

# Planning Services

## COMMITTEE REPORT

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### APPLICATION DETAILS

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APPLICATION NO:	DM/14/02388/FPA
FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION	CONSTRUCTION OF HELICOPTER CENTRE COMPRISING HELICOPTER MUSEUM, WORKSHOPS, LEARNING CENTRE, EXHIBITION SPACE, CAFÉ AND GIFT SHOP
NAME OF APPLICANT	MR D MOYSE
SITE ADDRESS	LAND AT THE AIRFIELD, SHOTTON COLLIERY, DURHAM
ELECTORAL DIVISION	SHOTTON AND SOUTH HETTON
CASE OFFICER	Barry Gavillet 03000261958 dmcentraleast@durham.gov.uk

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSAL

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#### Site:

1. This application site is located at Shotton Airfield which lies outside of the settlement boundary to the north east of the settlement of Shotton. The site lies within the Electoral Division of Shotton and South Hetton and is approximately 0.67 hectares in size. The land is currently unused grassland adjacent the access road to the airfield.
2. The airfield is primarily used as a parachute centre (Peterlee Skydive Academy) by the site owners, the Sunderland Parachute Centre Ltd. The airfield is also used by private aircraft as a stopping off point in the region and as a refuelling stop.
3. To the north of the site is the landing strip and open countryside beyond; to the south east is Shotton Industrial Estate; to the south there are residential properties whilst to the west are the airfield hangars with Shotton Primary School beyond.

#### Proposal:

4. This application proposes the erection of a helicopter centre which would include a helicopter museum display area, servicing and maintenance workshops, learning resource centre, exhibition space, café and gift shop and associated external works.
5. The applicant is a registered charity which plans to provide employment opportunities and back-to-work skills training for disabled ex-service men and women

in a familiar and economically sustainable environment, opportunities for learning for schools, young people and community groups in the field of aviation history, engineering and technology and a prominent, accessible and unique visitor attraction in the East Durham area.

6. The Museum would be dedicated to the display of historic rotary wing aircraft and associated memorabilia. It will be the only Museum of its kind in the North of England. The maintenance and training workshop would provide back-to-work skills training and job opportunities for disabled veterans injured on active service. Training courses would be offered in partnership with Hartlepool College Aerospace Engineering Department. The workshop would also be a trading arm of the charity, and would operate contracts for servicing live aircraft and dismantling obsolete machines. The centre would also be a learning resource for school and community groups, dedicated to inspiring an interest in aviation history, technology and engineering in young people.
7. This application is being reported to committee as it is classed as a major development due to the site area.

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## **PLANNING HISTORY**

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8. There are numerous applications related to aviation activity across the wider airfield site although no history relating to this specific application site.

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## **PLANNING POLICY**

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### **NATIONAL POLICY:**

9. The Government has consolidated all planning policy statements, guidance notes and many circulars into a single policy statement, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), although the majority of supporting Annexes to the planning policy statements are retained. The overriding message is that new development that is sustainable should go ahead without delay. It defines the role of planning in achieving sustainable development under three topic headings – economic, social and environmental, each mutually dependant.
10. The presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF requires local planning authorities to approach development management decisions positively, utilising twelve ‘core planning principles’

The following elements are considered relevant to this proposal:

11. *Part 1* - The Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.
11. *Part 3* – Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to new development.
12. *Part 4* - Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Smarter use of technologies can reduce the need to travel. The transport system

needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. However, the Government recognises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

13. *Part 7* - The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, with good design a key aspect of sustainable development, indivisible from good planning.
14. *Part 8* - The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Developments should be safe and accessible, Local Planning Authorities should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space and community facilities. An integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and services should be adopted.
15. *Part 10* - Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
16. *Part 11* - The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils; recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant. The full text can be accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements>*

## **LOCAL PLAN POLICY:**

### District of Easington Local Plan

17. *Policy 1*- Due regard will be had to the development plan when determining planning applications. Account will be taken as to whether the proposed development accords with sustainable development principles while benefiting the community and local economy. The location, design and layout will also need to accord with saved policies 3, 7, 14-18, 22 and 35-38.
18. *Policy 3* - Development limits are defined on the proposal and the inset maps. Development outside 'settlement limits' will be regarded as development within the countryside. Such development will therefore not be approved unless allowed by other policies.

19. *Policy 35* - The design and layout of development should consider energy conservation and efficient use of energy, reflect the scale and character of adjacent buildings, provide adequate open space and have no serious adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers.
20. *Policy 36* - The design and layout of development should ensure good access and encourage alternative means of travel to the private car.

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=7534>*

## **EMERGING POLICY:**

21. The emerging County Durham Plan was submitted in April 2014 ahead of Examination in Public. In accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to: the stage of the emerging plan; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies; and, the degree of consistency of the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF. Further, the Planning Practice Guidance explains that in limited circumstances permission can be justifiably refused on prematurity grounds: when considering substantial developments that may prejudice the plan-making process and when the plan is at an advanced stage of preparation (i.e. it has been submitted). To this end, the following policies contained in the Submission Draft are considered relevant to the determination of the application:
22. Policy 1 (Sustainable Development) – States that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
23. Policy 16 (Sustainable design in the built environment) - This policy addresses the built environment and aims to ensure that all new development (e.g. extensions, alterations, changes of use of existing buildings) in County Durham achieves high standards of sustainable design. Applications for major new development must be accompanied by a full Sustainability Statement demonstrating how proposals will make a positive contribution to the character and sustainability of County Durham. A relevant supporting Sustainability Statement may be required for other development which raises particular planning or sustainability issues. In doing so applications should reference the principles of BREEAM to measure the inherent sustainability of a project.
24. Policy 18 (Local Amenity) - Planning has an important role to play in making sure that new development does not have, and is not at risk from, adverse environmental effects. Ensuring a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings is a core planning principle of the NPPF. New and existing development should not contribute to, or be put at risk from, pollution or other sources of nuisance or intrusion which could adversely affect amenity. This policy outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications to ensure that amenity is protected from a wide range of potential environmental impacts.

Policy 27 (Visitor Attractions) – In order to raise the quality of the visitor experience, the provision of new visitor attractions or the expansion of existing key attractions will be permitted.

25. Policy 39 (Landscape Character) - The Durham landscape is one of enormous contrast and diversity. From its western boundary high in the summit ridges of the North Pennines, to the limestone cliffs of the North Sea coast, remote moorlands and pastoral dales give way to fertile settled farmlands. This diversity is a product of both natural and human influences. The varied rocks, landforms and soils of the County and differences in climate between the exposed uplands and sheltered lowlands have influenced both the natural flora of the landscape and the way it has been populated, managed and exploited by its people over the centuries.
26. Policy 48 (Delivering Sustainable Transport) – All development shall deliver sustainable travel by delivering, accommodating and facilitating investment in sustainable modes of transport; providing appropriate, well designed, permeable and direct routes for all modes of transport; and ensuring that any vehicular traffic generated by new development can be safely accommodated.

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## **CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES**

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### **STATUTORY RESPONSES:**

27. Northumbrian Water has no objections to the proposals.

### **INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**

28. Environmental Health officers have no objections to the proposals subject to a scheme of sound proofing to the walls, roof and doors of the building being conditioned along with a restriction on construction hours.
29. Highways officers have no objections to the proposals The existing private access road from the end of the public highway on the nearby industrial estate is a very poor standard to serve the proposed Helicopter Centre and must be improved in line with the proposed widening and surfacing works already proposed by the applicant. I would request a suitably worded planning condition be added to any planning permission that may be granted in line with the following
30. Design and Conservation Officers have no objections to the proposals.
31. Tree Officers offer no objections to the proposals.
32. Landscape Officers have no objections to the scheme but suggest a landscaping scheme is conditioned.

### **PUBLIC RESPONSES:**

33. The application has been advertised by way of a site notice, press notice and letters to individual residents. Five letters of support have been received from the Chairman of Ford Aerospace Ltd, Sunderland Parachute Centre, the Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Ross Aviation Ltd. All of the

responses support the project and it is stated that the project would support the lives of disabled veterans and provide education and training opportunities.

### **APPLICANTS STATEMENT:**

34. The RBL survey 'Profile & Needs of the Ex-service Community 2005-2020' found that 52% of veterans under 65 have a long-term illness or disability, which is likely to impact on their employability. This project is committed to redressing the disadvantage faced by disabled veterans in the current job market, and promote equality of outcome. The Centre will provide an ideal environment to encourage highly trained individuals to direct their own transition path back to work. Training will promote independence and choice, and will foster mental wellbeing through personal achievement.
35. The building will incorporate a co-ordinated regional hub for service charities to provide after service support, which is currently lacking in the NE. SPVA, Citizens Advice and RBL have confirmed that they will offer outreach advice.
36. The enterprise will forge strong links between service and civilian communities of East Durham and the NE, in accordance with the aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The high profile of the Centre will engender respect for the commitment and sacrifice of recent and older veterans. The project aims to change attitudes towards disability, by demonstrating the valuable contribution that disabled veterans make with the right support within their communities.
37. It is expected that the Museum will bring significant benefits to the local community, and make a valuable contribution regeneration of the East Durham coalfield area, attracting other businesses, and expanding the range of visitor attractions on the Durham Heritage Coast tourist trail.
38. In recent years, schools have had their budgets for extra-mural visits drastically cut, and the Museum will provide an affordable attraction 'on the doorstep', offering a valuable learning resource for the young people of our region.

*The above represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file which can be viewed at*

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## **PLANNING CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT**

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39. Local planning authorities (LPA's) must determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. If the Development Plan contains material policies or proposals and there are no other material considerations, the application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan. Where there are other material considerations, the Development Plan should be the starting point, and other material considerations should be taken into account in reaching a decision.
40. In this instance the main relevant considerations are the principle of the development, impact on the surrounding area and residential amenity and highways issues.

### **Principle of the development**

41. This proposal is for the erection of a helicopter centre which would include a helicopter museum display area, servicing and maintenance workshops, learning resource centre, exhibition space, café and gift shop and associated external works. The location of the proposed development is on an existing airfield, used mainly as a parachute centre with occasional use by private aircraft for re-fuelling. It is considered that the proposed use would be complimentary to the existing use and is considered acceptable in this location.
42. In terms of planning policy, the proposals should be assessed against the saved policies in the District of Easington Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, the emerging County Durham Plan should also be considered but given little weight.
43. In terms of the Local Plan, saved policy 1 states that account will be taken as to whether the proposed development accords with sustainable development principles while benefiting the community and local economy. Policy 35 states that the design and layout of development should consider energy conservation and efficient use of energy, reflect the scale and character of adjacent buildings, provide adequate open space and have no serious adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers whilst Policy 36 - The design and layout of development should ensure good access and encourage alternative means of travel to the private car. It is considered that the proposals are wholly in accordance with these saved Local Plan Policies.
44. Policy 3 of the District of Easington Local Plan states that development outside 'settlement limits' will be regarded as development within the countryside and such development will therefore not be approved unless allowed by other policies. Given that the wider site already operates as an aviation centre outside of the settlement limits, it is not considered that the proposals would be contrary to the aims of this policy.
45. The proposals are also considered to be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and in particular part 3 which states that decisions should support sustainable tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural areas, communities and visitors. Part 1 also advises that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity and part 8 advises that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.
46. In terms of the emerging County Durham Plan policy 27 is most relevant, this states that in order to raise the quality of the visitor experience, the provision of new visitor attractions or the expansion of existing key attractions will be permitted. The proposals are considered to accord with this draft policy.
47. Overall it is considered that the proposals are wholly in accordance with saved City of Durham Local Plan policies, the National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging County Durham Plan and therefore the principle of development is accepted.

### **Impact on the surrounding area and residential amenity**

48. The Museum, workshop and learning resource centre would all be located at ground floor level whilst a narrow mezzanine floor above the Museum would provide additional viewing areas for the display and an external viewing platform would offer views across the airfield. The learning resource centre would be at the front of the building adjacent to the main public entrance whilst the reception area will include an exhibition space for temporary displays and accommodate a small retail area for sale of merchandise.
49. The public car park would be located to the west of the building adjacent to the Skydive Academy and helicopters would be brought into the workshop and Museum via a separate service entrance to the East of the building, and lifted into the building using a portable gantry.
50. The Museum and workshop would be housed in a light industrial type of unit measuring 10.7 metres high and 45 metres long, finished in sheet cladding whilst windows at high level would be used to provide natural light to the display and working area. The resource centre and ancillary accommodation would be in a contrasting rendered finish.
51. Access for helicopters to the Museum and workshop would be through 5 metre high steel roller shutter doors. It is considered that all external materials and colours should be conditioned should planning permission be granted.
52. Design and Conservation Officers have been consulted on the proposals and have no objections to the proposals. It is understood that there are functional constraints due to the proposed use of the building and given the location of the proposed development is on an existing airfield and adjacent to an industrial estate it is considered that the scale and design of the building is acceptable. In addition to this, given the distance to nearest residential properties, the nearest of which is approximately 50 metres from the site, it is not considered that there would be any significant adverse impact on amenity, although sound proofing measures should be conditioned to ensure any noise from the proposed workshop is kept to a minimum. In light of the above it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with saved policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan and parts 7 and 11 of the NPPF.

## **Highways Issues**

53. Access to the site would be of an existing road to the south east corner of the site which runs through the adjacent industrial estate. Highways officers have been consulted and have advised that they have no objections to the proposals. Both the level of parking provision and means of access are considered to be acceptable. It has been noted however that the existing private access road from the end of the public highway on the nearby industrial estate is a very poor standard to serve the proposed Helicopter Centre. Therefore a condition should be required with requires widening and improvements to the road surfacing before the development is brought into use. Subject to this condition it is considered that the proposals would be acceptable from a highways point of view in accordance with saved policies 1 and 36 of the District of Easington Local Plan and part 4 of the NPPF.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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70. In summary, officers consider that this proposal is wholly in accordance with saved policies from the District of Easington Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging County Durham Plan. The proposal would seek to address the disadvantage faced by disabled veterans in the current job market and would create a valuable learning resource for school and community groups. The proposals would also contribute toward tourism facilities in the area and would bring about regeneration benefits and on this basis the application is recommended for approval.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

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That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

### **Conditions:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason:* Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved plans and specifications contained within:

Elevations 2 H17 L(2-)03, Mezzanine Level Plan H17 L(20)04, Roof Plan H17 L(9-)03, Ground Floor Plan H17 L(2-)01, Outline Site Plan H17 L(9-)02, Sections and Elevations 1 H17 L(2-)02

*Reason:* To meet the objectives of saved Policies 1, 35 and 36 of the Easington District Local Plan and parts 1 and 4 of the NPPF.

3. Development shall not commence until a scheme for the disposal of surface and foul water from the development hereby approved has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall take place in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason:* To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site and in accordance with saved Policy 1 of the Easington District Local Plan and part 10 of the NPPF.

4. Notwithstanding any details of materials submitted with the application no development shall commence until samples of the external walling and roofing materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason:* In the interests of the appearance of the area and to comply with saved policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan and part 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. No development shall commence until a landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall identify

those trees/hedges/shrubs scheduled for retention and removal; shall provide details of new and replacement trees/hedges/shrubs; detail works to existing trees; and provide details of protective measures during construction period. The works agreed to shall be carried out within the first planting season following completion of development of the site and shall thereafter be maintained for a period of 5 yrs following planting. Any trees or plants which die, fail to flourish or are removed within a period of 5 years from the substantial completion of the development shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

*Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to comply with saved Policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan.*

6. Development shall not commence until a widening and resurfacing scheme for the access road up to the limits of the public highway on Shotton Colliery Industrial Estate is submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme must be completed prior to the Helicopter Centre opening to the general public and maintained in perpetuity.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with saved Policies 1 and 36 of the District of Easington Local Plan and part 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

7. Notwithstanding any information submitted, development shall not commence until a scheme demonstrating how CO2 reduction and energy efficiency measures will be incorporated into the approved development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be implemented and retained in accordance with the approved scheme thereafter.

*Reason: In order to secure a sustainable form of development in accordance with part 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

8. No development shall take place until a scheme of sound proofing showing measures to deal with sound insulation of walls, roof and doors has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any mitigation required shall be implemented prior to any occupation of the development and shall be permanently retained thereafter.

*Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with the aims of Policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan and part 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

9. No construction/demolition activities, including the use of plant, equipment and deliveries, which are likely to give rise to disturbance to local residents should take place before 0800 hours and continue after 1800 hours Monday to Friday, or commence before 0800 hours and continue after 1300 hours on Saturday. No works should be carried out on a Sunday or Bank Holiday.

*Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with the aims of Policies 1 and 35 of the District of Easington Local Plan.*

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## **STATEMENT OF PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

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. In dealing with the application, the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising during the application process. The decision has been made in compliance with the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework to promote the delivery of sustainable development.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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- Submitted Application Forms and Plans.
- Design and Access Statement
- District of Easington Local Plan 2001
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Emerging County Durham Plan
- Consultation Responses





Planning Services

Proposed **CONSTRUCTION OF HELICOPTER CENTRE COMPRISING HELICOPTER MUSEUM, WORKSHOPS, LEARNING CENTRE, EXHIBITION SPACE, CAFÉ AND GIFT SHOP.**

**THE AIRFIELD, SHOTTON COLLIERY, DURHAM**

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Comments

Date **DECEMBER 2014**