway 34/16 (the cross runway).
- 7.2 The application relates to modest airport and airport-related facilities contained within the airport operational area. The proposed development will not give rise to any impact on runway operations.
- 7.3 It is considered that the upgraded facilities would be an improvement to the existing operational environment, providing a safer and more efficient operational airport.
- 7.4 There is no potential for significant environmental effects associated with public safety and risk giving rise to a need for EIA.

- 7.5 Given the above there is no requirement for a public safety and risk assessment in relation to the proposed development.
- 7.6 No Aerodrome Safeguarding issues would arise subject to:
- A condition requiring a Construction Management Plan that sets out how dust, waste and lighting impact arising from construction shall be managed such to not give rise to the attraction of birds and an increase in bird hazard risk on the application site, as well as give rise to creating a distraction for pilots and occupants of the control tower.
  - An Informative is suggested drawing the applicant's attention to AOA Advice Notes 1-5 relating to aerodrome safeguarding and BS 7121: Part 1 relating to crane use.