

WYCOMBE AIR PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON
23rd April 2013**

PRESENT

Mr R Pushman	Chairman
Mr D Phillips	General Manager, Wycombe Air Park
Councillor R Emmett	WDC Member, Hambleden
Councillor Z Ahmed	WDC Member, Sands
Councillor I McEnnis	WDC Member, Chiltern Rise
Councillor D White	Hambleden Parish Council
Councillor N Timberlake	West Wycombe Parish Council
Councillor M Detsiny	Lane End Parish Council
Councillor N Dunn	Great Marlow Parish Council
Councillor D Barnes	WDC Member, Greater Marlow
Mr H Luxton	Booker Common and Woods Protection Society
Mr R Wetenhall	Wycombe Air Park Action Group (WAPAG)
Mr N Phillips	Sands Residents' Association
Mr K Chanter	Frieth Village Society
Mr R Martyn	Booker Gliding Club
Mr N Day	Heli Air
Mr J Smith	Divisional Environmental Health Officer, WDC

(7 members of the public were in attendance)

1. The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and opened the public participation section of the meeting stating that the usual rules applied.

Q. Mr M King, Little Frieth advised that he had made numerous complaints, the last 4 of which had disappeared and were then recovered. He estimated he had made 10 complaints in the last month regarding aircraft on R06 and the tendency for pilots to fly to one side rather than adhere to the recommended flight path. He was advised that pilots had been reminded and charts sent to him detailing the aircraft that had flown and he had been unable to locate the aircraft he had seen from the charts. He therefore had come to the conclusion that some pilots were not putting on the GPS tracking equipment.

A. D Phillips replied in that it was not just his complaints that had temporarily been lost but others as he had unfortunately experienced a server breakdown. This had now been remedied and hence the retrieval of complaints that had been reported as lost. Turning to his particular issue, D Phillips considered there had been a tendency for some pilots to creep to

one side and he was endeavouring to address this. He acknowledged that some pilots did forget to switch on their GPS tracking but he stood by the fact that no-one intentionally went out to create mischief. He acknowledged that there was an emerging trend that track discipline was not as good at the weekends as during the week and he considered that his full time air staff were fully au fait with the procedures whereas the weekend instructors and staff did not fly as often and he agreed to keep up the policing at weekends. He would consider asking the control tower to issue an instruction to pilots to remind them to switch on their tracking devices.

Q. Mr P Jennings, Cadmore End stated that for the past month fixed wing and helicopters had been flying over the middle of Cadmore End and he asked whether they were off course or whether the flight path had changed.

A. D Phillips confirmed that no changes had been made, although around the same time Spring Coppice had experienced high volumes of aircraft going too far right and it may have been a knock on effect from that incident. He agreed to look into this but had not direct answer at this point.

Q. Mr M Spink, Hambleden stated that he had sent in an email in November last year in which he had expressed concern regarding the number of aircraft circuit flying on R24 and whilst the circuit was not directly over his home that was where the planes were turning.

A. D Phillips advised that he would rebrief pilots and ask them to turn over the woods; he did however suggest that when pilots were asked to avoid a particular area of sensitivity then inevitably somewhere else became a hot spot. He advised that within the circuit there were some 6 areas of sensitivity and in terms of accuracy of flying pilots quite simply could not fly to +/- 100 metres. He gave an undertaking to pull the trend back. The Chairman suggested that if a deviant pattern looked like being established he urged the public to let the air park know.

Q. Mr M Pratt, Spring Coppice informed the meeting that D Phillips and L Smith had taken him up in both a fixed wing and a helicopter. L Smith had been able to follow the correct route and had taken him away from Spring Coppice with ease but he acknowledged that a student pilot would have so much to think about and as a result he could now understand why many students drift off course and he acknowledged this would be the same for fixed wing aircraft. He therefore considered that the procedures in place at the air park asked too much of student pilots.

A. D Phillips stated that the flying procedures he had inherited had evolved over 30/40 years and were now extremely complicated. There were so many areas for pilots to avoid, that get it wrong in one area and it had a knock on effect in another location. Work was currently ongoing with the council on the north/south side regarding alternative circuits and at this stage he did not know how this would conclude.

Q. T Griffin, Heathfield Road, Sands advised that he considered the noise abatement map which he had, was wrong. Over Good Friday, Easter Saturday, Sunday and Monday, he stated every aircraft that took off, approximately every 90 seconds, came over him. On 19th April however, there had been a different pattern of flying. In addition, he considered that the previous Saturday there had been a "near miss".

A. D Phillips confirmed that there had been a problem at Spring Coppice and Sands and he agreed to compare his GPS tracking with the maps he had. He advised that he did try to ameliorate any issues by varying the route and he undertook to look into this particular matter outside of the meeting.

Q. Mrs S Pratt, Spring Coppice considered that the public were all echoing the same thing and there appeared to be no solution for the noise nuisance. The experienced pilots appeared to be able to successfully fly the routes, but as the majority of pilots were students, who were notoriously off track, there appeared to be no "cure" unless something radical could be done. She believed that Wycombe District Council needed to put something in the lease

and she questioned whether the air park was in fact in the right location.

A. The Chairman stated that he considered D Phillips was doing everything within his powers to remedy residents' frustrations, which he himself understood.

Q. T Griffin asked for a response from the council.

A. J Smith advised that discussions on the noise action plan were to be discussed later in the meeting. Negotiations regarding the lease were also beginning and the north/south exploration work was integral to that. He confirmed that the council was engaged and looking at all the issues.

The public participation session lasted 45 minutes.

2. Apologies for Absence

None were recorded.

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman asked that if anyone had an interest they should declare it at the relevant place on the agenda. This would replace the regular item which could then be removed from future agenda.

4. Minutes of the meetings held on 22nd November 2012 and 22nd January 2013.

The minutes of the above meetings were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters of report not appearing elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

6. DEFRA Noise Action Plan

Following the special meeting held on 22nd January, D Phillips had agreed to revise elements of the action plan in order that it could be shared with representative bodies and then comments received.

He tabled a précis of those comments received from the various organisations: Chiltern Conservation Board, Hambleden Parish Council, West Wycombe Parish Council, Lane End Parish Council, Sands Residents' Association and WAPAG and he asked that the representative bodies confirmed that he had captured the correct bias. He had subsequently put down his initial thoughts on the comments he had received.

Chiltern Conservation Board – R Pushman declared an interest. It was suggested that they be offered a seat on the JCC; the Chairman considered they were neutral and they would be a non voting member. This was agreed.

Hambleden Parish Council – D Phillips stated that it was unreasonable for AAA to commit to major expenditure until the nature of any head lease renewal had been ascertained. Cllr D White considered that adherence to routes was patchy and that this was not being driven at pace. In addition, the issue of silencers, work on which commenced some 6 years ago, was still not resolved. D Phillips maintained that he preferred to work in a consultative way with pilots and he would move this forward. He agreed to again look at the issue of silencers, but much was dependent on the lease renewal as the items suggested were costly and would require significant investment. He was limited in what he could do currently because of the lease but he gave an undertaking to return to the sourcing of silencers.

At this point, Cllr D Barnes spoke about the southern circuit work that had taken place and which had been both thought provoking and which was linked to the lease negotiations.

The suggestion of the use of winches and/or cables for the launch of gliders had been suggested but to mix these with powered aircraft was considered dangerous and the CAA may hold a view. D Phillips would however investigate the feasibility, although he felt the air field was too short. He agreed to include this in the action plan once investigated.

West Wycombe Parish Council – D Phillips accepted that the overall percentage of helicopter movements had increased. However, there was no evidence of helicopter issues except for

“localised” issues at Spring Coppice and he therefore requested further feedback on this issue. He was duly advised that reporting helicopter complaints had fallen into the category of “we give up” and R Wetenhall agreed to provide the detailed feedback requested. R Wetenhall and D Phillips to discuss outside of the meeting. In addition, J Smith advised that a common problem appeared to be on the return leg from Lane End to Frieth.

Lane End Parish Council – Cllr M Detsiny stated that the Parish Council wanted to see a robustness in the complaints handling system at the air park.

Sands Residents’ Association – D Phillips confirmed that much of the noise contour data required by DEFRA appeared to have limited relevance but he was nevertheless required to provide this. He was saddened to learn that SRA did not feel that the GPS tracking had improved performance when he could evidence an improvement. He wanted 100% of aircraft based at the air park to carry GPS. Cllr R Emmett considered that the council could strengthen the lease in this area perhaps by way of a side agreement.

In addition, SRA did not consider that the south side circuits would be of any benefit to them and D Phillips noted this but wished to remain open minded about this embryonic proposal, which would require full consultation if it were to be pursued. D Phillips stated that because this would require significant infrastructure work this change should form part of any head lease renewal discussions. D Phillips was asked to bring a further update on this to the next meeting.

In addition, SRA did not consider that there was any form of respite or noise abatement zone for R35 and D Phillips undertook to investigate the feasibility of this.

In respect of there being a downturn in movements, D Phillips reiterated that movements were half of what they had been 20 years ago. However, because of the extreme inclement weather we had been experiencing, when there was a fine day, flying on that day had been increased.

WAPAG – considered that providing respite would fix a large proportion of the problems. D Phillips stated that to prevent circuit flying on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays would make the business untenable. He had considered levying a higher charge for noisy aircraft flying for example at weekends, and R Wetenhall considered that this along with the use of silencers would be a great improvement. This was echoed by other members of the JCC and D Phillips gave an undertaking to try and source the silencers as soon as possible. The council believed that no further trials were necessary as they were happy with the work previously undertaken. This matter would feature on the next agenda. D Phillips confirmed he agreed with the comments regarding the LAeq data.

If the noise action plan was considered by all to be a mature document and D Phillips could evidence full consultation with the representative bodies, then he need not go out to wider consultation and he could publish the document. He agreed to further revise the document taking into the account this meeting’s discussions and he asked whether the meeting considered the consultation to have been adequate and the matters thoroughly dealt with.

Cllr N Timberlake requested that the document be tabled at the next meeting for final endorsement. D Phillips confirmed he would do this and he also asked that the council respond to it, as it was necessary to include their comments, and once these were received and the JCC had considered it once more, he would send this onto the DFT and DEFRA. He asked for any final submissions by 15th May.

In summary, it was considered the document was worthy and that the following action points be included in the final revision:

- Respite
- Silencers
- GPS Tracking
- South circuit
- R35 Noise Abatement Zone

7. Noise Complaints received by the Air Park

D Phillips stated that he had not received many and they had been predominantly from Sands

and Spring Coppice. R Wetenhall suggested that complaints had come in from R24 as well and D Phillips reiterated the issue he had with the server and his recovery of some 18/20 complaints.

8. Noise Complaints received by Wycombe District Council

J Smith advised that he had not received any directly but had seen copies of complaints sent to the air park from SRA and residents at Spring Coppice.

9. Reports from other bodies

Booker Common and Woods Protection Society – The Society's residents were the closest to the air park but there were few complaints. Providing the R06 noise abatement zone was observed there were generally no issues.

10. Letters received

D Phillips advised that he had received one from D Rendell, Shogmoor Lane, and this had been mostly covered previously.

The other concerned the western boundary of the NAZ on R 24 and a request to move this 150 metres and D Phillips advised that he could consider this.

11. Planning Matters

There were none.

12. Community Matters

There were none.

13. Date of Next Meeting

11th June at 6.30 pm at Wycombe Air Park