

MC/17/0931

Date Received: 13 March, 2017

Location: Rochester Airport, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME5 9SD

Proposal: Construction of office building with associated parking for use by Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust

Applicant: Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust

Agent: Mr Richard Jones Carter Jonas One Chapel Place London W1G 0BG

Ward Rochester South & Horsted

Case Officer NLP

Contact Number 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 13 June 2017.

Recommendation – Approval with conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Proposed Site Plan (1641-P-101 Rev. P6);

- Proposed Elevations in Context (1641-P-0102 Rev. P6);
- Proposed Elevations 1 of 2 (1641-P-103 Rev. P3);
- Proposed Elevations 2 of 2 (1641-P-104 Rev. P4);
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan (1641-P-105 Rev. P3);
- Proposed First Floor Plan (1641-P-106 Rev. P2).

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until further investigation work has been undertaken to confirm the exact position of the public sewer crossing the site. If it is found to be necessary to divert the public sewer, details of the measures which will be undertaken must be

agreed in consultation with the Local Planning Authority and Southern Water. Such works shall be implemented to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority before the development is occupied.

Reason: To safeguard the existing public sewer infrastructure.

- 4 No development approved by this planning permission shall take place until a scheme that includes the following components to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:
- a A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
 - i all previous uses;
 - ii potential contaminants associated with those uses;
 - iii a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors;
 - iv potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.
 - b A site investigation scheme based on (a) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.
 - c The results of the site investigation and detailed risk assessment referred to in (b) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
 - d A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (c) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the express written consent of the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To protect the underlying groundwater from the risk of pollution and in accordance with the requirements of Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5 No occupation of any part of the permitted development shall take place until a verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met. It shall also include a plan (a "long term monitoring and maintenance plan") for longer term monitoring of pollutant

linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action, as identified in the verification plan. The long term monitoring and maintenance plan shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To protect the underlying groundwater from the risk of pollution and in accordance with the requirements of Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6 If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy to the local planning authority detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and obtained written approval from the local planning authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To protect the underlying groundwater from the risk of pollution and in accordance with the requirements of Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 7 No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground is permitted other than with the express written consent of the local planning authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect the underlying groundwater from the risk of pollution and in accordance with the requirements of Policy CF12 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 8 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to address the issues listed below has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority:

- a pollution prevention at developments in a Source Protection Zone (storage and management of all potentially hazardous or polluting substances or materials); and
- b surface and foul water drainage.

The approved surface and foul water drainage scheme shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect the underlying groundwater from the risk of pollution and in accordance with the requirements of Policy CF12 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 9 No development above foundation level shall take place until details and samples of all materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 10 No element of the permanent lighting scheme shall be installed before full details have first been submitted to and, in consultation with Rochester Airport, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting scheme is to be implemented as approved, no subsequent alterations shall take place unless first submitted to and, in consultation with Rochester Airport, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: It is necessary to control the permanent lighting arrangements on this development to avoid confusion with aeronautical ground lights which could endanger the safe movement of aircraft and the operation of Rochester Airport. For further information please refer to Advice Note 2 'Lighting'.
<http://www.aoa.org.uk/policy-campaigns/operations-safety/>

- 11 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (who shall consult with Highways England) and implemented. The Travel Plan shall include arrangements for monitoring, review, amendment and effective enforcement.

Reason: To minimise traffic generated by the development and to ensure that the M2 Motorway/A2 Trunk Road continue to be an effective part of the national system of routes for through traffic in accordance with section 10 of the Highways Act 1980.

- 12 Prior to occupation of the development, a car parking strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This shall provide details of the expected use of the overflow car park area. The approved car parking strategy must be implemented and adhered to.

Reason: To ensure car parking is managed appropriately and there are no adverse effects on the surrounding road network.

- 13 Prior to occupation of the development, a scheme for the provision of cycle stands shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority, and the approved stands shall be in place prior to occupation.

Reason: To encourage alternative means of travel other than the private car and in accordance with Policy T4 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

- 14 No development above foundation level shall take place until a scheme of hard and soft landscaping, including boundary treatment/means of enclosure

(including details of fencing), car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with Rochester Airport, to ensure no risk of bird strike associated with the permanent scheme. This shall include external finishing materials, finished levels and construction details confirming materials, colours, finishes and fixings.

All boundary treatment and hard landscaping shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before occupation of any part of the development. All planting, seeding and turfing shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or completion of the development, whichever is the earlier.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 15 Development shall not commence until a construction management strategy has been submitted to and, in consultation with Rochester Airport, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority covering the application site and any adjoining land which will be used during the construction period. Such a strategy shall include the following matters:
- a Details of the area(s) subject to construction activity and the storage of materials and equipment including height of storage area for materials and/or equipment.
 - b Details of arrangements for the delivery of materials and construction equipment to the site.
 - c Details of cranes and other tall construction equipment, such as cherry picker machinery, if required (including the details of obstacle lighting) Such schemes shall comply with Advice Note 4 'Cranes' (available at <http://www.aoa.org.uk/policy-campaigns/operations-safety/>).
 - d Details and measures for the control of activities likely to produce dust and smoke etc.
 - e Details of temporary lighting - Such details shall comply with Advice note 2 'Lighting' available at <http://www.aoa.org.uk/policy-campaigns/operations-safety/>.
 - f Details and measures for the Control and disposal of putrescible waste to prevent attraction of birds.

The approved strategy (or any variation approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be implemented for the duration of the construction period.

Reason: To avoid endangering the safe operation of aircraft.

- 16 Development shall not commence until a Wildlife Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted plan shall include details of:

- a Management of the flat-roof office building which may be attractive to nesting, roosting and "loafing" birds (different management strategies may be required during and outside the breeding season);
- b Physical arrangements for the collection (including litter bins) and storage of putrescible waste, arrangements for and frequency of the removal of putrescible waste to prevent attraction of birds.

The Wildlife Management Plan shall be implemented as approved. No subsequent alterations to the plan are to take place unless first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For further information please refer to Advice Note 3 'Wildlife Hazards'. <http://www.aoa.org.uk/policy-campaigns/operations-safety/>

Reason: It is necessary to manage the development in order to minimise its attractiveness to birds which could endanger the safe movement of aircraft and the operation of Rochester Airport.

- 17 No development shall take place (except as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and time table which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved specification.

Reason: To safeguard the archaeological interest in the site in accordance with Policy BNE21 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

- 18 The development hereby permitted shall incorporate measures to minimise the risk of crime. No development above foundation level shall take place until details of such measures, according to the principles and physical security requirements of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved measures shall be implemented before the development is occupied and thereafter retained.

Reason: In the interest of security, crime prevention and community safety and in accordance with Policy BNE8 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the guidance within The Kent Design Initiative (KDI) and protocol dated April 2013.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of an office building (Use Class B1) with associated parking for use by the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust (KSSAAT) as its headquarters at Rochester Airport.

The proposed office building is to be located within the boundary of Rochester Airport, immediately to the south of the existing AV8 hangar, at the eastern boundary of the airport and close to the main access. An existing temporary building, portacabin and fencing south of the hangar are proposed to be removed, to accommodate the development.

The proposed building is a two storey, flat roofed rectangular building with a footprint of 534 sq.m (GEA). Nine car parking spaces are proposed, including two disabled spaces.

The proposed office building is to be primarily used to accommodate its administrative and charity fund raising staff. The application confirms that the proposed building is able to accommodate up to 44 permanent staff plus six visiting pilots and crew.

The application relates to the erection of the proposed office building only, but it is important to consider how this relates to KSSAAT's existing and future operations at Rochester Airport.

KSSAAT already uses Rochester Airport as a "satellite" airfield to its main Helicopter Emergency Medical Service bases at Marden in Kent and Redhill Aerodrome. In terms of the nature of the proposed future operations from Rochester Airport, KSSAAT advise the following:

"The Trust's aircraft will be based and maintained at its main service hub at Redhill aerodrome and all shifts will commence and complete there. The Trust's aircraft will routinely deploy to Rochester Airport either to replenish in between responding to incidents or to await further emergency tasking.

It is envisaged that the hangar facility at Rochester Airport will only be used for unscheduled maintenance when an aircraft is not airworthy and a recovery flight to Redhill Aerodrome is precluded. Given the extremely variable nature of the Trust's emergency response tasking it is not possible to predict how often the aircraft will recover to Rochester Airport daily but it is unlikely to exceed three or four occasions."

KSSAAT will use Rochester Airport as a forward operating base on most days of the year in the future. In this regard, KSSAAT highlights that there are no planning restrictions on the number of emergency helicopter movements allowed at the airport, and, therefore, these operational activities are not a matter for planning consideration.

While not forming part of the planning application, it is also relevant context that KSSAAT intends to take over the lease on the existing hangar to the north, following

the closure of AV8, and this will house its air ambulance helicopter and be used for unplanned maintenance and storage if required. The application explains that the location of the proposed office building next to the hanger and the existing helipad will help to optimise the effectiveness of its operations.

Following a request for additional information, the airport confirmed in an email of 17 May 2017 that the “AV8 Helipad and Hangar was built during December 2005 and February 2006, operational from March 2006”. It has therefore been developed and in use for over ten years and is an established use.

Based on the information submitted, the combination of the proposed office building and the use of the existing hanger and the helipad currently represent the full extent of KSSAAT’s operations at the airport for the foreseeable future, with the proposed office building being designed to accommodate additional staff as necessary should its charity function grow, as anticipated.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011 (as updated) specify that EIA development:

“...means development which is either—

(a) Schedule 1 development; or

(b) Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location”

The KSSAAT office development proposed at Rochester Airport does not fall within any of the categories of development defined within Schedule 1.

The development proposal is most closely related to development that falls within Parts 10(b) or 10(e) of Schedule 2 of the updated EIA Regulations. Part 10(b) relates to urban development projects (which could include office development) where more than 1 hectare of land which is not residential is proposed. Part 10(e) relates to development at airfields where it involves an extension to a runway or the area of works exceed 1 hectare. While not strictly a Schedule 2 development, the proposal involves works next to a runway that forms part of the wider Rochester Airport site, so there are some commonalities with the types of development typically assessed under Part 10(e). On a site of 0.17 hectares, the development falls well below the thresholds for schemes falling within Part 10(b).

As identified above, and in circumstances where a development could be considered to fall within Schedule 2, EIA will be required where significant effects on the environment are considered likely due to the nature, size or location of the development. The decision on whether significant effects are considered likely is the screening process and should be carried out with reference to the various selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.

Further guidance is provided in the Planning Practice Guidance which states that:

“Each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way and authorities

should retain the evidence to justify their decision.”

The Planning Practice Guidance also provides a set of indicative thresholds and criteria which are intended to aid local planning authorities to determine whether a project is likely to have significant environmental effects. In respect of Part 10(e), the indicative thresholds are identified as:

“New permanent airfields and major works (such as new runways or terminals with a site area of more than 10 hectares) at existing airports. Smaller scale development at existing airports is unlikely to require Environmental Impact Assessment unless it would lead to significant increases in air or road traffic.”

The Planning Practice Guidance also states that the key matters for consideration are those relating to noise, traffic generation and emissions.

As noted above, the development is not a Schedule 2 development, however the Council has considered whether to request an EIA for the revised proposals. The report attached at Appendix 1 undertakes a comprehensive review of the need for an EIA, in terms of the criteria of the 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated), which comprise:

- characteristics of the development;
- location of development; and
- characteristics of the potential impact.

As a result of this assessment, the screening opinion confirms that an EIA is not required for the current proposals.

Relevant Planning History

MC/14/2914 Erection of two hangars, erection of new hangar for Medway Aircraft Preservation Society, erection of fencing and gates, formation of associated car parking areas, fuel tank enclosure, ancillary works and a memorial garden (detailed submission)

Decision Approval With Conditions
Decided 16 March, 2017

MC/16/4534 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 - request for a Scoping Opinion in respect of an Environmental Impact Assessment at Rochester Airport for the formation of a replacement paved lit runway and parallel grass runway (including a landscaped bund), the demolition, replacement and refurbishment of existing buildings and associated works.

Decision: Scoping Opinion issued, 27 February 2017

MC/14/2159 Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact

Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 - request for a screening opinion as whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is necessary for the formation of a paved lit runway to replace 02/20 measuring 830 metres in length and 25 metres in width together with a new parallel grass runaway for use by historic aircraft and landscaped bund. The refurbishment or replacement of Hangar 3, new control tower, new hub building with MAPS, fuel pump island, vehicle parking and aircraft storage together with additional hangers and buildings with associated parking.

Decision: EIA not required, 18 August 2014

Secretary of State Direction: EIA required, 26 May 2016

Representations

The application was advertised in the local press and on site. Consultations were undertaken with statutory and other consultees, including Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Aylesford Parish Council, Burham Parish Council, Wouldham Parish Council, Highways England, The Civil Aviation Authority, The National Air Traffic Service, London Southend Airport, The North Downs AONB Unit, Southern Gas Networks, Southern Water Services and EDF Energy. Local residents in the surrounding area and interested parties were also notified of the application.

A number of the comments received relate to the operation of the KSSAAT service, and not the proposed office development which is the subject of the application, however these are summarised below for completeness.

Highways England has assessed the application, and concluded that the proposal would be acceptable from the viewpoint of maintaining the safety, reliability and effectiveness of the strategic road network, subject to attaching a condition requiring a Staff Travel Plan to minimise the number of additional vehicle trips on the strategic road network.

Southern Gas drew attention to its infrastructure in the vicinity of the application site and the construction working practices that should be adopted when undertaking works near this infrastructure.

Southern Water drew attention to the location of a public foul sewer that crosses the application site and the potential need for this infrastructure to be diverted. A condition was required in order to protect the drainage apparatus. An informative was requested regarding the need to apply for a connection to the public sewer.

The **Kent Downs AONB Unit** has no comments to make on the application.

Aylesford Parish Council has no objections to the proposals.

Burham Parish Council has no observations on the application. However they requested clarification on how the proposals would impact on air traffic movements at Rochester Airport.

Medway Council Planning Policy team supports the principle of development, and state that the proposal does not appear to present any significant adverse impacts. However, it is queried whether the proposed office building would fulfil the potential to deliver a 'gateway' with mixed-use development as set out in the Rochester Airport Masterplan.

Objections

A total of **11 representations** objecting to the proposals or raising concerns have been received.

A summary of the main issues raised by the objections is set out below.

- Planning permission has not been granted for the existing helipads and are being used unlawfully.
- The helipads are close to hotel and residential uses and the planned family area. The AW169 helicopters are extremely loud and could lead to permanent hearing damage. A noise contour plan is necessary to gauge impact.
- If the application is approved, conditions should cap air movements and flight path.
- Should be located on the western side of the airport away from residential properties.
- Transport Assessment required.
- Planning conditions must prevent future abuse of use and protect public safety, and mitigate noise disturbance, air pollution levels, traffic congestion and control of parking.
- Significant increase in flights and change in aircraft will increase noise and visual disturbance.
- Impact on local people's amenity, quality of life, the environment and intrinsic character of the area need to be assessed.
- Full noise impact study is required.
- Public safety assessment required.
- Insufficient parking provided.
- Airport has a restriction on flying times, KSSAAT will be in violation.

Support

A total of 236 comments supporting the proposals have been received.

The main reasons for supporting the application include:

- Support for the role of the air ambulance operation in saving lives.
- Important and vital service.
- Benefits for the airport and surrounding area.
- Good for the community.
- Airport adds to diversity of the area.
- Good accessibility and location for the service.
- Increase in noise would be minimal.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and are considered to conform.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan consists of the saved policies of the Medway Local Plan 2003. The draft Medway Council Local Plan Development Options document is a material consideration, but at the early stage of preparation of the new Local Plan, only very limited weight can be attached at this stage.

The Rochester Airport Masterplan (2014) has been adopted by the Council, and provides a framework for the evolution of development proposals at the Airport. The Masterplan is a material consideration but does not constitute an adopted Supplementary Planning Document.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitutes a material consideration but does not change this approach ie. the starting point for determining a planning application is always the development plan. That said, the NPPF (para. 14) is also clear that:

“at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development For decision-taking this means:

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
 - *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.”*

In the context of this application the Council’s development plan is neither absent nor silent and relevant policies are not out of date, and consequently the application should be approved without delay if it accords with the development plan, unless of course other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The policy specifically relating to Rochester Airport within the adopted Local Plan (S11) has not been saved, although saved Policy ED5 ‘Proposed Employment Areas’ lists Rochester Airfield (25 ha) as being allocated for business (Class B1), general industry (Class B2) and storage and distribution (Class B8) development. Policy T23 ‘Aviation Related Development’ also specifically relates to development at Rochester Airport.

Planning Appraisal

The proposed development that is currently under consideration solely relates to the erection of a new office building to accommodate the headquarters of the KSSAAT. The application does not relate to the operational use of Rochester Airport by the air ambulance service. The new office building is to house the management, administration and charity functions of the KSSAAT, that are currently based at Marden but need to relocate.

KSSAAT has two teams, with one each based at Redhill Aerodrome and Marden, but are in the process of transitioning to base both teams at Redhill. The helicopters often use satellite airfields, to provide the service more effectively, or in the case of inclement weather or maintenance requirements. This activity often involves Rochester Airport, and KSSAAT advise that in 2016, the service used facilities at Rochester 150 times. KSSAAT advise that the helicopters will need to continue to operate from Rochester Airport in the future, and the frequency of visits is likely to increase with the Trust operating from the single base in Redhill. The applicant estimates that Rochester Airport will be used as a forward operating base on most days of the year in the future. It is envisaged that there will be fewer helicopter movements at Rochester Airport than when AV8 operated a helicopter business at the airport.

Locating the headquarters office at Rochester Airport will not in itself result in an increase in the number of aircraft movements. The future increase in movements is related to the consolidation of the operation at Redhill.

There are no planning restrictions at the airport that limit how the airport can operate. Emergency helicopters are able to operate from Rochester Airport 24 hours a day, and do not breach the airport's licence, lease or any regulations. Therefore the continued and increased future use of Rochester Airport by KSSAAT for their air ambulance operations does not require planning permission and is not a consideration as part of the current application.

The issues that are relevant to the proposals solely relate to the impact of the office development. This is separate from any future plans for the airport, which will be subject to a further application and scrutiny at a later date.

The main issues for consideration are:

- principle of the proposed development;
- design and appearance; and
- highways.

As part of the current application, it is not a requirement to consider the potential impacts of the helicopter movements, as these will not increase as a direct result of these proposals.

Intrinsic to the assessment of these issues is whether the proposal complies with local and national policy.

Aeronautical Assessment

Although the current application relates only to the erection of an office building, Lichfields (The Council's planning consultants acting as case officer for this application) has produced an independent Aeronautical Assessment to review the proposed scheme on behalf of Medway Council against aeronautical regulations and guidance, and to identify and assess any aeronautical and safeguarding impacts.

The conclusions of this Assessment are as follows:

“This assessment has reviewed the proposed scheme on behalf of Medway Council (application reference MC/17/0931) against aeronautical regulations and guidance, to identify and assess any aeronautical and safeguarding impact. Consideration has been given to the airport’s consultation responses to the LPA as well as other consultation responses received that raise aeronautical matters.

The applicant has consulted with the airport during the pre-application process and the airport has raised no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

A number of comments have been received throughout the consultation period of the application, raising aeronautical issues about the proposal. These comments have been considered with respect to aeronautical regulation and guidance, as well as Rochester Airport’s relevant aeronautical documents, such as the terms of the licence, lease and AIP. Mitigation or the need for remedies is proposed where applicable.

Following a review of the proposed scheme detailed in the planning application, it is considered that the principles of the design would not raise any aeronautical concerns.

It is considered that the application will not give rise to safety concerns subject to the provision of further detail on construction management, waste management, proposed lighting and methods to ensure birds do not seek to roost on top of the flat roof.

It is considered that these matters can be dealt with by way of condition, for example through the preparation of a Construction Management Plan, a Waste Management Plan, detail on proposed lighting of the building and car park and detail on Bird Hazard mitigation for the roof design.”

Principle of the Proposed Development

The application proposals seek permission for a new office building (Use Class B1) to accommodate the management, administration and charity functions of the KSSAAT operation. The application site is within the boundary of Rochester Airport and is located on ‘airport operational land’.

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF states that:

“When planning for ports, airports and airfields that are not subject to a separate national policy statement, plans should take account of their growth and role in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs. Plans should take account

of this Framework as well as the principles set out in the relevant national policy statements and the Government Framework for UK Aviation.”

Although the policy (S11) within the adopted Medway Local Plan (2003) specifically relating to Rochester Airport has not been saved, Policy T23 deals with aviation related development, and states that development at Rochester Airport will be considered against the following criteria:

- 1 compatibility with existing or potential aviation operations;
- 2 the scale and nature of the proposed development, taking account of the existing amount of activity on the site;
- 3 the economic and employment benefits of the development;
- 4 the proposals for a science and technology park at Rochester Airport in policies [S11 and] ED5;
- 5 the impact upon residential and other noise sensitive properties;
- 6 traffic generation;
- 7 other environmental and social impacts; and
- 8 accessibility from the urban area of Medway.

Policy ED5 of the Local Plan identifies Rochester Airport as a proposed employment area, suitable for uses within Classes B1, B2 and B8.

The Medway Council Local Plan Development Options (Draft January 2017) identifies that Rochester Airport requires investment to secure its medium to long-term future, and states that the Council supports the retention of Rochester Airport, providing an enhanced aviation facility supporting business, public service, training, heritage and leisure uses. The policy approach to aviation states:

“Rochester Airport will be safeguarded to provide an enhanced aviation facility for business, public service, training, heritage and leisure uses, and support the development of a strategic gateway and an economic hub. Proposals will need to demonstrate how any impacts will be mitigated.”

Rochester Airport is a long established aviation site, and it is clear that the Council’s stated policy position and intention is that this should be maintained and enhanced as an important facility. Airport related improvements at Rochester Airport are therefore supported in principle, provided that impacts can be mitigated.

The application site area is relatively small in the context of the wider Rochester Airport, large parts of which are occupied by existing development, including land directly adjoining the application site. The proposal will result in an intensification of the use of the site on this part of the airport by KSSAAT.

The development will not alter the character of the airport’s general operations. The provision of office floorspace for use by KSSAAT complies with the adopted and emerging policy relating to Rochester Airport.

Design and Appearance

The development is located in close proximity to the North Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). The nature and form of the proposals that are the subject of this planning application are confined to development within the boundary of the existing Rochester Airport. The Airport is well screened and the construction and operation of the new office building is capable of being brought forward without giving rise to significant environmental effects on the AONB, or on landscape quality and views locally.

The proposed prefabricated office building is of a functional design and appearance, and typical of buildings to be found within a General Aviation (GA) airport. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application confirms that the building will be a standard, compliant and accessible building arrangement, including a reception area, open plan offices, executive offices, finance department, meeting rooms, break out spaces, kitchen/diners, toilets, storage, mail/copy areas and recycling points, with provision for a dedicated room for visiting pilots and crew. The proposed building is designed to accommodate 44 permanent staff, plus six visiting pilots and crew and provision for 12 hot desks.

The proposed office building is a bespoke modular building that could potentially be relocated or increased in size if required in the future, subject to further planning applications. The scale of the building is appropriate and will not be out of context with existing development in the area (eg. the AV8 hanger building, Holiday Inn and the Medway Business Innovation Centre).

The proposed building is located close to the entrance to Rochester Airport and will be visible from the entrance road. The building is positioned to have good visibility of the airport, with glazing along the elevation facing the main area of the airport, to allow staff to monitor and observe weather conditions and airfield activity.

Having regard to the siting and scale of the proposed building, it is considered that its design and appearance is acceptable and that there is therefore no conflict with the provisions of Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan or the NPPF's promotion of high quality development.

While external lighting would need to be installed in association with this development, it is likely that it would be of a scale that would not be visually intrusive. This is a matter that can be controlled by the imposition of a planning condition, to ensure that it does not conflict with policies BNE1 and BNE5 of the Medway Local Plan nor give rise to any operational issues at the airport. Conditions are proposed relating to the materials to be used.

Conditions are also proposed relating to hard and soft landscaping, to ensure that the visual appearance of the development is satisfactory, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan.

Highways

A Transport Statement has been submitted to accompany the planning application. This identifies the estimated number of traffic movements expected as a result of the proposed development. The TS states that the development will result in an increase of no more than 10% of the likely traffic movements on the airport access road from its junction with the A229, and an increase of no more than 0.2% on the A229 Maidstone Road.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that the proposed development will not generate any significant additional traffic movements to and from the airport, and the impact associated with the development will not be significantly greater than current movements. Vehicles associated with the demolition and construction of the proposed development are capable of being managed through normal traffic management procedures and are unlikely to be unusual in their number or type.

Highways England (HE) has been consulted on the application. HE note that the Transport Statement does not quantify the scale of impact on the strategic road network of the staff relocating from the current site in Marden. HE has undertaken their own investigations and confirm that the application would be acceptable from the viewpoint of maintaining the safety, reliability and operational effectiveness of the strategic road network, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring a Staff Travel Plan, in order to minimise the additional number of vehicle trips on the strategic road network.

Given the nature of the application proposals it is considered that the proposed development would not be a significant traffic generator, with the result that there would be no adverse effects for the operation of the local highway network. HE confirmed that they have no objection, provided the required condition is attached. The application proposals are therefore considered to accord with the provisions of Policy T1 of the Medway Local Plan.

The proposed development provides nine car parking spaces for the office building, which is anticipated to accommodate up to 44 staff. It is therefore proposed that the existing airport overflow car park will be used by staff when the nine spaces are already occupied. The applicant advises that this area of overflow car parking is capable of meeting any parking needs arising from the development. A condition is recommended that requires the preparation of a car parking strategy that identifies how the parking will be managed and operated.

A condition is also recommended seeking the provision of secure cycle parking facilities within the development site, for use by staff and visitors, in accordance with Policy T4 of the Medway Local Plan.

Other Matters

There is potential for ground contamination to be present, and there is a requirement for the applicant to undertake on-site investigations in association with the proposed development. Planning conditions to address this work are recommended. With the imposition of appropriate conditions, the proposed development is unobjectionable

under the provisions of Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan.

Rochester Airport has some interest associated with its previous use, particularly during the Second World War. However the site is not located within a Conservation area and contains no designated heritage features.

The application site lies in an area where there is some evidence of prehistoric and Romano-British activity and the airfield itself is of some historic interest dating back to the early 1930s and then into the WW2 period. Archaeological monitoring and investigation should be undertaken, and an appropriate condition is recommended. With the imposition of the condition, it is considered that the application proposals accord with the provisions of Policy BNE21 of the Local Plan.

Local Finance Considerations

None

Conclusions and Recommendation

For the reasons stated above, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in all regards and accords with local and national policy. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Planning Committee due to the extent of the representations received.

Appendix 1 - EIA Screening

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Application Number: MC/17/0931

Site Address: ROCHESTER AIRPORT, MAIDSTONE ROAD, CHATHAM, ME5 9SD

Recommendation

Environmental Impact Assessment is not required

Proposal

Construction of office building and associated parking for use by Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust (detailed planning application) – consideration of need for Environmental Impact Assessment pursuant to Regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as updated by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(Amendment) Regulations 2015

[Consideration also given to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 where relevant]

Relevant Planning History

- Ref. No: MC/16/4534 - Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 - request for a Scoping Opinion in respect of an Environmental Impact Assessment at Rochester Airport for the formation of a replacement paved lit runway and parallel grass runway (including a landscaped bund), the demolition, replacement and refurbishment of existing buildings and associated works
Decision: Scoping Opinion issued
- Ref. No: MC/14/2159 - Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 - request for a screening opinion as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is necessary for the formation of a paved lit runway to replace 02/20 measuring 830 metres in length and 25 metres in width together with a new parallel grass runaway for use by historic aircraft and landscaped bund. The refurbishment or replacement of hangar 3, new control tower, new hub building with MAPS hanger, fuel pump island, vehicle parking and aircraft storage together with additional hangers and buildings with associated parking
Decision: EIA Required (issued on direction from the Secretary of State dated 26 May 2016)
- Ref. No: MC/14/1178 - Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 - request for a screening opinion as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is necessary for the formation of a paved lit runway to replace 02/20 measuring 830 metres in length and 25 metres in width together with a new parallel grass runaway for use by historic aircraft and landscaped bund. The refurbishment or replacement of hangar 3, new control tower, new hub building with MAPS hanger, fuel pump island, vehicle parking and aircraft storage together with additional hangers and buildings with associated parking.

Decision: EIA Required

Representations

Given the provisions of the Regulations and nature of the proposal, there is no requirement to undertake consultation in respect of the screening process.

However, the Planning Practice Guidance (Environmental Impact Assessment) identifies the need to consult with certain public bodies to establish the development's likely effects on sensitive areas. The planning application is currently undergoing statutory consultation following its validation on 16 March 2017. To date, only one public body has responded (below) and this representation has been considered as part of this screening process.

Southern Gas (SG) notes that the proposed development is located near to a low/medium/intermediate pressure gas main that runs along the A229 Maidstone Road and the existing Rochester Airport access road via the junction further east of the application site. SG notes that there should be no mechanical excavations above or within 0.5m of a low/medium pressure system or above or within 3m of an intermediate pressure system, and SG access should be maintained to the pipeline mains system during the operation of the proposed development.

Southern Water identifies a public sewer running across the site.

Aylesford Parish Council has no objections to the application.

Burham Parish Council makes no observations but express the view that the impact on air traffic movements at Rochester Airport should be understood prior to the application being approved.

Kent Downs AONB Unit has no comments to make on the application

A significant number of representations have been received to the application from local interested parties; these are mainly in support, with a few opposed, to the development that is the subject of the application. Whilst there is no requirement to undertake consultations with local interested parties in respect of the screening process, a summary of those matters raised which refer to the EIA process are summarised below for completeness:-

- The provision of an air ambulance facility would provide significant community benefits;
- A public safety and noise assessment should be provided prior to any decision being made;
- Concern has been expressed on the level of car parking proposed and associated impact in the local area;
- A Transport Assessment should be provided; and
- Information on the relationship to helipads adjacent to the office building has been requested and confirmation as to whether the helipads can be lawfully used.

Appraisal

Background and context

A previous planning application (Ref: MC/14/2914) was submitted by Rochester Airport Ltd in 2014 for a development at Rochester Airport, and included the land subject to the current

application by Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust (KSSAAT). The proposal comprised:-

“Formation of a lit paved runway with parallel grass runway, formation of grassed bund, re-siting of helipads, erection of two hangars, a hub building with control tower and associated building, erection of fencing and gates, formation of associated car parking areas, fuel tank enclosure, family viewing area and a memorial garden (detailed submission) plus demolition of a range of structures and removal of portable structures and identification of future development site (outline submission)”

This development was the subject of a Screening Direction (referred to above) dated 26 May 2016 which indicated that the scheme is an EIA development. The screening was undertaken with reference to the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and in the light of the main matters to be considered being noise and airborne pollutants, safety and traffic impacts. The matters were identified on the assumption that various restrictions, including a yearly cap on the numbers of aircraft movements and regulated hours of operation, would be put in place through planning conditions.

The Direction concluded that:-

“Overall, the development will result in changes to how the airport operates; a steadier flow of aircraft movements, including over winter, but particularly of recreational flying with a significant difference during the summer/at weekends. The increasing use of a single runway and loss of respite periods from incidences of noise are potentially significant and would tend to coincide with the summer period, or better weather when nearby residents would make more full recreational use of their gardens and / or tend to prefer to leave windows open. Finally, there is also no clear understanding of the aforementioned changes alongside incidences of noise impact associated with autogyro activity. This has clearly been an issue for the airport and the information on this aspect of the noise issues is not evidenced to a level where a conclusion on the impacts can be satisfactorily assessed, albeit in the context of restrictions to be imposed specifically on this activity as party of any resulting planning permissions subsequently granted.

The Secretary of State has taken into account the fact that no environmental impact assessment has been conducted during the period since the site has been used as an airport. Therefore, it cannot be said that a baseline from which impacts from existing operations has been produced against which the impacts of the proposed changes to the operation can be assessed. However, no substantial additional impact is considered likely due to the potential for cumulative effects with other proposals and existing land uses in the vicinity. Similarly, no other significant effects have been identified as likely amongst the main matters considered (pollution, safety and traffic impacts).

This is therefore, a finely balanced judgment, based largely in considering the noise issue. This is due in part to the uncertainty over the impact of an increase in movements likely to occur and in the context of beneficial impact of the runway improvements and restrictions anticipated. Due to the lack of clear evidence on noise and uncertainty relating to the noise implications of these proposals, the Secretary of State considers there is similar uncertainty in relation to any likely noise impacts from the wider project, including on the nearest sensitive receptors, and on the AONB area. As a result of this uncertainty, it is not possible

for him to reasonably conclude that there is no likelihood of significant effects in relation to noise. EIA is therefore required.”

On 23 December 2016, Rochester Airport Ltd submitted a request for an amendment to the application to remove from the proposal the lit paved runway with parallel grass runway, the formation of a grassed bund, the re-siting of helipads, the development of a hub building with control tower and associated building and a family viewing area. The application site boundary was reduced and the description of development redefined to include only the erection of hangar buildings, the erection of fencing and gates, car parking, a fuel tank enclosure and a memorial garden.

Due to the significant change in the scope of the application, it was considered appropriate to review whether the revised proposals would still be EIA development in the context of the 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated). This process confirmed that EIA was not required. The application was granted planning permission on 17 March 2017.

The recent history of development at the airport and its assessment in relation to the EIA Regulations provides relevant context to current and future development proposals.

The current application proposal (Ref: MC/17/0931) by KSSAAT includes land that fell within the redline boundary of the above original and approved scheme (Ref: MC/14/2914). Acknowledging the previous Direction for the original larger development proposal and the subsequent screening process that was undergone on the revised development proposal that was granted planning permission, it is considered appropriate for Medway Council to consider if the current KSSAAT proposal falls within the remit of the EIA Regulations as part of its assessment of the application, and whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment and therefore require EIA.

Legislative Background

The Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011 (as updated) specify that EIA development:-

“...means development which is either—

(a) Schedule 1 development; or

(b) Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location;”

The KSSAAT office development proposal at Rochester Airport does not fall within any of the categories of development defined within Schedule 1.

The development proposal is most closely related to development that falls within Parts 10(b) or 10(e) of Schedule 2 of the updated EIA Regulations. Part 10(b) relates to urban development projects (which could include office development) where more than 1 hectare of land which is not residential is proposed. Part 10(e) relates to development at airfields where it involves an extension to a runway or the area of works exceed 1 hectare. Whilst not strictly a Schedule 2 development, the proposal involves works next to a runway that forms part of the wider Rochester Airport site, so there are some commonalities with the types of development typically assessed under Part 10(e). On a site of 0.17 hectares, the development falls well under the thresholds for schemes falling within Part 10(b).

As identified above, and in circumstances where a development could be considered to fall within Schedule 2, EIA will be required where significant effects on the environment are considered likely due to the nature, size or location of the development. The decision on whether significant effects are considered likely is the screening process and should be carried out with reference to the various selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.

Further guidance is provided in the Planning Practice Guidance which states that:-

“Each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way and authorities should retain the evidence to justify their decision.”

The Planning Practice Guidance also provides a set of indicative thresholds and criteria which are intended to aid local planning authorities to determine whether a project is likely to have significant environmental effects. In respect of Part 10(e), the indicative thresholds are identified as: -

“New permanent airfields and major works (such as new runways or terminals with a site area of more than 10 hectares) at existing airports. Smaller scale development at existing airports is unlikely to require Environmental Impact Assessment unless it would lead to significant increases in air or road traffic.”

The Planning Practice Guidance also states that the key matters for consideration are those relating to noise, traffic generation and emissions.

The Council is aware of the current intended publication of new EIA Regulations in May 2017 by the UK Government with a draft of the Regulations having been published for consultation in December 2016. This is not relevant to the screening of this application given that the application was submitted to Medway Council prior to the anticipated publication of the new EIA Regulations. This screening has therefore been carried out pursuant to the 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated).

Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017

On 16 May 2017, the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017 came into force within England. These entirely replace the previous 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated) except for various provisions included within the ‘Revocation and transitional provisions’ (Regulation 76 of the 2017 Regulations). These provisions include the adoption of screening opinions *“where, before the coming into force of these Regulations, such requests were made or the relevant planning authority or the Secretary of State, as the case may be, initiated the making or adoption of such screening opinions or screening directions”*.

The initiation of the process of making or adopting a screening opinion in respect of this application commenced with its validation on 16 March 2017. As part of that process, additional information was requested at a meeting on 5 May 2017; this information being provided on 17 May 2017. It is considered that as the initiation of this process commenced prior to 16 May 2017 that this screening exercise can be conducted pursuant to the 2011 EIA Regulations.

Notwithstanding this, the Council has informally considered if, should this screening process be undertaken with reference to the 2017 EIA Regulations, a different decision would be reached in respect of the need for EIA. This informal review concluded that such consideration would have no effect on the overall conclusion on the need for EIA as the

development is one that would not give rise to significant environmental effects when considered by itself or in conjunction with other nearby and/or related development.

Review of Proposed Development

As stated above, the 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated) establish a series of criteria under Schedule 3 that must be taken into account in determining whether a scheme, which falls within Schedule 2, is likely to have significant effects. The criteria comprise:-

- Characteristics of the Development;
- Location of Development; and;
- Characteristics of the potential impact.

Each is considered in turn below with regard to the current KSSAAT application proposal at Rochester Airport.

1. Characteristics of the development

As stated by the applicant, the development comprises the erection of a two storey, pre-fabricated, headquarters office building (Use Class B1) and the provision of 9 car parking spaces. The site area is 0.17 hectares and includes vacant land immediately to the south of the former AV8 hanger on the southern part of the wider airport. An existing temporary building, portcabin and fencing south of the hanger are proposed to be removed, to accommodate the development.

The application site area is relatively small in the context of the wider Rochester Airport, large parts of which are occupied by existing development, including land directly adjoining the application site. The proposal will result in an intensification of the use of the site on this part of the airport by KSSAAT, with the proposed office building to be primarily used to accommodate its administrative and charity fund raising staff. The application confirms that the proposed building is able to accommodate up to 44 permanent staff plus 6 visiting pilots and crew.

The Planning Practice Guidance, as stated above, identifies that EIA is more likely where new runways or terminals are proposed on site areas of over 10 hectares. The area of proposed development which is the subject of this application falls well below this threshold.

It is also relevant to consider whether the proposal forms part of a larger development for which planning permission is not currently sought and whether this relationship gives rise to a need for EIA.

As described by the applicant, KSSAAT often uses Rochester Airport as a “satellite” airfield to its main Helicopter Emergency Medical Service bases at Marden in Kent and Redhill Aerodrome, either to provide the service more effectively or in response to inclement weather or to service its maintenance requirements. KSSAAT envisages that its service will need to continue to operate from Rochester Airport and, indeed, the frequency of helicopter visits to the airport is likely to increase, with it due to operate from a single base at Redhill in the future. The applicant notes that this will result in its use of Rochester Airport as a forward operating base on most days of the year in the future. In this regard, KSSAAT highlights that there are no planning restrictions on the number of emergency helicopter movements allowed at the airport, and, therefore, these operational activities are not a matter for planning consideration.

Whilst not forming part of the planning application, it is also relevant context that KSSAAT intends to take over the lease on the existing hanger to the north, following the closure of AV8, and this will house its air ambulance helicopter and be used for unplanned maintenance and storage if required. The application explains that the location of the proposed office building next to the hanger and the existing helipad will help to optimise the effectiveness of its operations. Following a request for additional information following the submission of the application to which this screening relates, the airport confirmed in an email of 17 May 2017 that the “AV8 Helipad and Hangar was built during December 2005 and February 2006, operational from March 2006”. It has therefore been developed and in use for over ten years; hence it is an established use.

Based on the information submitted, the combination of the proposed office building and the use of the existing hanger and the helipad currently represent the full extent of KSSAAT's operations at the airport for the foreseeable future, with the proposed office building being designed to accommodate additional staff as necessary should its charity function grow, as anticipated.

Also of relevance, and as referred to earlier, Rochester Airport Ltd has stated its intention to proceed with the proposed development of a lit paved runway with parallel grass runway, the formation of a grassed bund, the re-siting of helipads, the development of a hub building with control tower and associated building and a family viewing area. In this regard:-

- 1 Planning permission was issued on 17 March 2017 for a development comprising “Erection of two hangars, erection of new hangar for Medway Aircraft Preservation Society, erection of fencing and gates, formation of associated car parking areas, fuel tank enclosure, ancillary works and a memorial garden”; and
- 2 Rochester Airport Ltd has stated its intention to submit an Environmental Statement in association with a second application for the lit paved runway with parallel grass runway and any associated works. The Council issued an EIA Scoping Opinion on 27 February 2017 stating that the following matters should be considered – air quality, transportation, ecology and nature conservation and public safety and risk of accidents (and associated risk to human health).

The characteristics of the office development proposed by KSSAAT that are the subject of this screening process do not give rise to significant environmental effects that would result in the need for EIA in their own right. The development is capable of being brought forward through the planning process in isolation and is not reliant on the wider runway proposals for its success. The potential for significant environmental effects arising from the wider runway proposals will be subject to EIA in due course. There is no justification for seeking an EIA for the current development due to its relationship to future proposals yet to be defined in a planning application at the airport.

2. Location of the development

The development is not located within a sensitive area as defined by the 2011 EIA Regulations (as updated) but is located in proximity to the North Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) which would be defined as a sensitive area. The nature and form of the proposal that is the subject of this screening process are confined to development within the boundary of the existing Rochester Airport. The Airport is well screened and the construction and operation of the new office building and associated development is capable of being brought forward without giving rise to any environmental effects on the AONB.

3. Characteristics of the potential impact

The characteristics of the potential impact are assessed below:-

Transport

The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement (TS, March 2017). This states that in the short term the proposed office development is likely to give rise to between 25-30 vehicle movements during the peak hour periods based on the 30 staff that will use the building, and this will increase to a maximum of 30-35 vehicle movements during peak periods in the longer term assuming a growth in overall staff numbers up to a maximum of 44 people. Using the higher number of staff, the TS estimates that total daily traffic activity is unlikely to exceed 80-90 movements per day, representing an increase of no more than 10% on the likely traffic movements on the airport access road from its junction with the A229 Maidstone Road, and an increase of no more than approximately 0.2% in the existing traffic flows on the A229. The proposal will not therefore generate significant traffic.

Vehicles associated with the demolition/removal of the temporary buildings south of the hanger building and the construction of the proposed development are capable of being managed through normal construction traffic management procedures and are unlikely to be unusual in their number or type. There is no potential for significant environmental effects giving rise to a need for EIA associated with transportation.

Noise and Vibration

The proposed office is unlikely to give rise to any significant increase in noise pollution. Any noise and vibration associated with the demolition and construction of the proposed development is capable of being managed through normal management and legislative regimes.

KSSAAT's existing and ongoing use of the helipad for its Helicopter Emergency Medical Service and its intention to lease the hanger formerly occupied by AV8 is presented in the application as context to the proposed office, but is outwith the scope of the application which is the subject of this EIA screening process.

Notwithstanding, and giving the helipad has been in existence for over ten years, there are currently no planning restrictions on the number of emergency helicopter movements that are allowed at the airport and the continuing use of the helipad. Further, as explained by the applicant, the AV8 operation on this part of the airport, which was the previous operator of a helicopter business, used to generate 1600 helicopter flights per year. As noted by the applicant, the closure of this operation means that, in net terms, factoring in the anticipated increase in helicopter use by KSSAAT, the overall number of helicopter movements at the airport will reduce. This will mean that overall noise impacts from the helicopter operations will also reduce. There is no potential for significant environmental effects giving rise to a need for EIA associated with noise and vibration.

Air Quality and Pollution

Rochester Airport is not located within an Air Quality Management Area. Demolition and construction of the development (which uses prefabricated components) is capable of being managed through normal management, planning and legislative regimes as is the

subsequent operation of the buildings. There is no potential for significant environmental effects giving rise to a need for EIA associated with air quality and pollution.

Ecology

The application site is located outside of any designated sites for nature conservation. Recommendations to implement ecological enhancements as part of the development are capable of being brought forward through the usual planning process. There is no potential for significant environmental effects associated with ecology giving rise to a need for EIA.

Landscape and Views

The form of development will not be out of context with existing development in the area (e.g. the hanger building, Holiday Inn and the Medway Business Innovation Centre). Further, the development site is contained within the heavily treed boundaries of Rochester Airport that will help to screen views of the building from further afield. There is no potential for significant environmental effects on landscape quality or on views giving rise to a need for EIA.

Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zone 1. No significant effects on flooding or drainage are anticipated giving rise to a need for EIA.

Heritage and Archaeology

Rochester Airport has some interest associated with its previous use, particularly during the Second World War. However the site is not located within a Conservation Area and contains no designated or undesignated heritage assets. The protection and/or investigations of any features of heritage interest are capable of being addressed through the usual planning/heritage process. There is no potential for significant environmental effects giving rise to a need for EIA.

Socio-Economics

The proposed new office accommodation will employ up to 44 staff and make an important contribution to the ongoing use of the airport by the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service, which provides an important emergency public health care service. However, it is not considered likely that the effect will be significant giving rise to a need for EIA.

In Combination Effects

Whilst the development may give rise to a number of non-significant environmental effects, these are not expected to result in an additional significant in-combination effect giving rise to a need for EIA.

Cumulative Effects

Considered above.

Conclusions and Reasons for determination: EIA is not required