



Chalgrove Airfield support to UK MOD, UK Industry and Western defence Interests

Chalgrove airfield makes a very significant contribution both to the UK MOD Helicopter force and wider Western defence interests. As a UK licensed airfield, Chalgrove provides a relief landing ground (RLG) on a daily basis to UK MOD heavy lift helicopters, who enjoy flexible use of the airfield by both day and night. Helicopter operations at RAF Benson require RLG capability close to Benson for the execution of cost effective, efficient training. Without such a facility, transits to airfields further afield would be required with attendant negative effects on quality of training, efficiency and cost.

Chalgrove also provides Martin-Baker a location for airborne ejection seat testing from military fast jet aircraft and testing is carried out under a safety case agreed at UK CAA Director level. The safety case is dependent upon a significant safety trace specific to Chalgrove and military radar support provided by RAF Benson. Construction of housing within the airfield boundary would entirely prohibit the activity whilst Martin-Baker's capability to execute airborne ejection tests is unique in the world and a critical factor in securing foreign sales - Martin Baker seats are installed in approaching 200 military aircraft types across the globe. A statement that "Chalgrove is the only location in the UK where Martin-Baker Aircraft Company Ltd could execute airborne seat test activity efficiently, if at all" would stand technical scrutiny.

The current 1800m tarmac runway also provides runway capability for large military transport aircraft (eg C130 Hercules) which have previously landed at Chalgrove to transport explosives for use by other Western Air Forces. This capability has been pivotal to ensuring continuous military capability to allied forces in normal peacetime operations, whilst in times of increased tension, such a capability could be vital. The provision of a well maintained 1800m runway, close to London and available for various kinds of non-standard and emergency operations forms part of a UK aviation capability port-folio. Chalgrove has supported many overnight flights in support of NHS transplant operations as one of the few airfields apart from Heathrow/ Luton in the West London area that is fully available at short notice in the small hours when many of these missions occur. Chalgrove has facilitated ~80 aircraft movements per year over the last decade in support of life saving NHS transplants and many of these movements would have been impossible without the capability that Chalgrove provides. As an example, over the 2017 Christmas period, 22-28 Dec, Chalgrove was operational at short notice on 5 separate days in support of life saving flying. As the UK approaches Brexit, the importance of maintaining specialist UK infrastructure such as airfields, which cannot be simply be dismantled and re-assembled elsewhere, represents an important capability which cannot be easily replaced once it has been lost.