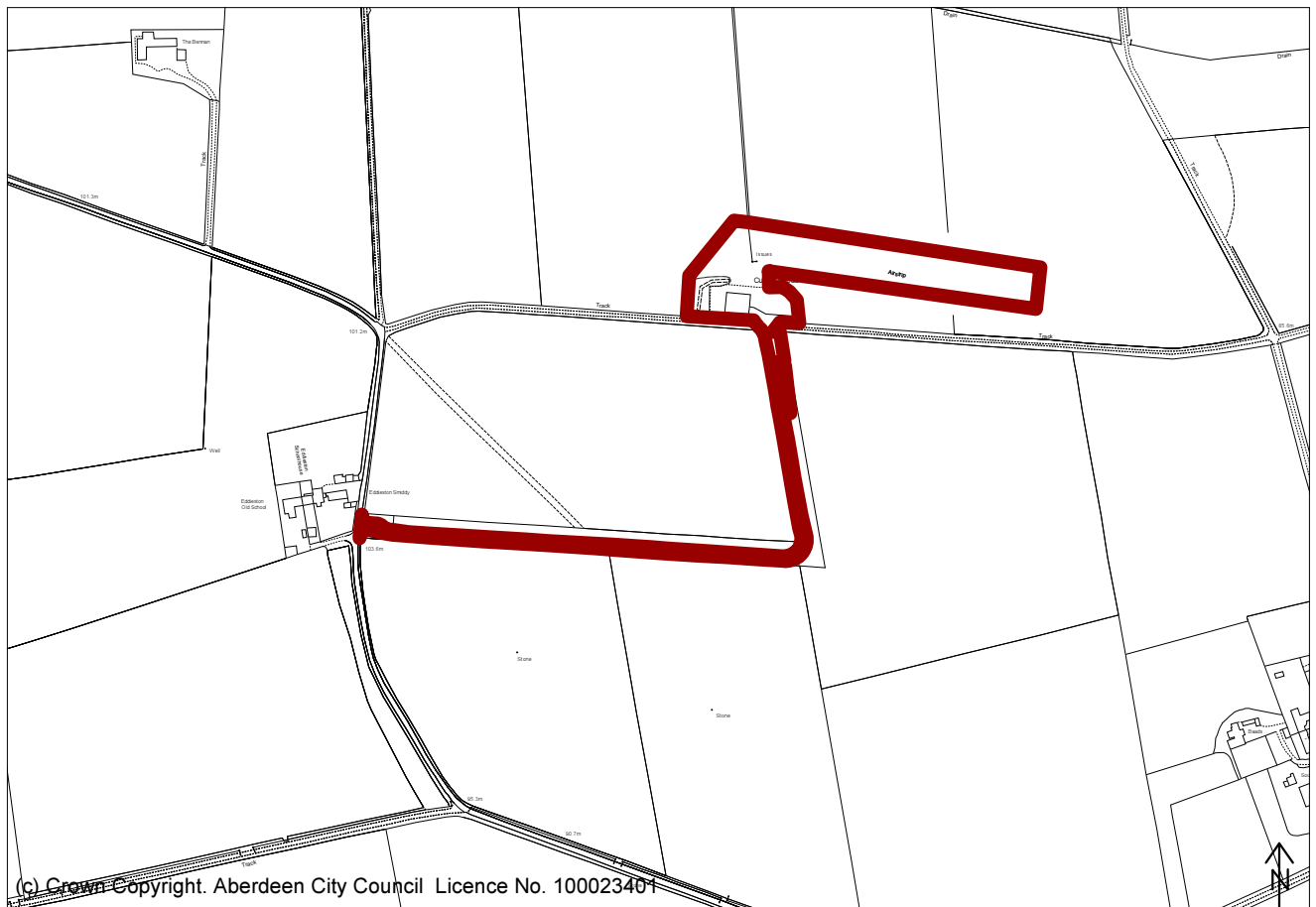


LOWER BAADS, ANGUSTON,
PETERCULTER

PROPOSED PERMANENT USE OF SITE
FOR HELICOPTER FLYING AND
TRAINING

For: HJS Helicopters Ltd, Mr Sydney
Simpson

Application Ref.	: P111147	Advert	: Dev. Plan Departure
Application Date	: 02/08/2011	Advertised on	: 17/08/2011
Officer	: Alex Scott	Committee Date	: 24 May 2012
Ward: Lower Deeside (M Boulton/A Malone/A Milne)		Community Council	: Comments



RECOMMENDATION: Approve Conditionally

DESCRIPTION

This site is located to the north-west of Peterculter and occupies a level area of land south of the Leuchar Burn which flows out of the Loch of Skene and joins the Culter Burn prior to flowing to the Dee. The area along the banks of the Leuchar Burn is flat, marshy ground known as Baads Moss and the farm known as Baads is located on higher ground to the south though the former steading has been converted into dwellings. There are a small number of relatively isolated dwellings in the vicinity though none directly adjacent to the small helipad and related hanger building. These facilities are accessed by a gravel track in good condition which lies to the east of the Anguston road and skirts round a forestry plantation to the helipad.

The land in the vicinity comprises rough grazing on the moss area with farm land and plantations on the higher, better drained ground.

HISTORY

The operation of a Helicopter pad on this site dates from 1999 when a temporary consent was granted for the operation; this was then extended by a further 5 years. A planning consent has also been granted for the hanger which is the only large building on the site though there are other ancillary structures such as fuel tanks within the site which comprises an area of level hardstanding and a surfaced roundel area for helicopter landing and take offs.

PROPOSAL

The application site as shown on the application plans includes the access road but the operational area of the helipad is less than 1.0 hectare in ground area. The application is therefore a minor submission and falls below the threshold for an Environmental Impact Screening consideration.

The application seeks planning permission for this established use without limit of time. A previous application was made to rectify this situation but was not determined as insufficient information was submitted by the agent and a new fresh application by a different agent was advised. The application has also been supplemented by the preparation of a noise assessment.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

The application has attracted comments from Culter Community Council and 6 letters of representation thus requires consideration by the Development Management Sub-Committee.

CONSULTATIONS

ROADS SECTION –no objections

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH –no response

COMMUNITY COUNCIL –Have no objection to the application but would agree with the inclusion of appropriate conditions

BAA – no objections

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was advertised but it appears that the free newspaper 'The Aberdeen Citizen' is not circulated in the Anguston area. In these circumstances a number of objections, which would otherwise have been considered late, have

been received and the main comments are:-

Local residents would like to see restrictions placed on operating times of this site
Concern over the number of helicopters in use

Future concerns over potential intensification of the use particularly if there is an ownership change.

The existing ambient level of noise in this countryside location is low and helicopter operation can be noisy.

Should be a small scale operation with only one training helicopter in use and no multiple helicopter operations

The provision of the recent Planning Advice Note on noise and developments, PAN 1/2011 needs to be taken into account.

PLANNING POLICY

The application site is within Green Belt as designated in the adopted 2012 Aberdeen Local Development Plan. Proposals for development associated with existing activities in the green belt will be permitted only if the development is within the boundary of the existing activity, is small scale, the intensification is not significantly increased and any construction is ancillary to existing facilities.

The portions of PAN1/2011 regarding potential noise generation and nuisance from proposals also require to be taken into account. The issues which may be relevant include the type of development and the likelihood of significant noise impact, the sensitivity of the location, the existing noise level and likely changes in noise level, the character, duration and frequency of any repetition and the time of day that noise is likely to be generated, the absolute levels and potential health effects.

EVALUATION

It should be noted that planning control can only be applied to the use and the activities on the ground; any flight control is by the CAA. It should be noted that this use has been in operation since 1999, now a period of 13 years and whilst the applicant has agreed to rectify the lapse in his planning consent the use and related activity have become established in this area. The operation of this activity near Culter supports the employment of 5 full time and 4 part-time staff.

In fairness to the applicant it should also be noted that apart from one complaint in 2005 no other complaints have been recorded against this operation. Whilst there are 6 letters of objection to the continued operation of this site no objections were made regarding the operation of the use without proper planning permission and, had this application not been made, it is probable that the activity would have continued without complaint or intervention.

The community council express no concerns regarding the continued operation of the helicopter site. The site is also occasionally used by the air ambulance service and the pipe line inspection aircraft (as the site is located along the pipeline route this facility minimises deviation from the line to fly to Aberdeen airport for refuelling) These ancillary activities are valuable facilities that reduces any delays at Aberdeen airport for refuelling which can be particularly important for the air ambulance service.

The noise impact assessment was requested to demonstrate whether any significant adverse noise impacts are likely to occur and to identify effective measures to reduce, control and mitigate any noise impact. HJS Helicopters provide tuition to private individuals and use two aircraft (Robinson R44). Typically the aircraft take off from the Helipad and head to the vicinity of Aberdeen airport to conduct training and during these periods there is no noise at adjacent residential properties. Training can also be held in the vicinity of the helipad involving 5-minute training sorties of which there will be no more than four in any one hour and a maximum of 3 sessions per day (with 2 hour gaps between sessions), resulting in a maximum of 12 sorties over one day. Weather conditions are a main constraint on the activity as, for example, in July 2011 only 10 days flying was possible owing to adverse weather conditions and during winter flying ceases at around 3:00 pm owing to visual flight requirements.

With regard to intensification it should be noted that, irrespective of the number of machines, there is limited flying capacity with the current airfield arrangements which are therefore self limiting. A more intense use of the existing machines would require additional airfield capacity which would require planning permission

Noise abatement routes have been agreed with the CAA and flights are restricted to avoid overflying of the closest properties. In order to minimise noise round the helipad the company lease four fields some distance away where exercises involving hovering training are undertaken.

Noise assessment was carried out in 2001 after the helipad was first established and the same positions for noise measurement were used in this more recent survey. The results of the 2012 survey are very similar to the 2001 levels indicating that no significant change or increase in noise from the site has occurred.

The operator had taken extensive precautions at business expense to ensure minimum impact on neighbours including consistently observing hours of operation, arrangements for remote landing outwith those times, arrangement of approach paths to minimise possible impact and leasing isolated fields to conduct hover training (this is the noisiest aspect of flight training)

It is therefore considered that this activity is undertaken in a responsible and careful manner which has now been in operation for some 13 years without significant complaint. There is no reason to doubt that this management approach will not be continued in the future and whilst the application is being supported in terms of the information currently to hand any intensification of activity would require a fresh consent. The application in its current form is therefore considered acceptable subject to a condition regarding operational times to avoid any risk of noise disturbance outwith these daytime hours.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve conditionally

That the use of the activities hereby granted planning approval shall be restricted to the following times:-

08:00am to 05:00pm Monday to Saturday

11:00am to 05:00pm on Sundays

unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority - in the interests of residential amenity

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The use has been established for over 10 years and is unlikely to lead to any undue noise nuisance to residential properties in the vicinity.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.