

APPENDIX A

JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE 8TH OCTOBER 2010

Application subject to public speaking.

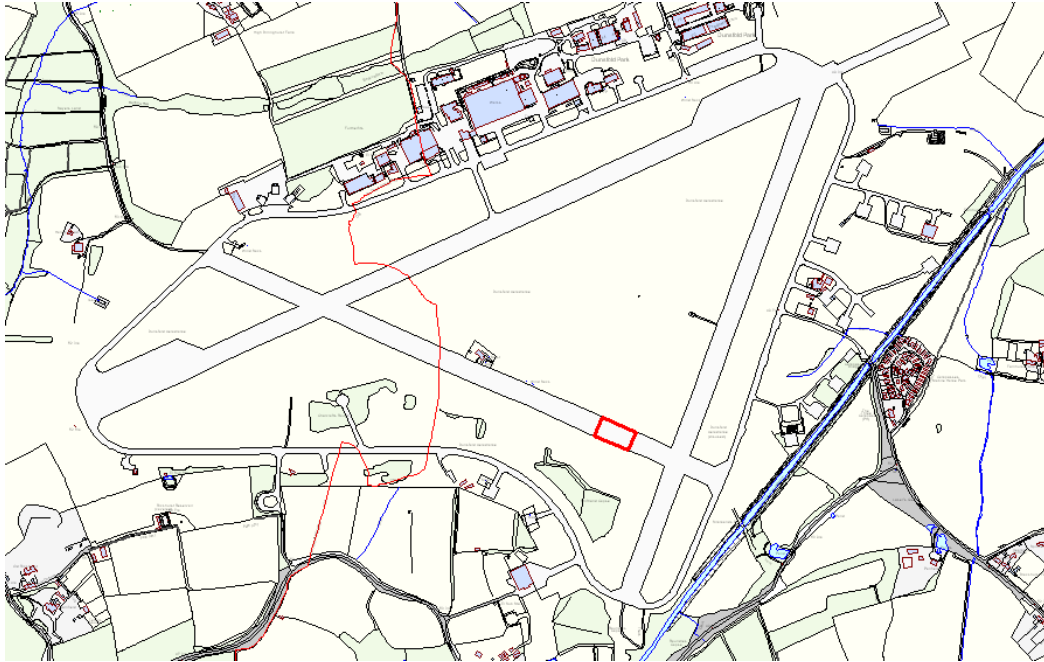
Background Papers

Background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report are listed under the "Representations" heading for each planning application presented, or may be individually identified under a heading "Background Papers".

The implications for crime, disorder and community safety have been appraised in the following applications but it is not considered that any consideration of that type arises unless it is specifically referred to in a particular report.

WA/2010/0994 Dunsfold Park Ltd 11/06/2010	<u>Variation under Section 73A of Condition 2 of WA/2007/0657 to allow Surrey Air Ambulance helicopter to attend emergencies on 24 hour basis at Land At Dunsfold Park, Stovolds Hill, Cranleigh GU8 4BS</u>
Public Notice Grid Reference:	Was Public Notice required and posted: Yes E: 502996 N: 136914
Parish : Ward : Case Officer:	Alfold Alfold, Cranleigh Rural and Ellens Green Mr T Lipscomb
8 Week Expiry Date	06/08/2010
Neighbour Notification Expiry Date	23/07/2010
Neighbour Notification Amended/Additional Expiry Date	
RECOMMENDATION	That permission be GRANTED

Location or Layout Plan



Site Description

The application site is the whole of the former Dunsfold aerodrome and is located in a rural area between Godalming and Cranleigh. This part of the Borough is low-lying, relatively level and a mixture of farmland, woodlands, isolated dwellings and small settlements. The Surrey Hills AONB lies to the north.

Dunsfold Park itself consists of:

- the open airfield with its runways, perimeter track and surrounding grassed areas;
- a large complex of buildings to the north;
- a cluster of smaller buildings and hard standing areas to the east;
- the remainder that has a more rural character with grassed areas, copses of trees, woodlands and occasional buildings and hardstanding areas.

The main access to the aerodrome and buildings to and from the highway network is via Stovolds Hill that leads to the B2130 and the A281. There is a second access via the Compass Gate entrance to the buildings on the south eastern side of the site. There are a number of footpaths running through the adjoining rural areas but none cross the aerodrome.

The aerodrome is registered with the International Civil Aviation organisation, and is colloquially referred to as "Dunsfold Aerodrome". The activities that may take place on the site are constrained by the relevant planning permissions. For the avoidance of doubt only aviation activities that are ancillary to the principal uses may take place, or those which benefit from a specific planning permission.

Dunsfold aerodrome was established in WWII as a Canadian airfield. Planning permission was given in 1958 for the aerodrome to be used for the erection, repair and flight testing of aircraft (HM/R9831).

This permission was refined in 1980, 1996 and 1998 by placing it on a limited timescale, restricting the number of employees and traffic movements to a maximum of 2,723 daily movements. Around 2000, BAE Systems, the main occupier of the site for many years, vacated the site and it was subsequently sold to Dunsfold Park Limited in 2002.

Temporary permission was given in 2003 to change the use of the land and buildings to B1, B2 & B8 including outdoor storage together with air flight capability ancillary to those uses (WA/2002/2046). This permission, and various conditions, was varied in 2005 to extend it to 2010 (WA/2004/0880) and again under WA/2007/0372 to extend it to 2018.

The site comprises an area of runway towards the southern part of the site. The site area is approximately 0.4 hectares.

Proposal

The proposal is for a variation of condition 2 of planning permission WA/2007/0657, to allow 24 hour helicopter flights for Surrey Air Ambulance emergency service. The existing condition reads as follows:

“Condition

There shall not be:

- a) any flying of aircraft except between the hours of 07.30 and 19.30 on any day during the period 1st October to 31st March inclusive and between the hours 07.30 to 20.30 on any day during the period 1st April to 30th September inclusive;
- b) any ground running of aircraft engines apart from essential testing preliminary to flight take-off except between the hours of 07.30 and 19.30 on any day during the period 1st October to 31st March inclusive and between the hours 07.30 to 20.30 on any day during the period 1st April to 30th September inclusive.

Reason

In order to avoid disturbance to local residents by the flying or testing of aircraft during the hours of sleep.”

The current application proposes to delete paragraph a) from the condition. The effect of that would be to allow flying of the Air Ambulance over a 24 hour period, 7 days a week. As an application under Section 73A, the proposal is effectively for the whole development again but with the intention of varying one single condition. Therefore the proposal is also for the operational development originally applied for:

Erection of a temporary hangar and portacabin with 8 car parking spaces on the disused Western runway at Dunsfold. It is intended that the site and buildings would be used by a helicopter emergency medical service.

The application is for new buildings and not for a change of use. The works would co-exist with other existing planning permissions on the site.

Works to the site will include:

- A 256 sq.m hangar with a total height of 8m
- A 115 sq.m portacabin with a height of 2.9m
- Helicopter pad
- 8 car parking spaces

The supporting documentation states that the air ambulance operation would operate on a 24-hour basis, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. An average of 6 staff would be employed at the site. It is proposed to use a MD Explorer helicopter. Aircraft movements would be influenced by demand. The best estimate for an increase in movements over the consented scheme is 2 – 4 per night (total some 8-10 over 24 hour period).

The hangar would continue to be used for the storage of the helicopter when not in use and be used for routine maintenance. The portacabin would as at present be used for office accommodation and would house the aircrew, paramedics and support staff.

The application is for a temporary period to 2018 in order to remain consistent with other recent applications for temporary use at Dunsfold Park and, according to the application documents, reflects the continued delay in preparation of the planning regime at Dunsfold Park.



Air Ambulance (MD-902 Explorer)

Relevant Planning History

Dunsfold Aerodrome was established in WWII as a Canadian airfield.

Planning permission was given in 1958 for the aerodrome to be used for the erection, repair and flight testing of aircraft (HM/R9831).

This permission was refined in 1980 by placing it on a limited timescale (to yr 2000) and restricting the number of employees (WA80/0697). The permission was varied in 1996 to allow the production, repair and flight testing of aircraft until 2020 (WA96/1334). It was again refined in 1998 to allow the use to continue on a permanent basis (WA/1999/1913) and again in 2000 to allow use of the site by organisations other than BAe (WA/1999/1913 to 1925).

Around 2000 BAE Systems plc, the main occupier of the site for many years, vacated the site and a 999 year lease was subsequently granted to Dunsfold Park Limited in 2002. A number of the suite of planning permissions granted in 2000 require Dunsfold Park remain in single occupation. Aircraft movements to and from the site are restricted under the 2000 permanent permissions to those connected with the occupiers, employees or business.

Temporary permission was given in 2003 to change the use of the land and buildings to B1, B2 & B8 including outdoor storage together with air flight capability ancillary to those uses (WA/2002/2046).

This permission was varied in 2005 to extend it to 2010. Air related movements are limited to 5000/annum and must relate to either i) the assembly, repair or flight testing of aircraft, ii) cargo handling in relation to the aircraft assembly and repair work at Dunsfold Park and iii) movement of staff and customers associated with companies at Dunsfold Park (WA/2004/0880).

In 2005 permission was granted on an enforcement appeal for use of the disused western runway for outdoor storage (EN/2004/5).

Permission was granted under WA/2007/0372 for the change of use of buildings and land for B1, B2 and B8 uses for a temporary period to 20th April 2018, to co-exist with extant, temporary and permanent permissions.

The original application for the use of part of the runway for the Surrey Air Ambulance was granted under WA/2007/0657.

Permission was refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal for a new settlement of 2,601 dwellings under WA/2008/0788.

Air flight capability of Dunsfold Park is currently controlled by the conditions on Planning Permission WA/2004/1952:

Condition No.	Description
1	Development granted for a temporary period only expiring 30 th April 2010
2	Use of the site shall be limited to office, R&D, light and general industry and storage uses, including use in connection with the assembly, repair and flight testing of aircraft and shall not be used for any other purpose
8	No aircraft shall be flown to or from the site except by employees of the firms operating at the site and customers of companies associated with Dunsfold Park.
9	Except with the prior written approval of the LPA, the total number of aircraft movements (including helicopter movements) operating to and from the site shall not exceed 5000 in any calendar year. Within this overall total of 5000 movements the number of aircraft movements consisting of the arrival and departure of aircraft for assembly, repair or flight testing of aircraft and the arrival or departure of aircraft with equipment and parts in connection with aircraft assembly and repair work at Dunsfold Park shall not exceed 2500 movements annually. Within the overall total of 5000 movements. The number of movements associated with the movement of staff, executives and customers of companies associated with Dunsfold Park shall not exceed 2500

	movements annually. For the purposes of this permission, an aircraft (or helicopter) movement shall include a take-off or landing.
10	No aircraft exceeding an unladen weight of 70 metric tonnes shall land at or take-off from the premises.
12	Without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority, there shall not except in the case of an emergency be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Any flying of aircraft except between the hours of 07:30 to 19:30 during the period 1 October to 31 March inclusive and between the hours of 7:30 to 20:30 during the period 1st April to 30th September inclusive (b) Any flying of aircraft between 15:00 hours on Saturdays and 07:30 on Mondays; and (c) Any ground running aircraft engines, apart from essential testing preliminary to flight take-off, between the hours of 18:30 and 07:30 nor between 15:00 hours on Saturdays and 7:30 on Mondays.

Table of Aviation related planning history for Dunsfold Park

HM/R9831	Use of Aerodrome for the erection, repair and flight testing of aircraft by more than 650 personnel	Full Permission 13/06/1958
WA80/0697	Continued use of aerodrome for the erection, repair and flight testing of aircraft up to 30 th April 2000 numbers of employees not more than 850 by 1982 and 1000 by 1985	Full Permission 27/10/1980
WA/1996/1334	Variation of Condition 1 of WA80/0697 to allow for the production, repair and flight testing of aircraft until 30 th April 2020.	Full Permission 27/03/1997
WA/1998/1013	Removal of condition 1 on WA80/0697 to allow the use of Dunsfold Aerodrome for the production, repair and upgrading of aircraft on a permanent basis	Full Permission 13/11/1998
WA/1999/1913 & WA/1999/1914 (Duplicates)	Non compliance with Condition 1 of WA/98/1013 and condition 2 of WA/80/0697 (restrictive user condition) to allow use by persons other than BAe and to waive the requirement to remove all buildings and installations and returning the	Full Permission 25/04/2000

	land to agriculture use.	
WA/1999/1915 & WA/1999/1916 (Duplicates)	Non compliance with Condition 2 of WA/98/1013 and condition 3 of WA/80/0697 to allow use of the site by organisations/persons/firms other than British Aerospace	Full Permission 25/04/2000
WA/1999/1924 & WA/1999/1925 (Duplicates)	Removal of Condition 6 of WA/1998/1013 and Condition 7 of WA80/0697. Condition restricts use of site to manufacturing processes in connection with aircraft by British Aerospace.	Full Permission 25/04/2000
WA/2002/2046	Change of use of land and buildings at Dunsfold Aerodrome to B1(office/light industrial), B2(general industrial), B8 (warehouse distribution) including 2.22ha of outdoor storage and ancillary uses together with air flight capability ancillary to those uses for a temporary period of 2 years	Full Permission 17/04/2003
WA/2004/0880	Variation or removal of conditions 1,2,3,5,8,11,14,15,19,20 and 21 of WA/2002/2046	Full Permission 7/01/2005
WA/2007/0372 & WA/2007/0373 (Duplicates)	Change of use of buildings and land at Dunsfold Park for a temporary period to 30 th April 2018, to co-exist with extant temporary and permanent permissions	Full Permission 11/03/2008
WA/2007/0656 & WA/2007/0657 (Duplicates)	Erection of a hangar building, siting of a demountable building and parking for a temporary period to provide facilities for an emergency air ambulance service.	Full Permission 18/05/2007

Planning Policy Constraints

Countryside beyond Green Belt – outside any defined settlement
 SPAD
 Potentially contaminated land

Development Plan Policies and Proposals

Policies D1, D3, D4, C2, CF3, IC2, M1, M2 and M14 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002

Consultations and Town/Parish Council Comments

Hascombe Parish Council:

The request by Dunsfold Park to allow Surrey Air Ambulance to operate emergency flights on a 24 hour basis is a reasonable response due to the occurrence of emergencies at night particularly as the nearest specialist Level 1 Trauma hospitals are in London or Southampton.

The present day time operation has been accepted as being for the public benefit even though the helicopter does make a considerably louder noise than aircraft when it passes over. Lack of complaints does not mean that the noise is not thought to be a nuisance by residents of Hascombe.

Your Environmental Health Department's note says that impact on residents from noise should be considered at this stage as there is no recourse available to Waverley BC after a planning application involving noise generated from air ambulance movements has been considered. We agree that the impact of noise at night is greater and we make the obvious point that sleep is likely to be disturbed by the night flights.

We have been reliably informed that all other HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) air ambulances in the South of England only work in daylight hours. We are concerned that the actual night time use may be greater than the 2 to 4 movements mentioned in the supporting paper written by Vail Williams since the coverage is likely to include Kent and Sussex. Thus flights will be over Cranleigh as well as in other directions. Incidentally this paper incorrectly states in 7.01 that Dunsfold Park is the only airbase in Surrey, Sussex and Kent. Surrey Air Ambulance is a fund set up within and is part of Kent Air Ambulance (KAA). KAA operates a day time only HEMS service out of Marden in Kent covering Kent and East Sussex.

We are also concerned that the allowance of night time emergency air ambulance flights should not lead to other permission being given at Dunsfold Park for any flights or any activities at night which would lead on to more disturbance for residents through noise including road traffic.

If Waverley Borough Council is minded to approve the application for night flights we suggest that it considers the possibility of placing conditions:

- a) on the noise levels allowed to be emitted by the helicopters to ensure that only the quietest types of helicopter are used.
- b) To insist that take off and landing are done vertically over the helicopter base until cruising height has been reached in order to minimise noise to neighbouring properties.
- c) To limit flights to emergencies in Surrey and Sussex in order to prevent flights from Dunsfold being increased to cover other counties.
- d) To make it clear that permission for night flying is limited solely to the use of helicopters by the Air Ambulance HEMS service.
- e) To make the permission only for a short time of say two years which reflects the fact that Kent/Surrey Air Ambulance will initially be carrying out night flights as a trial and in order to enable an evaluation to be made of the impact of the flights on residents including those living in Hascombe.

Alfold Parish Council:

Alfold Parish Council recognise they have a delicate decision to make in respect of this application.

Whilst the Council acknowledge the Air Ambulance service provides a valuable service, they have received an unprecedented response from residents who, whilst wishing to support the service, are concerned as to the intrusion and disturbance which will be inevitable from night flying.

The Application merits proper consideration and the Council has to say the evidence in support of the application lacks detail and the stated support is largely not local.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council, in view of the special and unique aspect of the Air Ambulance service, will not oppose the application.

The Council would ask that, if possible, any permission requires the service to use the flying route and/or flying technique which causes the least disturbance to nearby residential areas and be limited initially to a trial period to assess the impact on the surrounding area.

Finally, the Council wish to record that they would strongly object to the principle of further night flying from Dunsfold or intensification of air traffic.

Dunsfold Parish Council:

I write to provide my Council's comments on the Application. The rationale to extend the 2007 daytime permission to night-flying is understandable given the unpredictability of the occurrence of medical emergencies. Also understood is your Council's obligation to balance this rationale with the likely environmental impact on residents which is helpfully set out in the Note ("the Note") from the Waverley's Environmental Health Department dated 7th July.

The following comments are intended to be helpful in this balancing process, and also raise questions for consideration.

1. The first point to note is that this application concerns an emergency medical service whose value is clearly appreciated.
2. The Note rightly refers to the negative noise impact for local residents from helicopter flights and the importance of considering now the likely environmental impact of the proposed night time flying, which as the Note says is likely to be more significant than daytime flying. If such night time helicopter flying is to be allowed as an exception it is important for your Council to make clear that such relaxation does not create a precedent and cannot be used to justify other night time flying or noisy activity.
3. The Application states at paragraph 7.02: "The use has operated since 2007 without complaint". If residents have accepted the noise impact of daytime flying in the public interest it is not appropriate or relevant to use

any absence of complaint about daytime flying to support the extension to night time flying.

4. Paragraph 7.01 of the application says that the Surrey Air Ambulance service from Dunsfold “is only the air ambulance base in Surrey, Sussex and Kent and flights from Dunsfold cover these three counties”. This does not appear to be correct but the following factors and implication for residents need to be verified:-
 - a. Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance is understood to be a subsidiary of the Kent Air Ambulance Trust, and all their air ambulances are administered by that trust. Dunsfold is not their only base.
 - b. Kent Air Ambulance is understood to have started night flying from Marden in April 2008, the service being a collaboration between the Marden air ambulance and Sussex Police.
 - c. Will that service be continued?
 - d. What night time flying is currently and prospectively undertaken by Kent and Sussex Air Ambulance?
 - e. Is it the case (as paragraph 7.01 implies) that all night flying for the three counties is to be located at Dunsfold?
 - f. Whether or not that is so, how realistic is the estimate of 2-4 flights per night, or the possibility from experience that there are unlikely to be flights after 1.30am?
 - g. What is the proposed number and type of helicopters proposed to be used, and their related noise profiles?
 - h. Can conditions be agreed in relation to the direction of away and return movements to avoid direct overflight of nearby residents’ dwellings?
5. Night flying of helicopters will be an exceptional permission for this site but the applicable temporary period for the overall application is up to 2018. It is for consideration by your Council whether a variation of Condition 2 should be made subject to a shorter temporary period, with renewal to be subject to evaluation of the experience, given the following factors:-
 - a. The permission for night flying of helicopters is exceptional for this site;
 - b. Its impact on residents’ amenity is unpredictable given the absence of limit on the number of flights;
 - c. As the Note says, once permission is given “no recourse is available to the Council” in relation to noise generated since Environmental Health legislation does not “cover noise from aviation sources”;
 - d. The 2018 date is no longer justifiable or relevant to Waverley’s planning process given the Government’s abolition of any regional planning impact on that process.

WBC Environmental Health Service:

1. Identified Environmental Services issues relevant to Planning:

Noise.
2. Conclusion:

Environmental Health legislation does not cover noise from aviation sources. For this reason there is no recourse available to the Council after a planning application involving noise generated from the air ambulance movements has been considered. For this reason it is important to consider the likely environmental impact at this stage.

The noise of the air ambulance does result in a negative environmental impact to local residents, particularly when the helicopter is on the ground undergoing start-up, safety checks and run-down operations. During these times the engine and rotor blade noise is clearly audible at neighbouring residential properties during the day. The impact at night is likely to be more significant.

There is also concern that the noise from the additional flight movements will result in an increase in the accumulative noise impact generated by activities based at Dunsfold Park.

Environment Agency:

These applications are deemed to either have a low environmental risk or relate to conditions that were not issued by the Environment Agency. Unfortunately, due to workload prioritisation we are unable to make an individual response to these applications at this time.

Representations

5 letters/emails of objection have been received, objecting on the following grounds:

- Noise disturbance, especially due to low background noise levels.
- Disturbance from exhaust fumes.
- Precedents that would allow 24hr flying in the future would be disastrous.
- Cranleigh Freight Service already runs 24hrs a day and causes disturbance to residents.
- No other air ambulance services in the near vicinity operate 24hrs a day.
- Concerns that flights would cover not only Surrey and Sussex but also Kent.
- It could be argued that 24hr operation is not cost effective in today's economic climate.
- Original application was granted on the basis of day time flights only, this should not be changed.
- WBC must consider all the activities of the entire C2 area of Dunsfold Park and establish an overall plan for maintaining the original status of the site.
- A review of the present strategic plan for the period ending 2010 makes no mention of increasing operations to a 24 hour basis but only to keep the helicopter online for a maximum number of daylight hours. However, later in the plan there is mention of a need to deploy larger aircraft to accommodate larger payloads. Will such an aircraft be noisier and acceptable?
- The applicant has not shown conclusively the demand for or necessity for such an operation above traditional services at night.

- WBC must be encouraged to manage the planning of this site as a whole and not piecemeal.
- The consequences of sleep deprivation and any resulting reaction from affected residents in the area.
- Concerns that emergency night flights would include the transportation of organs, as indicated in the Five Year Strategic Plan.
- There is no way of controlling the noise level, as indicated by the Environmental Health department.
- There may be alternatives available – the London Air Ambulance uses specially equipped rapid response cars to cover all-after dark missions.
- Any restrictive planning conditions would provide little protection. Any omission or ambiguity in the wording would be used to challenge the conditions, in court if necessary.
- Insufficient information available to predict the disturbance to residents.
- We are situated very close to the airfield and are already disturbed by night time flying once a week at about 11:30/midnight onwards.
- Suggest a location closer to a motorway.
- Helicopters fly low to our house and it is unreasonable that they should fly at night also.
- Emergency services do not need to operate helicopters at night when the roads are quiet.
- Concerns that the Dunsfold base may become the base for emergencies in Thames Valley and Hampshire also.
- Once permission is granted WBC will have no power to control the impact of noise.
- Query whether the Air Ambulance at Marden has applied for 24hr flying. If not, why? Is this being promoted by the Rutland Group?
- If permission is granted this should be a short term permission of 12-18 months to assess the impact, with restricted flight path and stationary running and close down.
- A permission up until 2018 is now not valid or necessary since the change of government planning policies.
- Surrey Air Ambulance is not in a position to start night flying as of yet (2-3 years minimum) and perhaps this application is premature and there is no need to change the permission. This would also encourage them to move to a 24/7 site for night operation as part of their preparation.
- Dunsfold aerodrome was always supposed to be a temporary airfield.
- More noise is not appropriate in this location, set in the Hills and AONB.
- No amount of environmental taxation can mitigate for the noise impact.
- Noise from airfield and noise from the A281 must be considered together.
- Concerns over increase in Dunsfold Park activities and impact on wildlife.
- This application is a back-up plan from the failed new town proposal.
- General concerns over the activities and intentions of the Rutland Group.
- Concerns expressed in regards to the method of fundraising for Surrey Air Ambulance.

4 letters/emails making general observations have been received, one from the Dunsfold Aerodrome Group, making the following points:

- Army helicopters and private helicopters currently fly near the site at night and land and take off from the site. The noise is very disturbing. Dunsfold Park Ltd and the Armed Forces do not advise us of when these flights will take place.
- If permission is granted it should not be used as a precedent for future night flights or noisy activities at the site.
- Suggest time period up to 2012 in order to allow WBC to monitor the impact.
- Surrey Air Ambulance and Sussex Air Ambulance are divisions within one charity called Kent Air Ambulance.
- I live near to the site and I don't know of a single complaint ever having been made.
- The proposal has the potential to massively increase noise disturbance.
- The CPRE tranquillity map shows this area to be one of the few places where peace can be enjoyed.
- At night it is silent, so the engine noise will be huge, which will inevitably result in people being disturbed and unable to sleep.
- Suggest moving the operation to Gatwick, as it is in a central location for the three boroughs, it is only 6 minutes flying time from Dunsfold, it is closer to night time accident and emergency hot spots, there are site refuelling, engineering and security facilities available, the background noise levels from major roads is higher at Gatwick, the houses around Gatwick for many miles have been awarded grants for sound insulation, around the world air ambulances operate from major airports with little difficulty.
- It is essential that proper consideration be given to the detail of how the service should operate for the benefit of the community as a whole.
- Consideration should be given to how many people will be woken each night as a result of the service.
- If permission is granted, funds should be made available for the local community for increased sound insulation, permission should be exclusively for the Surrey Air Ambulance, this should not set a precedent for other night flying.

5 letters/emails of support have been received, making the following points:

- The use should not be limited to time restrictions as it saves lives.
- Support for a service that enables patients to reach hospitals quicker.
- Flights are likely to be less frequent than the army Chinook helicopters.
- It is better to be woken at night than for a life to be lost.
- Night flights should not be limited to 2-4 a night, it should be able to be flexible and related to the need.
- Flights should not be limited to Surrey and Sussex – if it is needed elsewhere it should not be hindered.
- The cost of obtaining a quieter helicopter may well be beyond the scope of the finances available and should not be a condition of any consent.
- The helicopter would not hover around the airfield but would take off and land as quickly as possible.
- The helicopter will not be landing/taking off every few minutes.
- Anyone who objects should be banned from using the service.
- In many countries this would go forward without debate and with government funding.

Submissions in support

The application is accompanied by a petition with over 300 signatures, predominantly from the local area, and a letter from the Surrey Air Ambulance Service explaining the need for the service, which makes the following points:

- There is an identified need for level one trauma hospitals (one being the highest level) in the UK. (As set out in the report published by The National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death, entitled “Trauma: Who cares”).
- There is no such hospital in Kent, Surrey or Sussex and none is planned before 2016.
- This issue is currently addressed by flying serious trauma patients to the nearest centre in Southampton or London.
- All patients with serious trauma should have critical resuscitation at the earliest opportunity.

Determining Issues

Principle of development
Need for the proposal
Impact on residential amenity
Impact on visual amenity

Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The site is located within the Countryside Beyond the Green Belt wherein the countryside will be protected for its own sake in accordance with Policy C2 of the Local Plan. The supporting text of the policy indicates that the reasonable needs of education, infrastructure and utilities may be acceptable in the countryside.

In the appeal decision under application WA/2008/0788 the Inspector considered that the operational part of the aerodrome and interstitial grassed areas are previously developed land (APP/R3650/A/08/2089143).

Having regard to the existing use and the fact that the runways are considered to be previously developed land the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle.

The application proposes an extension of the operating hours of the existing Surrey Air Ambulance that operates from Dunsfold Park.

The application is effectively a resubmission of the original application but with a proposed variation of Condition 2 to allow all night flying. The principle of this development has been established by WA/2007/0657. The key test for members is whether the proposed extension of hours would be materially most harmful in planning terms to warrant taking a different view to this application.

The acceptability of the proposal will be determined by balancing the material considerations. The benefit of the proposal must be balanced against the potential harm it would generate.

Need for the proposal

The continuing general need for emergency services is clear.

The Kent Air Ambulance Trust 5 year Strategic Plan (includes Kent, Surrey and Sussex) sets out the intention for this proposal:

“A medical emergency is no respecter of time and the need for the service does not diminish with either the on-set of darkness, or at the end of a shift, but continues 24 hours of the day. Our challenge is to continue to expand the availability of our service towards the 24 hour goal, the holy grail of all ambulance services.

We may not be able to achieve this on our own, as an isolated charity, but there is clearly scope to develop. Our industry still has a lot of catching up to do, and experience elsewhere suggests that operationally, economies of scale and best practice may well come from a collaborative effort by the air ambulance world as a whole. We need to continue to play a leading part to find the way forward. Our challenge is to do all of this, without losing sight of the fact that our air ambulances belong to the communities they serve. We therefore recognise that the moment the Kent, Surrey or Sussex Air Ambulances lose their county-specific identity, not only will the funding dry-up, but the charity may well lose its soul.”

In general, the quicker that the emergency services can get to the incident and deliver the patient to hospital the higher the chances of survival. These chances diminish over time and the ‘golden hour’ is a term used in relation to medical emergencies as being the most critical in ensuring survival.

There is currently very little medical emergency services night time flying covering Surrey, Sussex or Kent (Hotel 900 carries out a very few number of night time medically emergency flights see below) and there is considered to be a clear need for the service.

(Kent Air Ambulance has verbally confirmed that there is no night time flying of the Air Ambulance from the base at Marden.)

The need for a night time air ambulance is considered to be justified. However, the need for the base to be located at Dunsfold Park is an important matter. The agent has provided an explanation as to why Dunsfold Park is the most suitable location. The main points are listed below:

- The possibility of locating to one of the receiving hospitals is simply not feasible as they comprise a landing base with no supporting facilities.
- The existing site is on an industrial site, remote from residential properties.

- The Air Ambulance is established at Dunsfold Park and the buildings and operational equipment are all firmly in place.
- To relocate would be a logistical nightmare.
- To relocate would not be cost effective. Either relocating to another site or splitting daytime and night time uses between alternative sites would involve the duplication of many overhead costs.
- To have a split operation would not be sustainable given the need to travel between sites for staff and the transportation of equipment.

Impact on residential amenity

The proposal has the potential to generate noise, which could cause material harm to the amenities of nearby residential properties. The noise generated by helicopters whilst in flight is not covered by Environmental Health legislation and as such there is no recourse available to the Council after planning permission has been granted and the issue of noise must be fully considered.

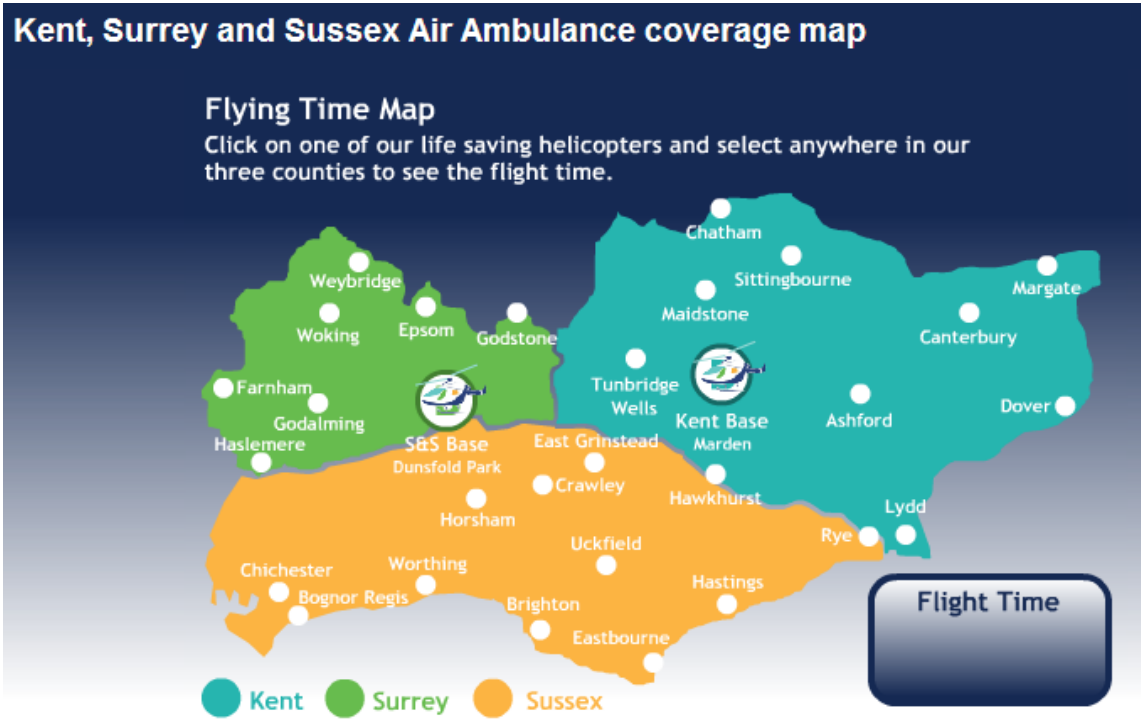
The proposed use, by its nature, will inevitably result in additional noise, at unsociable hours.

In order to understand the impact of the service upon neighbour amenities it is relevant to consider its current scope and nature of operation.

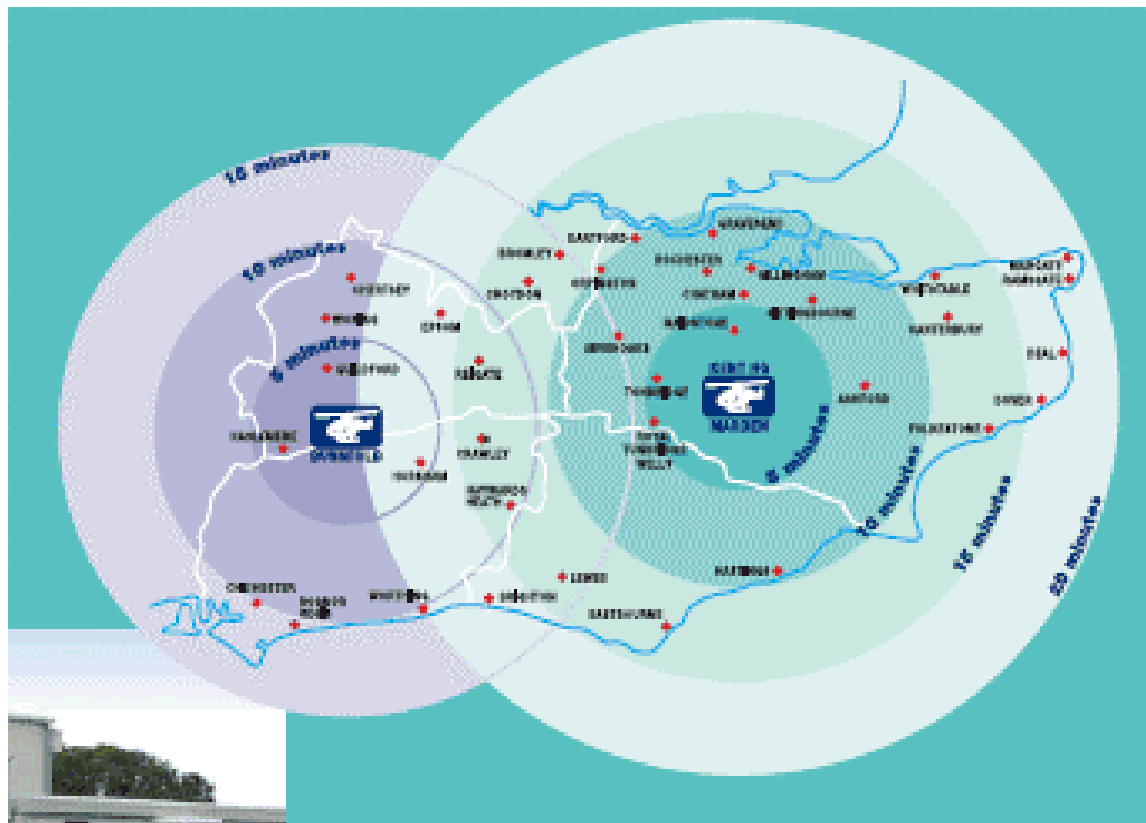
The existing Surrey Air Ambulance is part of Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance, with the existing Surrey service based at Dunsfold and also at Marden (Kent).

In Sussex the service is supplemented by the Sussex Police Air Operations Unit, who run a helicopter jointly with SECamb, called 'Hotel 900', which responds to both police and ambulance requests for assistance. (This service partially operates as an air ambulance, although not with the same level of expertise, and also for other emergency services tasks such as missing persons searches and crimes in progress). The Sussex Police website indicates that 'Hotel 900' carries out 1,500 tasks a year, Sussex Police have verbally confirmed that only 38 of these flights relate to medical emergencies. 'Hotel 900' operates on a 24 hour basis and has additional technology to that at Dunsfold Park (Infra red camera on board etc).

The flying time map is shown below to illustrate the geographical location of the bases in relation to the area they serve:



(Taken from Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance website)



(Taken from Kent Ambulance Trust 5 Year Strategic Plan)

The Surrey Air Ambulance has flown 492 missions so far this year (according to the Surrey Air Ambulance website on 04/10/2010); this translates to 1.77 flights per day.

The Air Ambulance in Kent has flown 551 missions so far this year (according to the Kent Air Ambulance website on 04/10/2010); this translates to 1.98 flights per day.

The planning statement sets out that:

“Surrey Air Ambulance have occupied the site and operated from it since 2007 and have attended in excess of 1,700 emergency calls; on peak days between 10 and 13 flights take place.” (para 2.03)

Para 6.08 of the statement estimates the number of flights envisaged:

“Although 24 hour flying is sought the likelihood is that any night time flying will take place in the early evening, between the hours of darkness and midnight, coinciding with peak traffic and pedestrian activity. Later into the night, when activity dies down, medical emergencies are unlikely. It is therefore estimated that no more than 2 to 4 movements per night is likely as an average.”

The number of flights each night will ultimately depend on the number of emergencies. However, the agent indicates 2 to 4 missions per night.

The night flying would cover Kent, Surrey and Sussex and would be the only night flying air ambulance service covering these three counties (other than the handful of flights carried out by Hotel 900). On the basis that there have been a total of 1043 missions flown (by both ambulance services) this year (an average of 3.76 a day), the estimation of 2-4 flights per night appears to be fairly accurate.

The helicopter to be used is the MD Explorer (MD-902). The planning agent has set out in email dated 05/08/2010 that this model has no tail rotor and, as a consequence, is quieter than other models. General officer research indicates that this is a quieter model of helicopter than most: “The MD-900 is a smaller vehicle that has no tail rotor (NOTAR) and was designed for reduced noise” (Extract from the document entitled “NASA: Design of Quiet Rotorcraft Approach Trajectories”). (The MD-900 is an earlier model of the MD-902 but appears to have the same noise profile).

The concerns of Hascombe Parish Council in relation to the benefit of a vertical take off are noted. The path that the helicopter would take when leaving the airfield is largely dependent on where the emergency is geographically. The possibility of a vertical take off to cruising height, prior to heading towards the emergency has been discussed with the agent. However, the agent has set out that this is not practical in reality for the following reasons:

“It is simply not practical for the helicopter to take off vertically and then move off once cruising height is reached. This would take more time, use more fuel (and thus reduce the range) and require more power with consequent impact upon noise. Aircraft need to take off into the wind and then route in the

general direction they want to go. However, crew will always try and avoid overflying properties where possible although you will appreciate that this is not always practical where the location of the emergency dictates a certain direct route. It is of course also for this reason that it would not prove practical to impose a condition specifying a particular route as this would not be efficient in terms of time or fuel use given that speed is critical for the air ambulance to reach an incident. To be forced to follow a particular route would completely undermine the imperative to respond swiftly.”

Officers recognise that the effectiveness of the service is, of course, an important factor and to operate effectively the helicopter must be able to get to its destination as quickly as possible. Given the response of the applicants, any kind of restriction on the direction of flight is likely to be detrimental to the speed of the service.

The concern in relation to the likely intensity of flights has been raised with the applicants who are confident that the estimate is accurate. In relation to the concern regarding possible precedent, officers are of the view that given the exceptional and unique justification for this service, if permission is granted then it would not establish the principle for general night time flying.

The matters proposed for coverage by condition by Hascombe Parish Council have generally been incorporated into the varied condition recommended, if permission is granted. A restriction responding to Surrey and Sussex emergencies only would not be reasonable nor consistent with the purpose of the Air Ambulance service. Notwithstanding that, the area covered by the service is geographically limited by the necessary target flying time to reach emergencies.

Members will note that the Parish Councils and some local residents have argued that given the potential noise concerns, if permission is granted it should be initially for a limited period to enable assessment and subsequent review. It is open to members to consider imposition of a restriction if they find this to be appropriate. In addition, a restriction of the number of helicopters at any one time to be used could also potentially be controlled if members feel this is appropriate.

The request by Alfold Parish Council for a restriction on flying route/technique has been considered but officers do not consider that this would be enforceable nor desirable given the relatively limited number of likely flights and the need for flexibility of an emergency service.

Some concern has been raised in representation letters that the air ambulance service would be used to transport organs, in addition to responding to incidents and therefore the level of flights could be much higher than envisaged. There is no indication from the submission that the flights are intended for this purpose at the current time. However, if as part of the overall service, this organ transplant is required, this is not considered objectionable. There is no indication that this would require a material uplift in the number of flight movements.

Impact on visual amenity

The proposal would continue to utilise the existing buildings on site that are currently used in relation to the Air Ambulance service and it is considered that there would be no additional harm caused to visual amenity as a result of the proposal. The proposal is therefore considered to be satisfactory in terms of its impact upon the appearance of the site and the wider locality.

Conclusion

The proposal is effectively a continuation of an existing permission for the Air Ambulance Service but with a variation of the permitted times of flight operation. The principle has already been established for the service at Dunsfold. Officers have carefully considered the concerns raised by third parties in relation to the extension of hours. The main issues raised are considered to be effectively controlled by the proposed varied Condition No 2. This will limit the type/model of helicopter to ensure that a least noise generating model is used. The officers conclude overall that this is a welcome proposal what will provide an extension to this worthy service providing the first dedicated night time air ambulance base in the locality. It is considered to be acceptable overall in planning terms.

That permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. Condition

The buildings hereby permitted shall be used for the purposes of a helicopter emergency medical service and for no other purpose.

Reason

To comply with the terms of the application and to ensure that the development does not prejudice local amenities in compliance with Policies C2, D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002.

2. Condition

There shall not be:

- a) any ground running of aircraft engines apart from essential testing preliminary to flight take-off except between the hours of 07.30 and 19.30 on any day during the period 1st October to 31st March inclusive and between the hours of 07.30 to 20.30 on any day during the period 1st April to 30th September inclusive.
- b) Use or operation of any helicopter in relation to the permission hereby granted other than of the model Explorer MD – 902, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason

In order to minimise disturbance to local residents by the flying or testing of aircraft during the hours of sleep in compliance with Policies C2, D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002.

3. Condition

Full details of a tree planting scheme at Dunsfold Park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of tree species, numbers and sizes, the location(s) for planting and a programme of works. The total area to be planted shall be a minimum of 0.8 hectare. The scheme shall be submitted within six months of permission being granted and shall be carried out in the first available planting season after approval of the scheme by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason

In order to contribute to the offsetting of carbon emissions from the hangar and use associated with the permitted structures in compliance with Policy D1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002.

4. Condition

The buildings hereby approved shall be demolished and removed from the site, and the site restored to its former condition, and the use of the site for the helicopter emergency medical service shall cease by 1st June 2018.

Reason

To enable the planning authority to reconsider the whole site at the expiry of other existing temporary permissions.