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Planning and Development Consultancy

Design and Access and Planning Statement

DESIGN AND ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPOSED PILOT TRAINING CAMPUS AT LONDON OXFORD AIRPORT INCLUDING STUDENT ACCOMMODATION AND TEACHING FACILITIES

Prepared on behalf of: London Oxford Airport

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**Ref: TAG/FER042
Date: October 2017**

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LIST OF DOCUMENTS

DOC 1	Extract from Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Part 1
DOC 2	Note circumstances affecting pilot training.
DOC 3	site selection analysis

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Design and Access and Planning Statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the erection of a new Pilot Training Campus at London Oxford Airport. The application is also supported by a Transport Statement and an ecological assessment of the site.
- 1.2 London Oxford Airport has a very long history of pilot training and the current proposal aims to strengthen and continue this tradition.
- 1.3 Following a meeting with the Local Planning Authority's Major Applications Officer it was agreed that the application should be supported by this Statement as well as reports dealing with transport and ecology.
- 1.4 The applicant had undertaken a consultation under the GPDO, assuming that the proposed development was Permitted Development under Class F, in order to achieve a speedy outcome to meet critical deadlines. It is recognised that this application is necessary and that a longer period will be required to determine it. In order to facilitate this the applicant intends to provide as much detail as possible with the application.
- 1.5 In parallel with the submission of the application, the applicant will consult with Kidlington Parish Council.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 2.1 The application site comprises a regular shaped parcel of land on the south side of the built up part of the airport. It is contained by Langford Lane to the south and the Boulevard (the main entrance to the airport) to the east.
- 2.2 The application site extends to 0.47 has of mainly open grass which is used informally as a kickabout area. The grass is regularly mown and has a neat tidy appearance.
- 2.3 There is an internal service road between the site and Langford Lane which provides access to hangars on the land west of the application site. Another access road from the Boulevard at the north east corner of the application site provides access to the car park adjacent to Langford Hall. Langford Hall is a block of student accommodation which occupies a position generally north of the application site and extending across about half of its width.
- 2.4 Two smaller buildings, a single storey office building and a two storey leisure complex, help to enclose the application site on its north and west sides.
- 2.5 There is a substantial hedge between Langford Lane and the service road which screens the site from the road. There are a number of trees around the edge of the site which are mainly ornamental non-native species.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposed development is for two buildings on the site. One for student accommodation at the western end , and the other as a teaching/training facility more centrally positioned. The accommodation block is a four storey building and the teaching block has two floors.
- 3.2 The site has two points of access for vehicles from the Service road leading to two areas of car parking. There are 60 parking spaces in total of which 5 are for disabled drivers. There are 16 cycle spaces in enclosed, secure timber clad modular units and 3 motorcycle spaces.
- 3.3 The scheme will involve the loss of a number of mainly ornamental trees, shrubs and bushes along the northern edge of the site .A detailed landscaping scheme will be prepared to replace trees to be lost.
- 3.4 The design rationale for the proposal is rooted in the qualities and nature of the development site which is surrounded by buildings characterised by a commercial nature often associated with non air-side airport sites. The site for the proposed building is exposed to long and short views within the suburban context of the London Oxford Airport along Langford lane and the scheme is therefore designed to respond to key views into the site. The building is designed to sit comfortably next to the existing buildings, with great emphasis being placed on making sure the proportions of the building are right in comparison with existing large format buildings including aircraft hangers.
- 3.5 The training building is easily read from adjacent street and is characterised by a highly articulated southern elevation comprised of a large roof overhang on columns and a prominent entrance lobby with porch. The appearance of the training building is recognisably a sleek corporate architectural solution similar to the buildings proposed at the recently consented Oxford Technology Park. The use of this architectural language reflects the vision of the operators for a

modern, innovate and forward looking yet unique product. This approach we believe sits comfortably with the longer term view of this area and region illustrated by the proposed Oxford Technology Park. The training building is designed to predominantly address the southern aspect to Langford Lane while the other elevations are functional and purposeful. The main teaching areas are characterised by larger glazed areas which look towards the airport apron and hangers. The functions of the training building can be read in the elevations and modern details and window proportions have been used to reinforce the notion that the building is modern and corporate in nature. Arranged over two stories the building is quite large due to the double height ground storey (for simulators) and has the main teaching rooms at first floor. The entrance area is characterised by a feature entrance porch and feature staircase which sets the tone for the building having a purposeful and restrained appearance.

- 3.6 The accommodation block is designed to be read as a complimentary building to the training building. The accommodation block is arranged over four stories and is comprised of a cellular plan form. The rhythm of the plan form is taken through into the main flank elevations. The appearance of the accommodation building follows the same detail regime as the training building.
- 3.7 Materials for both buildings include a micro rib metal cladding system with contrasting colours which follows the concept to present a modern sleek business in a high tech industry. The external windows and doors will be metal and finished in a dark grey finish. The appearance of the external materials will be generally tones of grey. The solar fins to the training building will be a feature dark blue finish.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND POLICY

4.1 There have been no relevant planning applications on the application site. The GPDO consultation for the same development as currently proposed is recorded as 17/01983/PAO.

4.2 The relevant part of the Development Plan is the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011 -2031 Part 1 and relevant saved policies from the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

4.3 Policy SLE 1 is concerned with Employment Development and notes that:
“ Employment proposals at Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington will be supported if they meet the following criteria :” (see Doc 1).

4.4 Part of the Explanatory text of the Local Plan deals with accommodating high value employment needs in the Kidlington area. It states in paragraph C.227 :

“ At Kidlington, London - Oxford Airport and Langford Lane industrial estate form an employment cluster. Due to the implementation of strategic development proposals in the Plan including East West Rail, the new station at Water Eaton and a growth in employment opportunities at Kidlington and Bicester the Council would expect demand for an increased role for the airport. The Council will work with London-Oxford Airport operators and the Civil Aviation Authority and other stakeholders to consider any proposals. Langford Lane has in recent years become a location for a wide range of commercial uses. The proposals in the Plan aim to improve the quality of the employment offer and, in doing so , establish a new gateway at this northern entrance to Kidlington.”

4.5 Policy GB3 , which is a saved policy from the 1996 Local Plan defines the airport as a “Major Developed Site “ in the Green Belt. However paragraph C.229 of the 2011 -2031 Plan states, in relation to Langford Lane and the Airport, that :

“The need for employment land to accommodate higher value employment uses in the research and development sector demonstrates

exceptional circumstances leading to the need for a small scale review of the Green Belt.”

Paragraph C.231 goes on to propose a review of the Green Belt in the vicinity of London – Oxford Airport. Indicative boundaries are shown on the proposals map. (see Doc 1)

- 4.6 The key Local Plan Policy as far as this application is concerned is Policy Kidlington 1. This states the intention to review the Green Belt boundary at :

“(A) Langford Lane/Oxford Technology Park/London – Oxford Airport”

The policy sets out a number of key site specific design and place shaping principles. These include :

- Creation of a “gateway” at the entrance to the airport
- Demonstrate good public transport links
- Well designed approach to the urban edge
- Development that respects the setting of the site
- Landscaping to enhance the setting of buildings
- High quality design and finish
- The height of buildings to reflect the scale of existing buildings

The plan accompanying this policy shows, indicatively, the area within which the revised Green Belt boundaries are to be drawn. (Doc 1). The application site is at the centre of this area.

- 4.7 Saved policy ENV6 of the 1996 Local Plan is concerned with development which might lead to an increase in noise from aircraft at the airport.

5.0 PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 The application site is within the Oxford Green Belt, albeit within the area defined as a Major Developed Site at London – Oxford Airport. It is very clear that this site will be excluded from the Green Belt when the review has been completed. The current Local Plan states that there are “exceptional circumstances” which require a review of the Green Belt. (see 4.5 above) The test for a review of Green Belt boundaries is the same as the test currently applied to “inappropriate development” in the Green Belt. If it is necessary to demonstrate “very special circumstances” therefore, that test must be met by the inclusion of a policy to review the application site and surrounding area in an adopted Local Plan. This will meet the test in the relevant part of Policy SLE 1

5.2 The key policy with regard to this application is Kidlington 1 as described in paragraph 4.6 above.

- Gateway development. The intention of the airport is to create a landmark group of buildings on this prominent site at the entrance to the airport. The airport wishes to demonstrate, by reference to the quality of the buildings, that the pilot training facility is second to none and will provide a very high quality experience, especially for overseas students.
- Public transport. The application site adjoins Langford Lane which benefits from a good bus service to Oxford and nearby settlements. A Transport Statement is submitted with this application which deals with transport matters in detail.
- Urban edge and setting. The proposed buildings will be clearly visible from Langford Lane and will present a contrast to the monolithic appearance of the hangars to the west. Once landscaping has matured the appearance of the entrance will be enhanced and will provide a balance to the older Oxford Spires development which occupies the area to the east of the airport entrance, the Boulevard.

- Landscaping to enhance setting. The site is currently open to views from Langford Lane and most trees and shrubs are along the north and north east boundaries. Some existing trees will be lost as a result of the development but the landscaping scheme which will be implemented prior to first use of the buildings will mitigate any losses.
- High quality design and finish.. The design and the choice of materials will ensure that the development is of very high quality to meet the demands of the operator.
- Height of buildings. The submitted illustrative drawings demonstrate that the proposed accommodation block is set back into the site when compared to Hangar 14 to the west, and is much less bulky and lower.
- Climate change mitigation. The proposed buildings have been designed to be very energy efficient and highly sustainable.

5.3 London - Oxford Airport has been the world leader in pilot training for many years. From its origins in 1938 as an RAFVR (Volunteer Reserve) training establishment to the present day, the airport has an 80 year history of pilot training. Pilot training has been a critical part of the airport's business, but in recent years there has been a very significant decline. The shift to locations overseas with better weather conditions all year has had an impact. Nevertheless very many airlines seek pilots who have had experience in UK airspace because of the levels of congestion and poor weather which will not be encountered elsewhere. There is a global shortage of pilots and the situation will get worse over the next few years. Many of the airlines in the Middle East and China choose to have pilots trained in the UK because the education is widely regarded as the best available.

- 5.4 In the last 12 months alone there has been a 40 -50% decrease in pilot training aircraft movements at Oxford. This is as a result of falling numbers of students and the increased use of simulators and fair weather flying overseas. This situation is not sustainable from a business point of view. The proposed new Pilot training facility will help to provide a response to the demand for new pilot training, create a modern attractive environment for students and provide an important economic boost for the airport business as a whole. (A full note on the decline in students and aircraft movements is set out in Doc. 2)
- 5.5 The very significant decline in aircraft movements means that even with additional flights as part of the proposed new training facility there will remain a significant net decrease in movements. This means that there will be no additional noise as a result of this scheme and no additional traffic movements on local roads. The majority of students attracted to the new facility are likely to be from overseas, and car ownership in this group is negligible. The proposal will not therefore, lead to an increase in traffic movements above present levels.
- 5.6 Careful consideration has been given to the selection of a suitable site for the proposed development. Details of the analysis are contained in Document 3. The selected site best meets all the criteria and in particular it is a site which is very well-contained by other development and does not therefore spread built development into open countryside. It is a site which in due course will be excluded from the Green Belt and so in planning policy terms is the best of all the available options.