

Sue Tiley  
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
Herts AL8 6AE

12 October 2015

Dear Sue,

Many thanks for your letter dated 22 July 2015 asking for the LEP's views on the importance of the aerodrome to the local economy of both Welwyn Hatfield and Hertfordshire and whether we consider that there is a strategic need to retain the runway. I apologise for the delay in responding.

You sent through a number of documents for our consideration and considered the contents carefully in compiling this response. These documents are:

- "The Economic Impact of Panshanger Aerodrome" prepared by York Aviation in August 2014
- "Outline Business Plan for Panshanger Airfield" prepared by British European Aviation
- "Panshanger Airfield: Review of the York Aviation Economic Impact Report" prepared by ASA on behalf of Mariposa in May 2015
- "Panshanger Airfield: Review of British European Aviation's proposed business plan" prepared by ASA on behalf of Mariposa in May 2015

I have also met with Jane Quinton and Nigel Pickard concerning the airfield, who also provided a significant amount of information and examples from elsewhere.

The factors I have considered are as follows:

- Would a runway at Panshanger make a significant contribution to the infrastructure of Hertfordshire and significantly increase its connectivity?
- Would the type of employment or skills align with key economic sectors which the LEP prioritises?
- Would the level of employment and wider economic benefits be significant ?

BioPark, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 3AX  
01707 358744 • [info@hertfordshirelep.co.uk](mailto:info@hertfordshirelep.co.uk) • [www.hertfordshirelep.co.uk](http://www.hertfordshirelep.co.uk)

In terms of whether a runway at Panshanger would be a significant piece of infrastructure provision I have considered the following factors:

- The close proximity of Luton and Stansted airports, as well as proximity to Heathrow.
- The proximity and facilities available at other General Aviation Airfields, particularly at Elstree within Hertfordshire
- The previous use of the runway predominantly for flight training and recreational flying
- The proposal by BEA, which would also be predominantly for flight training and recreational flying
- The difficulties (both in terms of site constraints and costs) there would be in upgrading the site to be suitable for business flights and its unsuitability for helicopter flights

On the basis of these factors, the LEP would not consider that a runway at Panshanger would constitute a strategic piece of infrastructure which is required for Hertfordshire's economic growth. However, it does appear that there may be a shortage of capacity of General Aviation Airfields in the area north of London, including Hertfordshire, but this view is based due to anecdotal views on the difficulties of booking flight slots at Elstree and the type of flight training provided with limited take off and landing practise (compared with Panshanger).

Turning to the employment and skills angle and whether it is a strategic fit with the LEP's priorities. Our sector priorities include advanced manufacturing which would include aerospace. In terms of skills, we are interested in increasing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects as well as ensuring that training is provided to meet employer demands. In looking at the Panshanger operation, it would seem that both the flying school and hangaraged planes were likely to be small planes and older vehicles and that this would be unlikely to change with the BEA proposal and on a small scale basis. Whilst there is definitely a need for this type of training for young people or provide hands on experience, use, application or innovation around it is difficult to make a case for aerospace clustering at this location when there is Airbus in Stevenage, and Stansted and Luton airports just over the Hertfordshire boundary.

In terms of supporting University courses, the amount of flying required by the University of Hertfordshire courses (20 hours) does not seem a large figure and the current arrangements with Stapleford (whilst not ideal) seem to be working.

Lastly I have considered what the greatest economic benefit would be of the options that are being presented. The options which the Council are considering would seem to be :

- A) the repositioning of the current grass runway to the north of the site with housing and other amenities on the south side – provision of up to 500 homes
- B) No runway – provision of up to 700 homes
- C) Proposed amendment green belt boundary limits – provision of up to 1000 homes

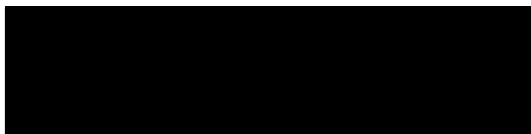
So the assessment would need to be whether there is greater economic benefit in options A or B (which cover the same area). We are not able to tell from the documents provided which option would provide the greatest economic benefit.

In addition, I am not aware of any businesses raising with us the importance of Panshanger or received any correspondence from businesses dismayed at its closure.

In conclusion, the provision of a runway at Panshanger may provide some local economic benefit or may assist to relieve possible congestion at Elstree.

In terms of funding for a new runway or other airfield infrastructure costs, a bid would need to be made setting out the economic and business case for the loan. It would be in competition with a wide range of other projects and would probably not score highly for either strategic fit or value for money based on the information provided so far.

Yours sincerely



Joan Hancox  
Infrastructure & Growth Manager