

Reference – NN/180221/20

Planning Application Number: 20/02082/VARYCO

Date: 15/02/2021

Verbal Representation 18.02.2021 from Mr Doug Coppin.

The recognised language of aviation throughout the world is English, that said unless individuals are involved in aviation themselves it is very easy to misinterpret or misunderstand how aviation rules apply in everyday practice.

As the representative of the Applicant, I have experienced a positive shared learning journey with Northumberland County Council (NCC) Planning Department and all the departments involved. It is to the credit of NCC that due diligence has been adhered to in relation to this Planning Application Variation and the Applicant is extremely pleased that NCC fully appreciate the complexities of aviation rules and together we have dismissed many of the microlight myths.

The Planning Variations amount to a slight increase in the number of flying days permitted; a small increase in the number of landings and take-offs within a 24-hour period; a request to allow flying training to take place to help promote the sport, showcase Northumberland as a tourist destination and increase the employment of local flying instructors and airfield personnel. It also requests up to four flying events per year to raise funds for Charities.

Many villagers/tourists have enjoyed the offer of a charity flight and all local businesses have benefitted from working in partnership to promote local flying. At no time has there been any misadventures caused due to flying and no incidents have occurred in the last 20 years that have impacted negatively on the local community, the environment or animal welfare.

It feels unwarranted that so many objections have been logged on the portal from essentially two village postcodes, driven by 'personal', 'perceived', 'suggested' and/or 'misinterpreted' evidence. Other village residents living side by side have both supported the Application and objected to it. Unfortunately, those in objection to the proposals seem to have gone out of their way to solicit coaxed objections to help validate their own points of view. The Applicant has not used any aviation social media platforms or asked the hundreds of local pilots to support the Application, only 7 out of the 38 Athey's Moor pilots took their time to register their support, the rest of the support comments are from local residents and business owners.

Longframlington Parish Council, by their own admission (FOI) did not consult with any local residents prior to submitting their objection, claiming that they do not have to consult with local residents. Parish Council Committee members have never taken up the opportunity to engage with the airfield owner nor have they sought clarification to validate their objections regarding aviation matters, which seems a little unreasonable.

The Applicant has provided a third sound report upon request, provided detailed plans and additional video evidence to show how a circuit pattern works, how animals are not affected, how aircraft noise is kept to a minimum within NCC parameters, how the airfield circuit patterns are designed to avoid flying over housing where possible and what the aim of the flying 'festivals' events are trying to achieve.

We are keen to generate and promote the rural economy, celebrate community spirit and Northumberland tourism, whilst acknowledging the safety of others and respecting the local environment. A microlight tourist flight can take off, fly out to the coast taking in all the incredible beaches and castles, flying over Holy Island up to Berwick, then along the River Tweed, before crossing the Cheviot Hills to pick Hadrian's Wall and the Roman forts before returning to Atheys Moor all within 2 hours, producing less carbon footprint than any other motorised vehicle could do within the same time period.

In summary NCC should be congratulated for the care and attention they have taken regarding this Application. The Flying Farmers Association has over 400 members which requires each farmer to have a valid pilot's licence, airstrip and aircraft, these farms celebrate shared environments with livestock/crops. Atheys Moor is no different to this and has been in operation for 20 years and works within an active farm which prides itself on the non-use of pesticides and its own biodiversity, encouraging an increase in natural wildlife.

In relation to the proposed flying events the Applicant wishes merely to encourage local villagers/business owners/tourists to walk or drive down to the airfield and enjoy taking part in a fun and entertaining flying event, such opportunities should surely be celebrated and encouraged in these troubled times, so I would respectfully request that NCC Committee Members support this application in its entirety.

Doug Coppin