Report on the Airport Consultative Meeting held on 30 January 2024

This was a better attended meeting than the previous one with about eighteen representatives present.

Flight complaints

No complaints about flight activity over Kidlington were reported. However, there were still issues with fixed-wing overflying of Bladon and Wootton, and helicopter overflying of the Thrupp, Hampton Gay and Shipston area. Although the Airport has recommended flight paths designed to avoid overflying villages it only has flight control within its two nautical miles radius Air Traffic Zone.

Flight activity

Overall flight activity in 2023 was down 21% compared with 2022. This represents a settling down from a sixteen year high post-pandemic peak. A key contributor to this was a 29% reduction in flight training school activity resulting from migration of some training to fair weather locations abroad. Total movements (takeoffs and landing) were 58,463, well within the permitted 160,000 annual movements allowed under the Section 106 agreement.

The MD stated that anyone purchasing property in the area should have an understanding of the Section 106 limits and the Airport's current activity levels. He had asked the developers of local housing that they and their sales and letting agents ensure that new property occupants are fully aware of this.

Airport developments

***Airbus Helicopters*:** The new hangars on the far side of the airport are nearly finished so Airbus hopes to start its move from various locations on the Airport from July with completion by September 2024. The level of activity at this new facility will be similar to existing levels and with similar numbers of employees.

***Science Park*:** Redevelopment of the Langford Lane airport entrance zone is underway following planning permission being granted for Phase 1 in June 2023. An associated Section 106 obligation relating, in part, to pedestrian access in the vicinity of Langford Lane is nearing completion. Demolition of other structures such as the gym building has taken place in preparation for Phase 2. When fully occupied the science park might accommodate up to 400 employees. An extensive travel plan analysis and ongoing monitoring for the next five years are prerequisites for the development.

***Hangar replacements*:** Two of the older hangars are likely to come down as part of the Science Park development second phase but other hangars might have to be demolished and replaced if they fail to meet government building efficiency regulations. The cost of retrofitting buildings to meet compliance requirements can be prohibitive so the Airport is considering further options to take down and replace other buildings.

***Hangar screening*:** Spoil continues to be used to build up the bund on the north-east side of the airport. Thrupp and Shipston residents have requested screening, particularly of the Airbus Helicopters hangar and Hangar 15. The possibility of screening planting is being investigated.

***Airspace Change Proposal (ACP)*:** The Airport is preparing an ACP to add GPS guided approaches to both ends of the main runway and greater control of the airspace in the vicinity of these 'precision' approaches. By 2030 new precision approaches will be required anyway. Gaining more controlled airspace would add to safety because aircraft passing through that airspace would be compelled to talk to the Airport. It would also give the Airport more control over things such as noise whereas at the moment their area of control of aircraft activity is very limited. This application process could take at least three years because of all the stakeholder consultations required and is likely to cost several hundred thousand pounds.

Botley West Solar Farm

The Airport has engaged with landowners and the developer regarding concerns about glare, ground turbulence, bird activity and electro-magnetic interference. They are awaiting the results of the developer's technical safeguarding studies. It is understood that the plans to the south of the main runway have been amended to safeguard land for any future approach lighting installation.

Cherwell Local Plan Review 204

As with previous Local Plan consultations the Airport has requested a reassessment of the greenbelt boundary, in particular on the eastern side where there is pre-existing development, to help ensure the commercial viability of the Airport. They have supported the County Council's proposed 'Transport Hub' on the western side near the Bladon roundabout.

OUFC stadium lighting concerns

Airport representatives have met with the developers and been assured that lighting will be directed downwards, thus minimising glare. This will be reviewed now that more design details are available.

Provisional date of next meeting: 4 June 2024 in the Airport Lecture Theatre at 18:00 hrs

Further information about the ACC can be found at https://www.oxfordairport.co.uk/airport-consultative-committee/, including the useful data packs of slides prepared for each meeting. After some of us requested more prompt publishing of the minutes this is now happening. Also on the website is an interesting history of the Airport from its beginnings in the 1930s (https://www.oxfordairport.co.uk/airport_history/).

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