

Cheshire East SADPD Examination: Manchester Airports Group Hearing Position Statement

Matter 7: Transport and Infrastructure

Hearing Session: Thursday 21st October 2021

Q177. Is the provision in Policy INF 4 that development and uses necessary for the operational efficiency and amenity of Manchester airport will 'usually be permitted' within the operational area, justified and likely to be effective in controlling and mitigating the impact of airport operational development on surrounding communities?

Introduction

This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Manchester Airports Group in response to the Addendum to Matters, Issues and Questions for Examination (reference INS/11) and relates to Question 177 under Matter 7.

As set out in our response to the Publication Draft SADPD (representation number 763340), policy INF 4 is essential to retain the status of Manchester Airport's Operational Area within Cheshire East.

The following precis of national aviation policy, history of the Operational Area concept and how this has manifest itself in local planning policies over a considerable period of time, demonstrates that the definition of an Operational Area is crucial to facilitating the growth of airports (National Policy) and controlling and mitigating the impacts of airport growth on local communities (Local Policy).

National Aviation Policy

Government policy is currently set out in the Aviation Policy Framework 2013. This recommends that "land outside existing airports that may be required for airport development in the future needs to be protected against incompatible development ..." (paragraph 5.9). Consultation on a revised strategy and a green paper 'Aviation 2050 – the Future of UK Aviation' advocates maintaining this approach stating (paragraph 3.66) "it is prudent to continue with a safeguarding policy to maintain a supply of land for future national requirements and to ensure

that inappropriate developments do not hinder sustainable aviation growth". This effectively supports the rationale for the definition of an Airport Operational Area, within which airport related development should be concentrated.

Operational Area Concept

The allocation of Manchester Airport's Operational Area is a concept that first emerged in 1974. By their very nature airports need to be located in largely open areas reasonably contiguous to (or at least accessible to) large centres of population, precisely the areas likely to be designated as Green Belt. The Operational Area concept provided a route through the usually heavily restrictive green belt policy controls for the delivery of development at airports that has been a long held national policy objective in a manner that gives certainty and protection to local communities regarding where airport activity will take place. Its fundamental basis is to reserve sufficient land for the airport's long-term needs, preventing non-airport development from taking place within the Operational Area, whilst at the same time containing the airport's growth within that Operational Area and by definition discouraging it on land beyond the Operational Area where the normal Green Belt assumption would continue to apply.

Whilst the majority of the Airport's Operational Area is within the City of Manchester, it also includes land within Cheshire East. The Operational Area has been defined in the Airport Company's Development Strategy documents for a number of years. These documents publicly and clearly set out the airport's land use requirements, a process now endorsed in national aviation strategy, and have been subject to regular consultation and review since the first Development Strategy was prepared in 1982. The latest version, the Sustainable Development Plan, was finalised in 2016.

There have been no requests to extend the Operational Area within Cheshire East since publication of the 'Manchester Airport Development Strategy to 2005' in 1993. That Strategy proposed a series of extensions to the defined Operational Area, including land in Cheshire East. This proposal was formally considered at the Macclesfield Local Plan (1997) Inquiry and was endorsed by the Inspector and adopted by the Council.

Local Policy

Macclesfield Local Plan (2004)

Saved Policy T23 allocates land in the Green Belt for airport purposes (the Operational Area) and specifies those types of airport development which are permitted. It recognises the unique nature and characteristics of a major airport while providing the normal Green Belt presumption against other (non-airport related) uses in the area.

Cheshire East SADPD Revised Publication Draft (September 2020)

This emerging plan continues to allocate the Airport Operational Area, which MAG strongly supports. Policy INF 4 recognises the realities and practicalities of a major international airport being partly within the Green Belt; it follows a long-standing policy approach that has been consistently in place for over 40 years, that has been endorsed by various Local Plan Inspectors and acknowledges the role of airport master plans in the Local Plan making process.

Conclusion

MAG believe that the overall growth of the airport, the benefits it brings and the facilities needed to underpin that growth, represent material considerations in the context of the Development Plan and Green Belt policy. Decades of consistent policy treatment have shown the merits of defining an Operational Area to meet the long-term needs and support its continued success. Development Plan policies have been adopted and successfully applied which reflect the unique circumstances at the airport. In particular, the current Operational Area within Cheshire East has remained unaltered since its formal designation in the Macclesfield Local Plan in 1997. The second runway represents the vast majority of Operational Area within Cheshire East, which itself imposes development restrictions associated with maintaining the safe operation of the airport (runway protected surfaces, public safety zones etc). The one exception is the area adjacent to Moss Lane, Styal which is now entirely covered by planning consents relating to its development, which have been flagged in successive Airport master plans. Notably those consents have put in place permanent and extensive boundary landscaping providing a clear division between the airport Operational Area and the rest of the Green Belt giving local communities a high degree of mitigation from airport related development.

We therefore believe that the provision within Policy INF 4 that “in the operational area, development and uses that are necessary for the operational efficiency and amenity of the airport will usually be permitted” is appropriate, justified and effective in controlling and mitigating the impact of airport development on the surrounding communities.