

BRANSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL



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1st October 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: 15/2046/VAR – Branscombe Airfield Variation of conditions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 of planning permission 14/2140/VAR

At Branscombe Parish Council meeting held on 24th September 2015 the above planning application was discussed.

We have received **87** objections to the application and no correspondence in support to date. A list of names is attached for your information, which is not for publication and should be treated as confidential.

There is a long history of planning issues at this site, starting from a small personal permission for one aircraft through to the present situation of the flying permission being transferred to the land in 2014.

Branscombe Parish Council has, by and large, been opposed to the expansion of activities at this site. This opposition is supported by feedback from local residents and various businesses in the surrounding area. EDDC has allowed this creeping expansion to happen and we would note the officers' report for approval of application 08/2538/FUL where it is stated that this application was a once and for all permission and EDDC will not be minded to allow various creeping evolution of the airstrip by small scale amendments.

The Parish Council feels, following feedback, that the residents of Branscombe have been remarkably tolerant of the flying activities to date but feel that the massive increases requested in the 8 No. variations will seriously impact the local area residents and businesses already well established.

One application should not be allowed to impact a whole area and various businesses and local residents for the sake of monetary gain.

With this in mind, Branscombe Parish Council would respectfully like to bring your attention to a similar situation at Bagby Airfield, North Yorkshire, where Hambleton District Council were investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman and found the Council was guilty of maladministration through a “failure to maintain planning control over the use of the airfield for flights”. The Ombudsman also found that this had caused injustice for residents through disturbance from increased numbers of flights and a sense of frustration and apprehension about the possibility of uncontrolled future expansion. The Ombudsman’s also stated that the Council “needs to regain planning control over the use of the airfield”. The full report can be found at <http://democracy.hambleton.gov.uk/documents/s850/290514%20Item%203.pdf>.

Furthermore, Branscombe Parish Council would like to see an Environmental Impact Assessment for the Airfield to enable the Council to properly assess the planning application.

The Airfield is situated in the heart of the village on an elevated site in an AONB and close to a coastal preservation area. It can also be seen from the South West Coastal Path and various holiday locations throughout the village.

The Parish Council note that no mention of any increased safety measures have been stated in the application and have serious concerns about larger planes being allowed to land. We feel that this would impact on the safety of the campsite situated between the end of the runway and the hangerage area. Along with this is the fact that there is a public right of way across the runway that needs specific safety measures explained.

The Parish Council also has concerns over the number of air movements which the application has requested an increase from 500 to 2400 per annum. The applicant requests a further 50 movements per annum for heavier aircraft and also the ability to operate 300 pleasure flights per annum equating to 600 air movements. This could in reality make 3050 air movements per annum on one small grass air strip.

The Parish Council were alarmed to be informed that the applicant has an agreed acrobatic practice area to the seaward side of Branscombe with Exeter Air Traffic Control and feel that they should have been consulted before this decision was taken.

The Parish Council notes in Condition 6 that the Airfield shall be used for the operation of private aircraft with no instructional or training flights or ‘Commercial’ uses. What are pleasure flights in an open cockpit aircraft operating from this airfield classed as? Also if these flights are allowed to proceed what re-fuelling facilities have been allowed for on site? No risk assessment has been supplied.

Branscombe Parish Council feel that EDDC has been remiss in the policing of the current flying conditions imposed and would strongly recommend that more stringent ways of assessing whether the number of flights are being adhered to.

Branscombe Parish Council would also like to suggest that in order to manage and monitor the flights at the Airfield, a CCTV camera be installed that could be set up to provide evidence to support the activities on the site. It is very difficult for residents to collect evidence to support any breaches to conditions and it is felt that this would help monitor and control the site activities better.

Branscombe Parish Council would respectively point EDDC to the Local Plan policies:

- Policy EN1 (4) avoidance of noise disturbance and light pollution
- Policy EN15 Control of Pollution – 1), 2) and 3)
- Policy TO1 (2) – the proposal does not harm the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- Policy TO6 Provision of Visitor Attractions - (1), (2), (3) and (5)

And also the NPPF and in particular the following extracts:

- *“contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;*
- *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability;*
- **Pollution:** *Anything that affects the quality of land, air, water or soils, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or general amenity. Pollution can arise from a range of emissions, including smoke, fumes, gases, dust, steam, odour, noise and light.”*

Branscombe Parish Council would also request that this application should be resolved by the full EDDC Development Management Committee.

After a long debate the Parish Council resolved that they are not in support of the application as a whole. Each condition was discussed and resolved as follows:

Condition 1 – Unanimously resolved **not to support** the variation for the following reasons – increase in noise pollution, safety for the surrounding areas and public footpath together with increase in air pollution.

Condition 3 – Unanimously resolved **not to support** the variation for the following reasons – increase in noise, safety for the surrounding areas and public footpath together with increase in air pollution especially with older planes it is understood to be using leaded fuel.

Condition 4 – 3 Councillors voted not in favour of supporting this change with 5 abstaining and none in favour of supporting the change therefore we believe with appropriate amendments there could be a way of resolving this change of the condition.

Condition 5 – Unanimously resolved **not to support** the variation for the following reasons - increase in noise, safety for the surrounding areas and public footpath together with increase air pollution.

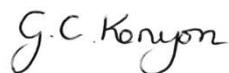
Condition 6 – Unanimously resolved **not to support** the variation for the following reasons – It is felt that this would be a commercial business and the application has not been treated as such. The increase in flights would affect noise, safety for the surrounding areas and public footpath together with increase air pollution and traffic on a narrow road approaching the site.

Condition 7 – Unanimously resolved to support this variation and would ask EDDC to condition screening the area with vegetation/trees to provide a minimum impact to the surrounding area.

Condition 8 – The Parish Council all abstained from voting either way for this condition as it was felt they were not in a position technically to advise if this was appropriate and asked if EDDC could approach Air Traffic Control at Exeter for advice.

Condition 9 – The Parish Council all abstained from voting either way for this condition as it was felt they were not technically informed on the movement of aircraft but would re-iterate that aircraft must avoid local residences at all times unless there were safety issues that would not allow this.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G.C. Kenyon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gail Kenyon
Clerk to Branscombe Parish Council