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**LAND EAST AND WEST OF HAINE ROAD, RAMSGATE-PLANNING APPLICATION  
NUMBER OL/TH/14/0050**

To: **Planning Committee – 15 July 2015**

By: **Simon Thomas Planning Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

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**Summary:** This report advises Members on the information that has been submitted by the applicant in response to issues raised by the planning committee at the June meeting. Annexed to this report is the previous Officer report which sets out the material considerations and recommends that the planning application be deferred to the Planning Manager to approve subject to conditions and legal agreement being made.

**For Decision**

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**1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 At the Planning Committee meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 it was resolved by members that the planning application be deferred for further information to be provided by the applicant in respect of agricultural land classification and the potential noise impacts on the development from the operation of Manston Airport.

**2.0 The Current Situation**

2.1 The applicant has provided further information to address the requirements of the Planning Committee. In this report I will summarise and appraise this information.

*Noise*

2.2 The applicant has as part of their original submission considered the previous airport operators 2009 Masterplan to 2018 where predicted passenger numbers were 2.2million and predicated freight was 167,000 tonnes. Members were concerned that this did not provide enough information. As such the applicants have sought to give members greater information on potential noise impacts by reviewing the previous operators Masterplan and looking to its fullest aspirations for growth which would have resulted in 4.7 million passengers and 401,000 tonnes of freight by 2033.

2.3 The 2009 Masterplan acknowledged that it was not possible to accurately predict noise contours to 2033 because of the likely change in aircraft type and noise signatures at that time. However, the applicant has for the purposes of assessing the impacts as members requested, assumed exactly the same aircraft mix as 2018. On this basis the applicants indicate that overall noise levels would be increased by 2DBA but they point out that this would be likely offset by reduction of 1DB in future aircraft noise level resulting in a likely increase of 1DB.

- 2.4 Based upon this assessment the applicants have concluded that the noise impacts at 2033 would not exceed 63DB, 57-63DB which falls within category B for the purposes of Local Plan Policy EP7, other than for a small part of the site at the southern boundary. Proposed development within category B will not be precluded but noise will be taken into account in determining applications and where appropriate noise mitigation may be required.
- 2.5 The applicant also points out that a large area of existing properties to the east of Ramsgate will most likely be within the 57DBA contour at 2033, at these levels the airport will be required to provide sound insulation or grants to these properties to mitigate noise impact.
- 2.6 Having discussed the findings with the Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the information submitted by the applicant and has provided the following advice:

*I spoke with the acoustic consultant this morning and based on the information they had available to them they have used appropriate methodology to reach their conclusions, unfortunately given the circumstances it is almost impossible to predict future noise impact from aviation to the extent requested especially as you cannot predict the make-up of possible flight movements. It should be noted that all of these predictions are based on a master plan with aspirations of passenger flights which are generally newer quieter planes than cargo planes.*

*Given the predictions they have made show some housing that would fall into the higher predicted noise contour I would recommend that the plans need some reconfiguration to reduce possible impact.*

*The acoustic consultant is confident that a sound insulation scheme submitted as part of any planning condition will mitigate any impact of aircraft noise.*

- 2.7 Having regard to the new information submitted along with the matters discussed within the previous Officer report, we are satisfied that the evidence provided by the applicant adequately demonstrates that the potential expansion of the airport would not increase the impact of aircraft noise on the development. Only a very small part of the site would be within a noise Category C as set out in the local plan and where development will not normally be accepted. is already impact by the airport and as such it is recommended that should planning permission be granted it should be made conditional upon there being no dwellings located within the small area of the site that would be within the area that falls within the noise category C which would be affected by noise should the growth aspirations of the previous airport operator (by 2033) be realised.

#### *Agricultural Land Quality*

- 2.8 The applicant has sought to clarify the position in respect to the quality of agricultural land. The current MAFF agricultural land classification system was last revised in 1988 and the application site is shown on the ALC map as having been assessed by MAFF in 1983 as mainly grade 2 with areas of grade 1 locally present. Given the fact that the 1983 figures could not be relied upon since they were not undertaken in accordance with the 1988 Guidelines, the applicant undertook more investigation and identified that an ALC was undertaken in 1994 on the eastern side of the site, as previously referred to in the Officers report, this study revealed mainly Grade 2 and 3a.

- 2.9 The applicants have confirmed that the MAFF Guidelines on agricultural land classification are based upon an assessment of limiting factors including climate, site and soil and the way in which these factors interact.
- 2.10 They applicants state:
- In respect to climate; The ALC guidelines requires specific climate data to be taken from a specific data set from 1989, as such the data that would be used today would be the same data as that used in 1994.
  - Site factors including gradient, micro relief and flood risk and soil characteristic which include texture, structure depth and stoniness would not have changed over the last 20 years so as to affect the grading the applicants state that this is because Soil type, depth, underlying wetness levels, proportions of sand, silt, clay etc, all take very long time periods to develop and therefore also to change. As such these proportions will not have changed significantly since 1994 (the land has not been landfilled or otherwise worked since 1994), and as they were assessed under the current ALC rules, those results are capable of being relied upon today.
  - Fertility levels can be changed readily by, for example, adding inorganic fertiliser. The effects are short-lived. Therefore fertility levels do not reflect long-term land potential and so are not included in the ALC system. This has the benefit of, for example, discounting attempts to downgrade land quality by leaving the land unmanaged or unfertilised. Organic farming does not, for example, result in a downgrading of agricultural land quality.
- 2.11 The applicant has therefore concluded that the 1994 ALC would not have changed and can thereof continue to be a reliable source of up to date data of the land quality of the eastern side of the site.
- 2.12 In respect to the western part of the site this had never previously been surveyed as part of the submitted information accompanying the application the applicant commissioned a new study of this part of the site. This revealed this to be mainly grade 2 and grade 3a with pockets of 3b This data was produced in accordance with the 1988 MAFF guidelines and is therefore consistent with the up to date approach. The applications consider that this work adequately addressed the matter of the current soil condition of the western part of the site.
- 2.13 Given that the applicant has further clarified the basis upon which the information was provided within the original application, this effectively confirms that the land is BMV agricultural land and as Thanet is rich in BMV land as outlined in the committee report this will therefore its loss will need to be balanced alongside all other material planning considerations in particular the need for housing.

**3.0 Recommendations**

- 3.1 In response to comments by the members the applicants has provided further clarification of the issues of aircraft noise and agricultural land quality. Officers consider that the information provided adequately addresses the concerns expressed by members and as such the recommendation for defer and delegate as set out in the Committee report (as appended) remains unchanged.
  
- 3.2 It is therefore **recommended that members defer and delegate the planning application to the Planning Manager to approve subject to appropriate safeguarding conditions and subject to a legal agreement to secure the community facilities and affordable housing provision as set out in the previous report.**

**Annex List**

Annex 1	Previous report to Planning Committee
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