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Sent by email: [rebekah.morgan@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:rebekah.morgan@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

5 June 2020

Dear Rebekah

**Re: 19/02708/OUT Outline:- Provide new employment units comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage) and D1 (Education) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, with all matters reserved except for access**

We are grateful for an opportunity to submit representations on behalf of our members. I write on behalf of the British Gliding Association (BGA) which is the National Governing Body responsible for the conduct of the sport of gliding in the UK. As the BGA's Development Officer, I am authorised by the Executive Committee to make this response on their behalf.

Further to our response of 27 March 2020, following a change in circumstances and the publication of the Cherwell District Council commissioned '*Aviation Safeguarding Review and Assessment*' by Eddowes Aviation Safety Ltd, the BGA are now better able to comment on the planning proposal.

The BGA makes use of the Sport England Significant Area for Sport (SASP) scheme. Bicester airfield is registered as a National SASP. In total there are three agencies with formal documents referring to the importance and significance of continued gliding on Bicester airfield: Historic England; Sport England; and Cherwell District Council. The BGA remains keen to support continued gliding on the site.

The current situation is that the applicant and our member club, Bicester Gliding Centre (BGC), were not able to establish a means of working together and BGC will be leaving Bicester Airfield on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This removes the possibility of conditionality, where BGC could not be seen to be speaking against their landlord for fear of affecting future lease renewal.

That said, we appreciate the LPA requirement to seek independent advice in order to make an informed decision. As a result, the view of the current airfield operators (BGC) has not been included in any of the aviation assessments associated with this planning proposal, depriving

Cherwell DC of pertinent expert information. Similarly, we note that the report of Dr Eddowes, entitled '*Aviation Safeguarding Review and Assessment*', recognises the need for further expert aviation input. For while Dr Eddowes' report is invaluable in relation to obstacle limitation surface criteria, the outcomes need to be informed by the detail of the actual flying operations at the airfield, a point that is recognised by Dr Eddowes in his report.

Similarly, while it is inevitable that the current scheme will impact aviation operations at the airfield, we accept that the nature and severity of that impact should be established by Dr Eddowes in consultation with aviators expert in the operation of the airfield.

In view of this, we have been considering ways to address the gap in knowledge and would suggest that Dr Eddowes consult with Pete Stratten (the current BGA Chief Executive Officer). Earlier in his career, whilst a serving member of the Royal Air Force, Pete held the role of Chief Flying Instructor at RAF Bicester. For four years, Pete supervised gliding and flying activities on the site. He currently operates his glider from the airfield, and has been flying gliders and light aircraft from the site for many years. Pete is not involved in the management of BGC. He can be contacted via myself or on the telephone number given in the heading of this letter.

From a broader perspective, the BGA remains concerned that the drawings submitted illustrate, albeit outside the application site, a far more wide ranging scheme that would inevitably have a significant impact on aviation and could result in the loss of the use of the airfield to many forms of aviation, including gliding. In any event, the loss of the omnidirectional take-off and landing on the airfield would most certainly appear to be completely at odds with one of the very reasons for which it was designated as a Conservation Area. For if the original layout of the site is so submerged by development that its unique omnidirectional functionality is lost, then the very character of the site is also irreparably damaged.

Should the LPA be minded to approve the planning application, we would strongly suggest that a specific condition or notation is added to any grant of planning approval stipulating that the indicative proposals illustrated on drawing number ASA-556-DR-001 Rev. P01 Draft D05 do not form part of the approval. To do otherwise would invite continued confusion.

The BGA remains keen to support processes to find solutions that could accommodate continued gliding activities on the site. The BGA would also be keen to work with other stakeholder organisations such as Sport England and Historic England to support processes to seek suitable mitigations.

Yours sincerely

**Alison Randle MSc**  
Development Officer

cc: Peter Harvey     Chairman Bicester Gliding Centre  
Dave Latimer     Chair BGA Development Committee  
Pete Stratten     BGA Chief Executive  
Richard Peats     Historic England  
Bob Sharples     RIBA MRTPI Principal Planning Manager - South Team, Sport England