



Meeting note

File reference

Status

Final

Author

Rachel Gaffney

Date

05/01/2016

Meeting with

RiverOak and Bircham Dyson Bell

Venue

Temple Quay House, Bristol

Attendees

RiverOak: Tony Freudmann, Niall Lawlor

Bircham Dyson Bell: Angus Walker, Tom Henderson

The Planning Inspectorate: Susannah Guest (Infrastructure Planning Lead), David Price (EIA Manager), Richard Price (Case Manager), Rachel Gaffney (Assistant Case Officer), Nicola Mathiason (Lawyer)

Meeting**objectives**

Project inception meeting

Circulation

All Attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) explained its openness policy and its statutory duty to publish any advice issued under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) to its website. Any advice issued under s51 would not constitute legal advice upon which the attendees, or others, could rely.

RiverOak provided a brief introduction and background to the scheme. Manston Airport was fully operational up until 15 May 2014, until this date the airport's operation was covered by the relevant Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) licence. RiverOak indicated that in November 2013, the airport had been purchased by Ann Gloag (co-founder of Stagecoach) and subsequently closed. There had been no operation on site since May 2014.

RiverOak noted that it was their intention to reopen the airfield and redevelop elements that are in a current state of disrepair. RiverOak stated that the revised business strategy for Manston Airport would primarily focus on increased cargo capacity. RiverOak also suggested that there may be potential for alternative aeronautical operations including some passenger capacity at a later stage. RiverOak stated their assertion that the proposals for Manston Airport would constitute a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. RiverOak provided a brief overview of their indicative development proposals which could include: increased parking for aircraft; altering taxiways; construction of a new control tower; facilities for handling cargo and the inspection of the goods coming

in and out; construction of office space; runway lighting; radar; and fencing. RiverOak suggested there would be enough physical space on site for these alterations as the site is 680 acres. RiverOak confirmed that the one fixed feature of the site is the 2,750m long runway.

The Inspectorate explored how the indicative development proposal relates to s23 PA2008. In particular the discussion focussed on the provisions of s23(1) and whether the proposal would be considered a construction or alteration project and from what starting point the developer would consider the proposals were having the effect of increasing air transport movements of cargo. RiverOak indicated that the previous capacity of Manston Airport was in the region of 2,000 air transport movements of cargo aircraft per year (approximate 3 planes in and out per day). RiverOak outlined their current calculations whereby proposed air transport movements of cargo would satisfy the threshold requirements outlined in PA2008 (for example in s23(5)(b)).

The reference to 'capable' in, for example, PA2008 s23(5) was noted and discussed. The provisions of PA2008 s35 were also noted.

RiverOak discussed the current state of the site and the assets that had been removed since its closure as an operational airport in May 2014, noting for example, runway lighting, instrument landing system and the fire station. RiverOak provided a brief overview of the discussions undertaken with the current owner of the site and subsequently with Thanet District Council with a view to the authority acquiring the site via a Compulsory Purchase Order.

The Inspectorate enquired about the planning history of the site and RiverOak noted some planning applications for change of use by the current owners. RiverOak anticipated that an application for the Stone Hill Park development would be submitted later in 2016.

The Inspectorate enquired about the relevant policy background for such a scheme. RiverOak outlined that whilst the Thanet Local Plan refers to Manston Airport, it recently expired. The Government's announcement in respect of the drafting of an Aviation National Policy Statement was noted, and its relative timing in respect of an anticipated submission date for this proposal was subsequently discussed.

RiverOak explained that there was an extant s106 agreement dating from 2001 that covered matters such as opening hours and a curfew for aircraft flying from Manston Airport between 2300 until 0700. Under that s106 it was highlighted by RiverOak that there are currently no restrictions on numbers of aircraft flying to and from the airport. The use and relationship of s106 documents with the Development Consent Order (DCO) process and any appropriate requirements included within a DCO was noted by the Inspectorate.

The key highways surrounding the site were discussed, including the A299, the dualling of the route from the M2 to the Channel Tunnel and local B roads. RiverOak indicated that once detailed master planning had taken place this might provide a clearer indication of what road improvements would be incorporated as part of the airport proposals.

An indicative redline boundary was discussed. RiverOak consider the land within such an indicative redline boundary is under single ownership. It was noted that former

RAF housing was located to the north of the scheme. This housing is still occupied and is located just outside the indicative red line boundary.

RiverOak indicated that there was local public support for the proposals and suggested that there had been support from Members of Parliament for the re-opening of Manston Airport. CAA licences were discussed and RiverOak explained that licences are post-holder specific and a formal application would be required. RiverOak confirmed its intention that the Manston Airport scheme would be planned and developed to the satisfaction of CAA standards.

Controlling airspace was discussed. RiverOak noted that Manston Airport is outside of the London airspace boundary (London TMA) and therefore a different management process is used compared to that of London airspace. RiverOak indicated that airspace for Manston Airport is capped by physical slots.

There was discussion regarding the possibility that a s53 application could be needed regarding gaining access to the site. The Inspectorate noted their Advice Note for further information and advice regarding s53 applications.

The future timetable for the scheme was discussed. RiverOak stated it would prioritise a review of its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) data; some of which is available from 2014 when the airport was last open. PINS discussed the likely timescales for submission of an EIA scoping opinion request and the approach to establishing the baseline for assessment. RiverOak confirmed that an EIA would be prepared and that a scoping opinion will be sought. RiverOak stated that the precise timescales would be agreed at a later date and following the appointment of appropriate consultants. However, it was indicated that the request would be made as promptly as possible. PINS did advise careful consideration of the timing of the request in order for the scoping opinion.

RiverOak indicated a likely submission date of Q4 2016. The Inspectorate advised that this was a tight timeframe particularly with regard to environmental survey information and noted the risk that if sufficient preparatory work wasn't completed during the Pre-application stage (including considering the scheme in sufficient detail) this could impact significantly during both the Acceptance and Examination proceedings if the application was accepted.

Specific decisions / follow up required?

- The Inspectorate to create a project webpage.
- A further meeting to be arranged for February 2016.
- Monthly update on progress of the scheme; face-to-face or via telecon.