

MC/18/2509

Date Received: 24 August 2018

Location: Rochester Airport Maidstone Road Chatham Medway

Proposal: Relocation of two helipads within the airport to include the provision of landing pads together with the decommissioning of an existing helipad

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Ward: Rochester South & Horsted Ward

Case Officer: Nathaniel Lichfield - Planning Consultants

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**Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 19th December 2018.**

**Recommendation – Approval with Conditions**

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

The reasons for this recommendation for approval are given in the Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

- 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 (206/309)
  - Proposed Site Plan Incorporating Other Approved Schemes (206/P 310)
  - Helipad Layout (206/P 308 Rev. A)

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

- 3 Development shall not commence until the hangar buildings approved under planning permission ref. MC/14/2914 have been constructed, in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To provide acoustic attenuation

- 4 No development shall take place until a scheme showing details of the disposal of surface water, based on sustainable drainage principles, including details of the design, phasing (where appropriate), implementation, maintenance and management of the surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Those details shall include (if applicable):

- a timetable for its implementation, and
- a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To manage surface water during and post construction and for the lifetime of the development.

- 5 Prior to occupation of the development, a signed verification report carried out by a qualified drainage engineer (or equivalent) must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority to confirm that the Sustainable Drainage System has been constructed as per the agreed scheme and plans.

Reason: This condition is sought in accordance with paragraph 163 of the NPPF to ensure that suitable surface water drainage scheme is designed and fully implemented so as to not increase flood risk onsite or elsewhere.

- 6 Should any sewer be found during construction works, all works on site shall be suspended while an investigation is undertaken to ascertain the condition of the sewer, the number of properties it serves, and the potential means of access to it. A report on that investigation shall then be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and

no works on site shall be permitted to resume until the details of any measures required to be taken in relation to the discovered sewer have been agreed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water. Such measures 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.

- 7 Development shall not commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) 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) Hours of construction working.
  - B) Measures to control noise affecting nearby residents.
  - C) 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.
  - D) Details of arrangements for the delivery of materials and construction equipment to the site.
  - E) 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/>).
  - F) Details and measures for the control of activities likely to produce dust and smoke.
  - G) Details of temporary lighting - Such details shall comply with Advice Note 2 'Lighting' available at <http://www.aoa.org.uk/policy-campaigns/operations-safety/>.
  - H) Details and measures for the control and disposal of putrescible waste to prevent attraction of birds.
  - I) Pollution incident control management.
  - J) Site contact details in case of complaints.

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 ensure the development is undertaken in a satisfactory manner and to avoid endangering the safe operation of aircraft.

- 8 No lighting 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/>

**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 relocation of two helipads within the airport to include the provision of landing pads together with the decommissioning of an existing helipad.

The components within this current application previously formed part of an earlier application at the airport (ref. MC/17/3109) that, among other elements, also included a new paved runway. The airport is now not progressing with proposals for a new paved runway at this time. Instead, fresh applications have been submitted for the works now proposed, comprising 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 (ref. MC/18/2505) and this application for the relocation of two helipads.

The extent of the application red line 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.

### *Environmental Impact Assessment*

The applicant has not requested a screening opinion for this proposed development, however one has been undertaken by Medway Council to ascertain whether it is EIA development. The screening opinion concluded that EIA is not required.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 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 relocation of two helipads 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 descriptions 10(b) or 10(e) in Column 1 of the table in Schedule 2, para. 1 of the EIA Regulations. Description 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. Description 10(e) relates to the construction of airfields where it involves an extension to a runway or the area of works exceeds 1 hectare. For completeness, description 13(b) also captures any change to, or extension of, these descriptions of development where it has already been carried out, if the thresholds and criteria for these descriptions apply to the change or extension, or if the development as changed or extended may have significant adverse effects on the environment.

As the proposed development would include much less than 1 hectare of urban development, it does not meet the threshold for description 10(b). Nor would the proposal meet the threshold for description 10(e), given that the area of the works is much less than 1 hectare.

However, in light of description 13(b), it is still prudent to consider whether the proposal is likely to result in significant adverse effects on the environment. 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.”* (Ref ID: 4-018-20170728)

It also adds in the same section: *“Only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an environmental impact assessment”*. 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. It is noted that, in respect of description 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.

Taking account of the relevant law and guidance, the Council has taken a precautionary approach and considered whether to request an EIA for this latest proposal, even though the criteria for descriptions 10(b) and 10(e) are not met. The report attached at Appendix 1 therefore undertakes a comprehensive review of the need for an EIA by reference to:

- The characteristics of the development;
- The location of development; and
- The nature of the potential impact(s)

As a result of this assessment, a screening opinion undertaken as part of this application and dated 10 December 2018 confirms that an EIA is not required for the current proposals.

### **Relevant Planning History**

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 hangar, fuel pump island, vehicle parking and aircraft storage together with additional hangars and buildings with associated parking. Decision: EIA required, 19 May 2014
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 hangars and buildings with associated parking. Decision: EIA not required, 18 August 2014 Secretary of State Direction: EIA required, 26 May 2016
MC/14/2914	Full planning application for 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 Decision: Planning Permission granted, 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/17/0931      Full planning application for construction of office building with associated parking for use by Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust.  
Decision: Planning Permission granted, 14 June 2017
- MC/17/2323      Lawful Development Certificate (Existing) for the construction and existing use of two helipads and a hangar for aviation purposes.  
Decision: Certificate issued, 24 August 2017
- MC/17/4013      Lawful Development Certificate (proposed) to extend the existing helipad and remove existing hanger doors and replace with wider doors.  
Decision: Certificate issued, 12 February 2018
- MC/17/3109      Full planning application for formation of a replacement paved lit runway and parallel grass runway (including a landscaped bund), demolition of existing buildings (including control tower, two portacabins housing the airport office and Skytrek office), re-siting of helipads and construction of a new control tower and hub building including the provision of a family viewing area.  
Application withdrawn, 26 July 2018
- MC/18/2556      Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 - request for a screening opinion for the demolition of existing buildings (including control tower, two portacabins housing the airport office and Skytrek office), construction of a new control tower and hub building including the provision of a family viewing area proposed development of Rochester Airport  
EIA not required 10 December 2018
- MC/18/2505      Full planning application for 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.  
Also on this agenda

## Representations

The application was validated on 12 September 2018. 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.

### Consultee Responses

**National Air Traffic Service (NATS)** anticipates no impact from the proposals and has no comments to make on the application.

**Highways England** has assessed the application, and concluded that the proposal is not anticipated to induce any changes to the volume of existing vehicle movements or aircraft movements, or changes to the pattern of aircraft movements over the strategic road network. HE is satisfied that the proposals will not affect the safety, reliability and/or operation of the strategic road network.

**Natural England** raised no objection to the proposed development. As the proposal does not allow for any increased helicopter flight movements over the AONB, Natural England does not consider that the proposed development would compromise the purposes of designation or special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB. The proposal should be determined in line with the NPPF and development plan policies, and landscape and visual impacts should be minimised as far as possible.

**Southern Water** drew attention to the approximate position of a public sewer within the site. The exact position of the public sewers must be determined by the applicant before the layout location of the proposed development is finalised.

**Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)** considered the proposed scheme is acceptable in principle. Conditions suggested to ensure that there is a maintenance schedule in place for the lifetime of the development to maintain any SuDs which serve it.

**Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council** recognises that the relocation of the two helipads within the airport and the decommissioning of an existing helipad will be of benefit to the users of the airport and merits support. TMBC formally requests that Medway Council must be satisfied that the proposed development accords with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 in relation to the issues of noise, public safety, air quality and highway safety/capacity associated with the Helipads hereby approved, in order to ensure that there is no harm to the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and residential amenities, in accordance with the submitted details.



**Gravesham Borough Council** has no objections to the proposals.

**Kent Police** have no comments to make on the application.

**Historic England** advised that they had no comments to make on the proposed development.

**Kent County Council Biodiversity** confirmed they were satisfied with the conclusions of the preliminary ecological appraisal, and satisfied that the proposed development has limited potential to impact on protected/notable species. The application provides opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, and they recommend that bird and bat boxes are erected within the site boundaries to enhance the site for biodiversity.

**Kent County Council Archaeology** advised no archaeological measures are required.

### Objections

A total of 21 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.

- An EIA should be undertaken.
- The work involved necessitates the closure of runway 16/34, increasing flight activity on the remaining runway 02/20.
- Previous calls for independent public safety, noise impact and air quality assessments over choice of runway closure and increase of flight movements on the remaining operational runway, have been ignored by the applicants.
- Noise contours should be provided for the helipad move.
- Noise contours will determine whether the close proximity of the helipads to the family viewing area and nearby hotel exceed safe limits and accord with adopted Local Plan policy BNE3 (noise).
- Current location of helipads is away from residential properties.
- Relocation of two helipads in front of the new control tower and hub building near to the family viewing area has potentially dangerous safety implications.
- Increased helicopter traffic involving the use of much larger, commercial machines will have a serious impact on current noise levels which have not been properly evaluated.
- Larger helipads will allow airport operator to offer commercial all weather all year unrestricted helicopter taxi services which will eclipse the significant environmental impact of the 02/20 runway flight intensification.
- There should be a cap imposed on total air movements (25,000 pa suggested).

A further local resident stated that they would only object if this proposal led to the closure of runway 16/34.

### Support

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

The main reasons for supporting the application include:

- Support improvements and modernisation of facilities at airport.
- Need to ensure viability of the business.
- Plans for the relocation of the helipads coincide with wider plans to regenerate Rochester Airport and provide employment.
- Rochester Airport remains an important asset for the Medway Towns and offers facilities, such as training pilots to fly and maintaining aircraft. The modernisation of the Airport creates skilled and sustainable employment.

### **Development Plan**

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 policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 and are considered to conform with it.

The Medway Council Local Plan Development Strategy consultation document (March 2018) is a material consideration, but at the early stage of preparation of the new Local Plan, only limited weight can be attached to this document.

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. Para. 10 of the NPPF states:

*“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development”*

Para. 11 continues:

*“For decision-taking this means:*

*c) Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*

- d) *Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- i. *The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
  - ii. *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.”*

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.

Draft Policy T4 specifically relates to Rochester Airport, and 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, including air quality, noise, traffic, and amenity.”*

#### Other Guidance

- Rochester Airport Masterplan (2014)
- Medway Council Parking Standards (2004)

### **Planning Appraisal**

The proposals that are currently under consideration solely relate to the relocation of two helipads within the airport to include the provision of landing pads together with the decommissioning of an existing helipad.

The applicant has stated that the reason for the development is to consolidate the helipad movements further west and more centrally within the site, and reduce the extent of taxiing and the length of helicopter running time. With the proposed new hub building and control tower, the extent of personnel movement within the site to get to the relocated helipads is reduced, and health and safety improved. The applicant has stated that the development will not change the number of flights or the type of helicopter using the site.

Consideration has been given to whether the airport benefits from Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and can carry out the proposed works under Schedule 2, Part 8, Class F of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015 (England GPDO). To be able to benefit from the PDR, an airport must have an interest in the land and be able to satisfy four criteria – namely that any development:

- A. Takes place at a “relevant airport”;
- B. Is carried out by a “relevant airport operator” or its agent;
- C. Is required in connection with the provision of services and facilities at an airport; and
- D. Takes place on “operational land”.

A relevant airport is one able to levy airport charges under Part 5 of the Airports Act 1986 and is certified by the CAA to do so. An airport must be able to demonstrate an annual financial turnover exceeding £1 million in at least two of the previous three financial years to qualify. The airport has confirmed that it does not meet this financial test such to be a ‘relevant airport’. Accordingly, Rochester Airport does not benefit from Airport PDR and would need to apply for the proposed works via a planning application – hence this application.

Consideration has also been given to the negative EIA screening opinion (PDR cannot be used if the scheme is EIA development) and that the airport is owned by Medway Council but leased and controlled to an operating company, Rochester Airport Ltd (where an airport is wholly local authority owned and controlled it does not have the benefit of PDR). There is no Local Development Order in place (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015) authorising similar development to Part 8 of the England GPDO within a defined area of operational land, nor is there an Article 4 Direction in place at the airport.

The new location for the helipads would be a more appropriate location than the existing location, providing more immediate access to airside facilities such as the airport’s Final Approach and Take-off (FATO), the Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance Trust (KSSAATO) facility, airport apron areas and access to the airport.

The applicant proposes greater demarcation than currently exists between operational airside areas and landside areas, which would improve public safety throughout the site. The proposed development meets civil aviation airport design guidance.

A portion of the application red line area, where the hub building and helipads are proposed, would encroach onto the southern end of the existing cross runway.

Continued use of the cross runway would not be possible with the proposed development encroaching onto the runway end. The airport has already received Preliminary Notice from Medway Council to close this runway via the terms of the lease.

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.

The issues that are relevant to the proposals solely relate to the impact of the elements currently under consideration. Any plans that might be brought forward in future for the expansion of the airport by adding more runway capacity will need to be subject to a separate application and scrutiny at a later date, including in relation to EIA.

As noted above, a number of objectors to the revised application stated that an EIA is required for the current proposals. These comments are covered in more detail in the attached screening report at Appendix 1, which concludes that *“there is no justification for seeking an EIA for the current development due to its relationship to future aspirations at the airport.”*

Following a review of the application and the consultation responses, the main issues for consideration are:

- principle of the proposed development; and
- noise and air quality.

As part of the current application, it is not a requirement to consider the potential impacts of the number of aircraft 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 Review*

Although the current application relates only to the relocation of the helipads, Lichfields, as the planning consultants acting for the Local Planning Authority, has produced an independent Aeronautical Review considering the proposals against aeronautical regulations and guidance, and to identify and assess any aeronautical and safeguarding impacts. This Review also considered the current application for construction of a new control tower and hub building (ref. MC/18/2505).

The conclusions of this Review are as follows:

*“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).”*

*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.*

*It is considered that the upgraded facilities would be an improvement to the existing operational environment, providing a safer and more efficient operational airport.*

*There is no potential for significant environmental effects associated with public safety and risk giving rise to a need for EIA.*

*Given the above there is no requirement for a public safety and risk assessment in relation to the proposed development.*

*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".*

#### *Principle of the Proposed Development*

The application proposal seek to support the airport's operation by providing relocated helipads.

Paragraph 104 of the NPPF states that planning policies should:

*“recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields, and their need to adapt and change over time – taking into account their economic value in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs, and the Government's General Aviation Strategy.”*

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:

- compatibility with existing or potential aviation operations;*
- the scale and nature of the proposed development, taking account of the existing amount of activity on the site;*
- the economic and employment benefits of the development;*
- the proposals for a science and technology park at Rochester Airport in policies [S11 and] ED5;*

- *the impact upon residential and other noise-sensitive properties;*
- *traffic generation;*
- *other environmental and social impacts; and*
- *accessibility from the urban area of Medway.*

Draft Policy T4 of the Medway Council Local Plan Development Strategy (Draft March 2018) specifically relates to Rochester Airport, and 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, including air quality, noise, traffic, and amenity.”*

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 local facility. Airport-related improvements at Rochester Airport are therefore supported in principle, provided that impacts can be adequately mitigated.

The development will not alter the character of the airport’s general operations. In particular, the relocation of the helipads will not alter the existing role of the airport or the size and type of aircraft using the airport. It is therefore considered that the general principle of the proposed development is acceptable and complies with adopted and emerging policy relating to Rochester Airport.

#### Noise and Air Quality

As stated above, the relocated helipads will not facilitate additional flying activity at the airport. As the development of itself will not generate additional aircraft movements in the area or alter the hours of operation, it is considered that there will be no adverse effect on the AONB’s tranquillity, and Natural England confirmed that they have no objections to the proposal.

The proposed relocation of the helipads is considered to be a minor change, and is only likely to lead to small changes in noise, at most. The location of the relocated helipads is screened from any noise sensitive properties by the existing and proposed buildings in this part of the airport. A condition is proposed to require the new MAPS building and hangars to the south of the application site to be constructed in advance of the relocation of the helipads, in order to provide acoustic attenuation.

Rochester Airport is not located within an Air Quality Management Area. As the new control tower and hub building will not affect aircraft movements, it is considered that this development will have no adverse effect on the area’s air quality and as such there will be no conflict with Policy BNE24 of the Local Plan.

A condition is proposed requiring a Construction Method Statement to ensure that measures are in place to control the emission of dust and dirt, and noise and vibration during demolition and construction.

Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that the occupiers of properties that adjoin new development do not experience unacceptable noise disturbance. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ‘... mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life ...’. For the reasons given above it is considered that there will be no conflict with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan or paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

### Other Matters

The airport is in the ownership of Medway Council and is leased to the applicant, however, this is not a material planning consideration. There are no local finance considerations applicable to the proposal.

South East Local Enterprise Partnership funding is potentially available for some of the works proposed by the applicant. The availability of that funding is, however, not material to the determination of this planning application.

Safety concerns have been raised in relation to the implications of the development leading to the closure of runway 16/34. The issue of operational aviation safety for licensed airfields is a matter for the CAA. As part of that, the built development associated with the submitted application will also require consent through the licensing regime administered by the CAA.

### Conclusions and Recommendation

For the reasons stated above, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable 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 for determination due to the extent of the representations received expressing a view contrary to the recommendation.

## **Appendix 1: EIA Screening**

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## **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://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>