Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0022/15 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: Unit 2 27 Cecil Pashley Way Shoreham (Brighton City) Airport Lancing

Proposal: Continued mixed use for business (Class B1) and training centre for industrial rope access techniques (Class D1)

Date of site visit: 03.03.2015

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a recently completed building located at the western end of Cecil Pashley Way. The western part of the building (airside) consists of a light aircraft hangar and flying club offices whilst the east part consists of 5 no. workshop units (Class B1/B2). There is a tarmac car park on the south side of the perimeter road serving the building as a whole.

Retrospective permission is sought to continue using the workshop for mixed business (Class B1) and training purposes (Class D1) by the current occupier.

The occupier runs his own industrial rope access business and also runs training courses in industrial rope access techniques in line with the Training, Assessment Certification Scheme of IRATA International (Industrial Rope Access Trade Association). The premises is shared with a small-scale lighting design business (run by the applicant's partner).

A supporting statement submitted with the application states:-

"I plan to run 2 courses per month. Each course takes place over 4 days with an independent assessment by an external examiner on the 5th day. Generally they will run Monday to Fri8day though I hope to offer bespoke courses over weekends and holidays to fit around the candidate's work schedules.

The IRATA system consists of 3 levels of qualifications. People with no experience are required to attend a level 1 course. After set periods of time and verified work experience they may return for further training and assessment to level 2 and eventually to level 3. The courses are aimed at novices who want to get into the industry and also at trade specialists who wish to further their career prospects with an in-demand qualification. Rope access has been widely used in construction, oil and gas and offshore wind energy for decades.

IRATA stipulate the maximum instructor to student ratio is 1:6. Therefore the number of people in the Unit will be 6-7 (including the external assessor on Day 5).

The candidates generally come from within an arc stretching from Poole to Hastings. Our proximity to Gatwick means we are increasingly looking to overseas markets.

I travel to the Unit by bike and approximately 50% of the trainees travel on the train to Shoreham from where they walk or by bus.

IRATA rope access qualifications can lead to careers in engineering, building and maintenance and even film or TV. I am trying to encourage more young people from our Region and those leaving the military to consider this exciting career option. The industry continues to grow and especially with the development of offshore wind farms in the English Channel [e.g. Rampion] the demand for personnel training is increasing."

The site is located within the Tidal and Fluvial Flood Zone and the application is accompanied by a rudimentary FRA.

Planning History

Permission for the hangar/workshop was granted in 1999 (L/151/99). The use of the building is restricted by a condition of planning permission to mainly aircraft hangar-age and maintenance (west half) and small units for Class B1 or B2 use (eastern half).

Consultations:

WSCC: The Highway Authority has raised no objection commenting:-

"The proposal to continue mixed use business class and include D1 use for a training centre for Industrial Rope Access techniques has been considered by WSCC, as the Local Highway Authority. WSCC raise no objection.

The existing unit, located within the airport, currently employs 2 people. The change in use to incorporate a training centre would create a total of 4 employees. The unit offers 2 car parking spaces, 2 motorbike spaces, and 4 bike racks.

Two training courses would be offered per month, each course lasting 5 days, with a maximum of 7 people per course. The company envisage that additional bespoke courses may be included during holiday period periods or at weekends. The courses attract attendees from far and wide and as such it is considered that they may travel to the unit in a variety of ways. The unit is accessible from the A27 and the A259, and is also accessible by public transport. Shoreham-by-Sea Railway Station is located approx. 2km away, providing links to Gatwick Airport and beyond; and local bus services run frequently connecting the station to the airport.

The number of parking spaces is limited to 2. WSCC would like to know if there is any area of parking offered for visitors to the airport. If there is limited

parking WSCC would recommend that the applicant provides a travel information pack to attendees providing them with information on how to travel to the site by rail, bike and bus. WSCC have a dedicated Travel Wise officer who can provide advice if needed."

Environment Agency: No Objection.

Lancing Parish Council: No comments received.

Adur and Worthing Councils: The Contaminated Land Officer has no adverse comments.

The Planning Policy Officer comments:

"As you are aware, I provided some pre-application policy advice in February 2014. Although my advice effectively remains the same, it is worth noting that since I provided this advice the Proposed Submission Adur Local Plan 2014 has since been published which means that the policies within this emerging Plan have more weight due to the advanced stage of the Plan.

The relevant polices within the Proposed Submission Local Plan are Policy 7: Shoreham Airport and Policy 26: Protecting and Enhancing Existing Employment Sites and Premises. Combined, these policies aim to protect B1, B2 and B8 uses at the airport as well as restrict non-aviation uses. This planning application does not accord with these policies, but for the following reasons I would not object to this application:

(i) The existing interior design business is not aviation related so the proposal would not result in the loss of part of an aviation use;
(ii) Although the proposal would result in the loss of part of a B1 use at the airport, the proposed Rope Access use would clearly have economic benefits by providing skills/training opportunities for residents in the District;
(iii) The emerging Local Plan has not yet been adopted and taking account of points (i) and (ii), I would not be confident in recommending refusal for the proposal on the basis of a currently un-adopted Plan when the impact of the proposal is likely to be minimal.

I have also spoken to the Councils' Economic Development officers who have confirmed that they have no comments to make regarding this application. I therefore raise no objection to the planning application."

Representations: None received.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AE10, AE12
Proposed Submission Adur Local Plan (ADC 2014): 7, 26
National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012).

Planning Assessment

Principle

The site is located outside the 'built up' area within an area of countryside which separates Lancing and Shoreham. Development at Shoreham Airport is currently restricted by a legal agreement to the southern part of the site, on either side of the terminal building. The adopted Local Plan recognises the need for Shoreham Airport to be economically viable and supports limited development primarily for airport-related businesses consistent with environmental protection policies.

Policy 7 within the Submission Local Plan allocates the north-eastern part of the Airport for 15,000sqm of new employment-generating floor space (aviation and non-aviation related) subject to (amongst other things) improvements to the A27 Sussex Pad junction, completion of the Adur Tidal Walls, and mitigation of impacts on landscape, ecology etc. Policy 26 seeks to resist changes of use from Class B1, B2 and B8 on employment sites including Shoreham Airport.

The use for Industrial Rope Access Techniques training is not aviation-related – but then neither is the lighting design business which can lawfully operate from the industrial unit under the auspice of the consent granted under L/151/99 (Class B1 or B2 use). In fact, the lighting design business is very low key, little more than a craft-based enterprise run on a part-time basis. There is little evidence of the existence of this business from inside the Unit, other than a very limited amount of space reserved for storage and a work-desk within a small mezzanine area. There is no advertising of the lighting business on the premises, and it appears to operate solely on the basis of internet orders. The most notable piece of equipment within the interior is a large steel-framed scaffold (approximately 7m tall) used as a training structure in connection with the Industrial Rope Access Techniques training courses.

Although the continued training use does not comply with the Submission Local Plan policies for the Airport, the comments of the Policy Officer are extremely pertinent inasmuch that the use in question is employment-related, aimed at improving skills and therefore employment opportunities accessible to local people in a developing business area that has a local context given the likely development of the Rampion wind farm off the Sussex coast. It is worth noting that there are also other employment-training institutions which have been located at the Airport for many years. In view of the employment – related nature of the training in question it is considered refusal would not be warranted on policy grounds in this instance. However, other non-employment related training or other uses falling within the wider D1 Use Class (health centres, day nurseries, crèches etc.) would not be appropriate. A restrictive condition is therefore recommended limiting the use of the premises to mixed business (Class B1) and Industrial Rope Access Training (Class D1) only.

Visual amenity

The equipment used in connection with running the training courses is all located internally within the business Unit. Thus there are no implications for the external appearance of the building arising from the current use.

Nevertheless it would be pertinent to attach a condition requiring all training equipment and associated paraphernalia to be located inside the premises.

Access and parking

Whilst there is direct vehicle access to a loading door in the front of the Unit, the only parking provision is within the car park on the south side of the perimeter road which is shared with other 4 occupiers of the business workshops in this building plus the hangar/flying club. There is a small area capable of use for cycle parking on the frontage.

The applicant travels to the site by bike and indicates that most training candidates travel by train to Shoreham and walk from there. The available parking provision is considered adequate in the context of this small-scale operation and the Highway Authority has not raised any objections on highway safety grounds.

Flood Risk

The proposals have involved no physical alteration to the building and would therefore have no implications for raising flood risk in terms of the efficacy of existing drainage measures or operation of the wider floodplain. The proposed use as an education establishment falls within a 'more vulnerable' use. However, the training courses are of short duration (5 days) with only a limited number of trainees per course (6-7 students). The training courses are aimed at improving employment skills of the local and wider population in a sustainable growth industry. The nature of the training course means it is not suitable for people who are less mobile or who have a physical impairment. Thus, given the specific characteristics of the proposed training carried out on a small-scale basis it is considered no safety implications are raised by the continued use. No objection has been raised by the Environment Agency.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:-

2. The Class D1 element of the mixed business (B1) and training (Class D1) use hereby permitted shall be limited to Industrial Rope Access Techniques training only and for no other training use or use within Class D1 of the T + C Planning Use Classes Order.

3. No training equipment or paraphernalia shall be fitted or fixed to any external surface of the building or on sited on any part of the external curtilage of premises unless otherwise approved by the LPA in an application on that behalf.

Informative

1. Proactive Statement – No Amendments
2. Contact WSCC Travel Wise Officer for advice on providing attendees with travel pack.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Jo Morin Date: 18.03.2015

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 18 March 2015