

Supporting Statement

Proposed maintenance access track to serve land at the former Lec Airfield, Bognor Regis – June 2014

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement is submitted on behalf of Sime Darby London Limited (SDLL) in support of a full planning application for the provision of a maintenance access track to serve land at the former Lec Airfield, off Felpham Way, Bognor Regis.

The proposed access track is to allow for vehicles to occasionally access the site to undertake routine maintenance. It forms a safer and better defined access route than the existing arrangement which is via a level crossing point of the branch railway between Bognor Regis and Barnham to the west of the application site. This statement sets out the background to the proposals, key planning policies, a description of the site, a description of the proposed development and a summary of the key issues.

Background

The former Lec Airfield site forms part of the land previously owned by Lec Refrigeration. It is currently accessed via an existing level crossing point across the branch railway track between Bognor Regis and Barnham. This level crossing known as Cox's Crossing is held under licence from Network Rail. Lec Refrigeration manufactured refrigeration products on land located to the west side of the railway track (between the railway and Shripney Road) between 1948 and 2004.

When Sime Darby London Limited (SDLL) purchased Lec Refrigeration in 1994, they acquired land on both sides of the railway including the airfield. Regular use of the airfield ceased and in 2001 the airfield hanger was destroyed by fire started by vandals.

SDLL has maintained, via Cox's Crossing, drainage ditches on the airfield land which carry surface water run-off from New Era Estate, Sainsbury's and Retained Land and which discharge into the Lidsey Rife. This access has also been used in connection with site investigation at the airfield relating to monitoring for land and ground water contamination required by the authorities. Additionally regular patrols are conducted in an effort to maintain security and safety of the site.

SDLL sold part of the former Lec site to Sainsbury's in 2011 and the residue site formerly known as the Retained Land to Polestar Cooling in 2014. Hence a replacement access route is required to allow continued maintenance of the airfield land and associated ditches. Accessing the site from the south, via Felpham Way, would provide a safer and more defined route than the existing which crosses the branch railway line.

The Site

The route of the proposed maintenance track traverses land, immediately to the north of Felpham Way, not in the applicants' ownership. However SDLL have secured the appropriate easement for the track from the land owners. The site is accessed directly off Felpham Way (A259) and is bisected by the Lidsey Rife, south of which the site is comprised largely of grassland used as pony paddocks. To the north of the Rife, the site comprises the former airfield with its disused tarmac runway. This area is mainly made up of grassland and patches of vegetation/scrub. There are a number of ditches which cross the site and only a small number of trees which are mainly located along the site boundaries.

Proposed Development

As set out above, there is an ongoing need to undertake maintenance of the airfield land and associated drainage ditches. This includes: maintaining the tarmacadam runway; grass-cutting and cutting back vegetation and; maintaining two ditches which feed into the Lidsey Rife taking water run-off from Sainsbury's, Polestar cooling and New Era Estate as previously described. Such maintenance activities require equipment and machinery which needs to be transported by vehicle. There is also a need to maintain a presence on site via regular security patrols by licenced providers for security and safety purposes.

The proposed access track will be approximately 800m long and will roughly follow part of the route of the north/south link road identified in the adopted and emerging Local Plans (see accompanying Site Plan which sets out the proposed route of the track).

A 5 metre timber gate will be created at the existing fence boundary at the southern end of the site at the existing access from Felpham Way. The track itself will be approximately 4 metres wide other than at 4 passing areas which will be 6 metres wide.

The track will be set at the existing ground level. The proposal is to strip and set aside topsoil and then provide a hardcore/capping layer fill of 300mm to provide the track. A temporary bridge will also be constructed to cross the Lidsey Rife. There will be a freeboard of about 600mm from the top of the existing river banks. Therefore, some embankment work will be required locally to raise the level of the banks by up to about 1 metre.

As the track will not be a permanent construction, it will be made of a semi-permeable material. A percentage of the rainfall will be allowed to infiltrate through the surface, whilst the remaining rainfall will run off the sides of the track on the surrounding land and into the Lidsey Rife. A small approximately 6 metre section of the ditch just to the south of the airstrip will be culverted to allow for the track to be constructed over the top. This application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment which concludes that the proposed development will not increase the run-off rates or volumes from the site and there will be an acceptable risk of flooding from extreme tidal events.

Movements to and from the site will be occasional and limited to those necessary to undertake maintenance and security checks on site. The impact on the local road network will therefore be negligible.

Vegetation trimming / removal will be kept to a minimum to allow for the construction of the track. Ecology and tree reports accompany this application and set out any relevant impacts and mitigation measures associated with the proposed development.

Summary

The proposed access track will have the appearance of a farm track. It will allow for vehicles to access the airfield land to undertake maintenance and monitoring activities. It proposes a safer route than the existing arrangement which crosses the branch railway line. It will also enable SDLL to undertake safety and security patrols on the airfield site.

The track will be of a temporary construction and will appear in keeping with its surroundings. Technical issues have been appropriately considered and flooding, ecology and tree impacts and mitigation measures are set out in the accompanying reports. The application does not raise any planning policy issues and should be approved accordingly.