



Chocksgoaway

In April 2021 Mr R. Ledger of Manor Farm, Little Monegham, submitted a planning application to Dover District Council (along with a supporting statement compiled by Spring Green Planning) with a proposal to create a new, small rural General Aviation Airfield and Glamping Site at Little Monegham. The proposal involves the formation of a 750 metre long grass runway for general aviation use, the construction of two large hangars for up to 20 light aircraft, and other supporting facilities including helipad, flight office and toilets, workshop/plant storage building and ten glamping/camping cabins.

Chocks-Go-Away is a community group which was subsequently formed to represent the many hundreds of residents who oppose the proposed airfield. We along with our appointed consultant, Valerie Owen and other professionals, submitted a number of documents to Dover District Council with evidence to support our views that the airfield is not needed, is harmful and inherently unsustainable as well as counter to both local planning policy and the national policy framework.

The proposal presents no economic benefits against a backdrop of very considerable harm to the environment, to local residents and character of the countryside.

At a time when ways to limit damage to the environment and climate change are being considered by the Governments of all nations it would be morally wrong to undertake any development that could make matters worse.

Nationally and locally, there are policies and strategies that have been adopted with the sole purpose of improving the environment for everyone. Dover District Council states in their Climate Change Strategy that their vision 'is to deliver a better environment for everyone and to help individuals, businesses and other organisations to commit to act to reduce the district's carbon footprint.' The proposal to construct an airfield in a rural area is totally contrary to that vision.

In order for the planning application to succeed it is necessary for the developer to show that it complies with all planning regulations both locally and nationally. These are too numerous and complex to consider in this brief article. However, Valerie Owen, a Chartered Architect, Chartered Town Planner, Chartered Surveyor and Chartered Environmentalist and an expert in sustainable development, in her submission to DDC, considers these in detail along with the sustainability of the proposed development.

To briefly outline some of the main concerns that have been identified.

The Government seeks to protect and invest in the strategic network of high value airfields and it does not offer any basis of support for the spurious and opportunistic creation of new, unimportant and unlicensed airfields in wholly inappropriate locations. General Aviation facilities in Kent are more than adequate for current and future usage and River Oak Strategic Partners remain committed to reopening Manston as an aviation facility.

The planning application submitted does not consider the safety issues which arise from flying at unlicensed airfields and provides no examination of air safety within the context of the proposed site.

Within close proximity to the proposed airfield there are a number of riding schools, private horse paddocks and riding networks. The British Horse Society identifies low flying aircraft as a specific safety risk which cannot be reasonably mitigated by either horse riders or pilots in this area. A public footpath used by many ramblers runs through the area close to the end of the proposed runway. The experience of being over flown on the footpath and corresponding noise level will be extremely unpleasant and potentially dangerous.

With no operational security measures, the proposed airfield would be an attractive facility for local and cross border criminality reducing the safety of local residents and supporting organised crime in the area.

The principal intended use of the airfield is recreational flying by amateur pilots. It is envisaged that there will be up to 7500 movements per year which equates to a daily average of 21. Since activity will be primarily at weekends during the summer months it is reasonable to expect between 40 and 60 movements per day at weekends.

The types of aircraft that tend to be flown by amateur pilots are older and noisier than modern light aircraft and they burn Avgas which is a heavily leaded fuel. The lead in the fuel is emitted by the aircraft exhaust into the environment. The World Health Organisation states that 'There is no level of exposure to lead that is known to be without harmful effects. Both noise and lead emissions will be harmful to the health and wellbeing of the local residents and to tourists who visit the area. They

will cause significant damage to the wildlife and impact severely on the environment. People who have chosen to live in this area do so for its tranquillity and healthy environment. They should not be expected to tolerate high levels of noise and pollution so that a few pilots can indulge in their hobby of flying for pleasure.

The proposed airfield is located in an area of significant heritage. There are numerous Listed Buildings in Northbourne and Great Monegham, and hundreds of listed buildings within the flight path. The proposed airfield and its operations will have a detrimental impact on over a hundred heritage assets and their settings.

In summary this proposed airfield is counter to both local and national planning policy. It presents no economic or social benefits and is harmful to the environment, to local residents and the character of the countryside.

In this brief article it has not been possible to cover everything. Further detailed and specific information can be found on Dover District council's Planning Website. The following documents in particular may be of interest to those who live within the area of the proposed development.

Documents Relating to DDC Planning Application 21/00626

19th April. Planning Application Support Document

12th July. Chocksgoaway Community Representation

12th July. Valerie Owen Consultant on behalf Chocks –Go- Away(C-G-A)

2nd August. Review of Noise Assessment by Consultant Hayes McKenzie on behalf C-G-A

15th June. Chocksgoaway, Lead Poisoning Report by Prof S. Peckham

There are many other documents on the website including objections from Parish Councils.

Chocks-Go-Away has been very successful in raising funds which are essential if this planning application is to be opposed professionally and effectively. To this end we have commissioned reports from both a planning consultant and noise consultant. We have also produced and circulated a very large number of posters, placards and fliers. Recently a Public Meeting was held in Northbourne Parish Hall. There were over 200 people in attendance along with Councillors from DDC, KCC and the Parishes. A presentation was given by our Chairman and Valerie Owen the Planning consultant we have engaged. At this awareness and fundraising event, a Grand Auction draw took place raising £3500 in much needed funds.

This campaign is not over as this Planning Application it is not likely to be given full consideration until early next year. It is essential to keep pressure on Dover District Council to ensure that this proposal is rejected. A concerted effort must be made to keep it in the forefront of people's minds to ensure it is not overlooked and inadvertently gains approval. You can still comment on Dover District Council's Planning Website (DDC Planning Application No 21/00626) or write to any local councillor or our MP.

Written submissions will be considered right up until the day the application comes before the Planning Committee.

Chocksgoaway Team