The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 December 2016

by Andy Harwood CMS MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 26 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/W/16/3160289
Site off Embassy Way, Sandown Airport, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 0JP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Embassy Air Services Ltd against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
- The application Ref P/00183/16, dated 3 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 April 2016.
- The development proposed is the erection of an aircraft hangar and facilities for existing flying club including facilities for maintenance of aircraft.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon highway safety at the junction of Scotchells Brook Lane and Newport Road (A3056).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a small parcel of land to the north of the runway at Sandown Airport. It was unused and overgrown at the time of my visit. The site is close to other buildings which appear to be in use for purposes associated with the airport and also related industrial enterprises.

4. The proposed building would include a 20m x 13m hangar and a smaller area to the side measuring 8m x 8m that would include an office and lounge as well as 2 toilets. There would be a patio at the front of the office and 4 parking spaces between the front of the building and the carriageway of Embassy Way. The purpose of the proposed building would be to re-site the existing flying club which is currently located to the south of the runway.

5. The site is accessed from Newport Road via Scotchells Brook Lane and Embassy Way. There are some dwellings, a holiday park and also the main airport buildings and industrial units accessed from Scotchells Brook Lane.

6. The Council is concerned about visibility distances and the design of the junction where Scotchells Brook Lane joins Newport Road. The Council refers to 'design standards' and states that a visibility distance along the main road of 101m is necessary in both directions (the 'Y' distance). While they have not

specified which standards they have applied, I note that the Core Strategy[1] (CS) suggests "Manual for Streets"[2] (MfS1) as a further reference just below Policy DM2. This is the policy referred to within the reason for refusal.

7. The appellant commissioned a traffic count which was undertaken by the Council's 'Island Roads' section. The survey is not reproduced in the appeal documents. The reported extracts show the 5 day 24 hour average 2 way vehicle flow of 373 vehicle movements with a high of 407 movements into and out of Scotchells Brook Lane at the junction. I visited the site mid-morning on a week day and the figures provided seem a fair reflection of what I saw. I also saw a regular flow of traffic along Newport Road travelling east and west past the junction.

8. In terms of available visibility at the junction, there is a bank and hedge to the west but these features do not interrupt visibility to a significant degree and I could see up to the main bend in the road to the west. The Council measures visibility in this direction as 142m and confirms that this is adequate. I agree. The Council's concern therefore relates to the visibility to the east for drivers emerging from Scotchells Brook Lane and the view for drivers of vehicles approaching the junction travelling from the east within Newport Road.

9. To the east side of the junction a footway and bus stop layby provide an open frontage. Visibility in this direction is stated by the Council to be 90m for drivers of vehicles emerging from Scotchells Brook Lane. On approaching from the east, the bend in the road and in particular the hedge on the roadside restricts the view of the junction for drivers travelling from that direction. The Council states that this visibility distance is 66m. These distances appear to be reasonable measurements and the appellant does not dispute them.

10. It is not clear how the Council derived their suggested 'Y' distance of 101m. I note that visibility to the east to and from the junction is a little greater than the suggested stopping sight distance (SSD) of between 56m and 59m set out in Table 7.1 of MfS1 for vehicle speeds of 37mph. However, while Newport Road is subject to a speed limit of 40mph close to the junction, I have no firm evidence that prevailing vehicle speeds do not exceed 37mph.

11. Furthermore, a build-up of vehicles standing on the west bound carriageway waiting to turn into Scotchells Brook Lane would reduce the effective visibility and therefore the available stopping distance. It would only take a few standing vehicles to bring the effective visibility below that recommended in MfS1 even if one assumes speeds of around 37mph.

12. I have not been provided with much information about likely traffic generation which should be considered on the basis of current circumstances rather than how the airport may have operated in the past. Only 4 parking spaces are proposed but these would not provide much of a limitation to traffic movements as they could be used multiple times. The airport also includes other areas where parking may be possible if the proposal created further demand for people to drive to the site. The new building would replace the use of the existing club but I am not provided with a figure for the difference in floor areas. The proposal would be a modest structure in terms of what would

[1] "The Island Plan", Isle of Wight Core Strategy (including Waste and Minerals) and Development Management Development Plan Document, adopted March 2012
[2] Department for Transport

be provided for members. In isolation this may not lead to substantial numbers of additional traffic movements although that is not clear given the evidence before me. Furthermore, if the existing club building remains it could be used for alternative purposes or be retained as an additional facility. The possible economic advantages may also bring with them further traffic generation. The increase in the number of vehicles travelling to and from the site could overall be to a significant level.

13. The Council suggests that less than 18 additional vehicles as a result of the development would be acceptable. However, it is not explained how the Council derived that figure and it seems unlikely to be as clear cut as 17 additional vehicles being safe but 18 being unsafe. As it is not clear what degree of queuing is likely to occur, it is also not clear whether a right turn warning sign would sufficiently secure safety at this junction.

14. CS policy DM2 requires the provision of a safe built environment. This is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which advises at paragraph 32 that decisions should take account of whether safe access can be provided. Although there has been only 1 reported accident near the junction, there is insufficient evidence before me to demonstrate that safe access to the proposed development can be achieved. The proposal therefore conflicts with CS policy DM2 and with paragraph 32 of the Framework.

Other Matters

15. The appellant states that an earlier club building on this side of the airport had to close due to a planning decision for the nearby industrial building which impeded the sight lines and taxi area. This resulted in the club using the existing building to the south of the airport which is now proposed to be closed. I cannot review the appropriateness of the previous planning decision and have to consider the proposal on the basis of current circumstances.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andy Harwood

INSPECTOR