

**From:** Roy Warren <Roy.Warren@sportengland.org>  
**Sent:** 13 July 2018 15:01  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** App Ref: 6/2018/1635/OUTLINE - Historic De Havilland Grass Runway, Ellenbrook Fields, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, Herts (Sport England Ref: PA/18/E/WH/49382)

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For the attention of Mr. Mark Peacock

Dear Mr. Peacock

**App Ref: 6/2018/1635/OUTLINE - Historic De Havilland Grass Runway, Ellenbrook Fields, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, Herts (Sport England Ref: PA/18/E/WH/49382)**

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

### **Sport England – Non Statutory Role and Policy**

The Government, within their Planning Practice Guidance (Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Section) advises Local Planning Authorities to consult Sport England on a wide range of applications. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space> including developments which create opportunities for sport.

Sport England assesses this type of application in line with its planning objectives and with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Sport England's planning objectives are to PROTECT existing facilities, ENHANCE the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities, and to PROVIDE new facilities to meet demand. Further information on Sport England's planning objectives can be found here <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/aims-and-objectives/>.

### **The Proposal and Assessment against Sport England's Objectives and the NPPF**

The proposal involves an outline application for a relocated grass runway and supporting ancillary facilities on the site of the original De Havilland Grass Runway near Hatfield Business Park. The background to the proposal is set out in the Planning, Design, Access and Aviation Statement, but in a summary the scheme is being proposed as an alternative to relocating the runway at nearby Panshanger Aerodrome. Following the proposed allocation (allocation SDS1 (WGC4)) of the existing Panshanger Aerodrome in the emerging Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Submission (2017) for residential, provision was made in the related local plan site policy (SP18) for the masterplan for the site to allow the opportunity for a realigned grass runway on land to the north of the Green Belt. This policy is currently being considered through the local plan examination and the principle of maintaining the airfield was considered at the stage 3 hearings in February 2018. At the hearing, the Inspector asked whether there were alternative sites for relocating the airfield as an alternative to realigning the runway at Panshanger given the difficulties in delivering a feasible airfield at Panshanger without compromising the number of dwellings that could be accommodated in the residential allocation. The current planning application is intended to present a potential alternative to realigning the runway at Panshanger in the event that is determined through the local plan process that it will not be possible to maintain the opportunity for delivering a feasible realigned runway. The delivery of a replacement airfield at the De Havilland Grass Runway site would be dependent on funding being secured from any future residential development at Panshanger Aerodrome and therefore would be dependent on the residential development being permitted and progressing and an appropriate financial contribution and

a delivery mechanism being secured as part of any outline planning permission for the residential development. In this regard, a planning application (6/2018/0873/OUTLINE) has recently been submitted for outline planning permission for a residential led mixed use development on the area allocated for residential at Panshanger. The residential planning application will have to be determined in accordance with policy SP18 incorporating any amendments recommended by the Inspector. In the event that the policy makes provision for the development to provide a replacement runway and supporting facilities off-site in the local area as an alternative to realigning the runway at Panshanger, then subject to planning permission being granted and other matters affecting delivery being addressed, the De Havilland Grass Runway site proposal could represent a means of meeting a policy requirement to replace the displaced airfield facilities at Panshanger. The same would apply to the Cromer Hyde site in Welwyn Garden City which is currently the subject of another outline planning application for a new grass runway and would be an alternative off-site option.

### *Principle of the Development*

Sport England's position on the importance of Panshanger Aerodrome for air sports, particularly light aircraft flying, is set out in detail in our representation on the local plan submission document which I attach for information. I also attach a recent further submission made jointly by the General Aviation Awareness Council and Sport England which recognises that an alternative airfield in the vicinity of Panshanger may be an option in principle in the event that a realigned runway cannot be provided on the Panshanger site. In summary, Panshanger Aerodrome is considered to be of strategic importance for air sports and its retention or replacement has been sought due to the scarcity of general aviation airfields in the region suitable for air sports and the economic, community and environmental role that an operational airfield can play. In particular, following a review of the airfield by the Light Aircraft Association (the recognised governing body for light aircraft), Sport England considers that the site is of at least regional importance for air sports. As set out in the local plan representations, the retention or replacement of the airfield would be considered to accord with the NPPF in its current form, particularly paragraphs 33, 70 and 74.

As the planning application is intended to provide an option for replacing the airfield in the event that the runway cannot be feasibly realigned at Panshanger, the proposal would be considered to accord with the PROTECT objective outlined above and would in principle accord with the NPPF in relation to providing a replacement sports facility. I can therefore confirm that Sport England welcomes the planning application and is supportive in principle of it.

### *Design and Layout*

As the planning application is in outline with limited supporting detail provided, it is not possible at this stage to make informed comments on the design and layout of the proposals. If planning permission is forthcoming, Sport England would expect a reserved matters scheme to be supported by a detailed feasibility study which informs and justifies the proposed design and layout of the proposed runway and supporting infrastructure in detail as well as addressing delivery considerations such as meeting the requirements of a planning permission, funding, land ownership and delivery mechanisms. The feasibility study should also show how a detailed scheme will be compliant with the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements in relation to the licensing of aerodromes set out in their CAP 168 (Licensing of Aerodromes) <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=11&catid=1&id=6114&mode=detail&pagetype=65> and CAP 793 (Safe Operating Practices at Unlicensed Aerodromes) <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=11&mode=detail&id=4141> guidance.

If planning permission is forthcoming, it is therefore requested that a planning condition is imposed requiring a detailed airfield feasibility study to be submitted and approved as part of the reserved matters scheme to allow an informed assessment to be made of the acceptability of the detailed proposals. The Council would also be expected to impose conditions relating to the detailed design and layout of the ancillary hangar and clubhouse buildings, car parking, vehicular access etc.

As indicated above, to ensure deliverability of a new airfield (if permitted), its delivery would need to be

secured through any planning permission for residential on the existing Panshanger Aerodrome site e.g. through section 106 agreement requirements as well as a suitable arrangement with the landowner of the De Havilland Runway site being secured.

It is noted from the planning application documents that reference has been made to the proposed airfield being transferred to an operator through Sport England (or the Council) via a Community Asset Transfer mechanism as an option for delivering the scheme. While not relevant to the determination of the planning application, I would advise that this option has not been discussed or agreed with Sport England. While Sport England has published a Community Asset Transfer Toolkit <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/community-asset-transfer/> to provide guidance for community bodies considering asset transfer and can signpost to other bodies that can provide advice, it is not part of our remit to be involved directly in the asset transfer process. Community asset transfer usually involves transfer from a local public body such as district or parish/town council to a community body such as a sports club.

The absence of an objection to this application in the context of the Town and Country Planning Acts, does not in any way commit Sport England or any National Governing Body of Sport to support any related funding application

If you would like any further information or advice please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

**Roy Warren**

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