

Your Reference



Our Reference  
2603095/VJF01

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30 September 2019

Dear Mr Duffield

### Emerging Local Plan 2011-2033

#### Strategic Allocation – STRAT 9 Land at Chalgrove Airfield

My client received on Friday at 16.50 a copy of Homes England's letter of 23 September 2019 and the accompanying technical assessment purporting to respond to Martin-Baker's representations, which explained why Chalgrove Airfield is not available and why the creation of a new 3,000 market town is not compatible with Martin-Baker's operations.

There is insufficient time before the next set of Council meetings to respond to the technical assessment in detail and to correct the many inaccuracies and the incorrect assumptions. We are arranging for that exercise to be undertaken and will share a detailed response in due course.

For the purpose of the forthcoming meetings, we note that Homes England's assertions that the housing development can accommodate Martin Baker's operations appear to rely on the following:

- The nature of testing and manufacture at the site will change;
- The ageing nature of the Gloster Meteor means that Martin-Baker will have to reconsider the manner in which it conducts its trials and therefore it is questionable as to whether long term decisions around redevelopment of an aerodrome and the planning permission for a housing development should be determined based on the requirements of this aircraft. The inference being that Homes England's experts recognise the incompatibility of the low flying tests with the creation of a new market town on part of the airfield;
- Other airfields are available for aircraft unable to use the proposed new runway and to maintain Martin-Baker pilots' flying hours;
- The availability of further land to the north of the airfield guarantees that Martin-Baker's operations can be safeguarded.

#### The nature of testing and manufacture at the site will change

The sites in the Local Plan have been selected as capable of delivering homes during the plan period. Chalgrove Airfield has been included in the draft Local Plan to deliver 2025 homes within the plan period.

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We are not, therefore, concerned with long terms decisions as referenced in the technical assessment but the immediate future. The Local Plan Inspectors are looking for evidence as to how 2,025 homes will be delivered on this site within the plan period, taking into account, among other matters, the existence of Martin-Baker's active use. The Inspectors have also asked the Council to help them understand whether the reorganisation or removal of the Martin-Baker, including the stated potential use of a compulsory purchase order in paragraph 4.64 of the submitted plan, is compatible with its policy to retain employment land in Policy EMP3 and its objective to support the growth of all employment sectors as indicated in paragraph 6.15 of the submitted plan. We suggest clearly not.

It is fanciful to suggest that the testing and manufacturing of air ejection equipment will change during the plan period. As noted in section 5 of Martin-Baker's original representation, Martin-Baker does not expect any slowdown in the rate of production or testing. Martin-Baker's customers are transitioning to a new generation of aircraft (6th Generation), which will require a new generation of ejection seats. Martin-Baker expect to undertake more testing not less.

Martin-Baker is consistently receiving instructions on new customer programmes but the nature of those programmess are not necessarily discloseable due to their confidential nature. This statement also ignores the fact that Martin-Baker supply replacement parts which need to be tested. Martin-Baker's order book has and continues to remain strong.

The suggestion that the nature of testing and manufacture will change implies a slowdown or a different method of testing. Martin-Baker expect that the nature of future testing could in fact require more of the airfield rather than less and require them to increase the rate of production/use of pyrotechnics at Chalgrove Airfield, this could be severely restricted by the proposed housing development for the reasons alluded to in Martin-Baker's detailed representation.

Martin-Baker will also require the approval of the CAA for new and expanded operations and this may prove difficult to obtain due to security and public safety risks involved with the proposed housing development. Homes England 's advisors acknowledge in their report that it will take up to 2 years to obtain CAA approval for the proposed new runway.

As endorsed by Jeff Nichols, Escape System Engineering Lead, NAVAIR F-35 Aircraft Joint Programme Office, due to electronic obsolescence issues, ejection seat sequencer qualification programmes are recurring events. It is reasonable to expect that there will be many aircraft platforms that will have the need to perform in-flight testing in the future.

#### **The future of the Gloster Meteor testing**

As noted in Martin-Baker's representation there is no other means in the western world to conduct in-flight testing other than the Martin-Baker Meteor. If this capability is not available, this will cause a major issue for the completion of future programmes. A specific example of this includes the testing coming up using the Meteor to qualify the new NACES sequencer which is the ejection seat fitted to the F-18 aircraft. If the ability to test from the Meteor is lost, the means to satisfy the qualification requirements will also be lost which could impact F-18 aircraft deliveries.

In short Martin-Baker will continue to provide this means of testing in the foreseeable future and there is no reason to suggest that this means of testing or the use of the Gloster Meteor will cease during the plan period. Again the amount of testing using the Gloster Meteor is expected to increase. The suggestion that Martin-Baker simply revert to undertaking this testing elsewhere is not practical. Martin-Baker do not own



other airfields and no other airfields are currently licensed for the low altitude flying testing undertaken at Chalgrove.

#### **Availability of other airfield**

The suggestion that Martin-Baker and its customers simply use other airfields completely ignores Martin-Baker's operations, and the sensitive and complex nature of those operations. Martin-Baker is a commercial business, important to global defence and how it operates needs to be commercial, competitive and sensitive to its customers. The majority of Martin-Baker's customers are foreign governments and export control regulations require secrecy for military and dual use components. The use of other airfields for customers to land or for testing removes the ability of Martin-Baker to accommodate the need for secrecy and to respond to the export regulations. Martin-Baker is an active user of the airfield and it has an existing lease of the airfield which is not due to terminate until March 2063. Its existing operations mean that it can meet the needs of its customers with certainty and in full compliance of military regulation.

#### **The availability of further land to the north**

Homes England are fully aware that Martin-Baker has consistently expressed concern over any relocation of its existing operations due to a risk of noise nuisance claims and its operations being curtailed as a result of such claims. Martin-Baker's existing operations have taken place on the site for in excess of 20 years and so are protected from any claims. The tests and the pyrotechnic manufacture create substantive amounts of noise, which may lead to complaints. If Martin-Baker's operations are relocated then it has lost its long user defence. At the moment Martin-Baker have virtually complete flexibility over the noise they create and such flexibility will be constrained if the housing development goes ahead and Martin-Baker's operations have to be relocated.

#### **Protection of Airfields**

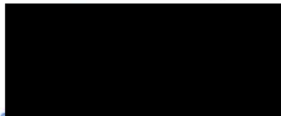
Since Martin-Baker's original representation, work has continued by the Airfields Working Group of the All Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation to protect airfields. Grant Shapps MP who chaired the Group is now the Secretary of State for Transport. General aviation is a high priority area for the Department for Transport. The Secretary of State has acknowledged the wide range of services to aircraft and emergency services the airfield supports and the vital importance of these. A copy of recent correspondence from the Rt Hon. Grant Shapps is attached to this letter.

I ask that a copy of this letter and the attachment are made available to Council members, given that the Homes England's representation has been made available to Council members in the reports pack.

I have consistently appeared before the various Council meetings to explain Martin-Baker's position and will do so again. The purpose of the forthcoming meetings is to decide the options for the draft Local Plan and I ask on behalf of my client that any review of the Local Plan or modifications are used to reappraise Chalgrove Airfield, particularly in light of the Inspectors' comments regarding deliverability and how the selection of Chalgrove Airfield is consistent with the Council's objective to support the growth of all employment sectors.

Should you have any questions you wish to be clarified, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Vicky Fowler.

 Vicky Fowler  
Partner



Department  
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State  
The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

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Our Ref: MC/266910

*Dear James,*

18 SEP 2019

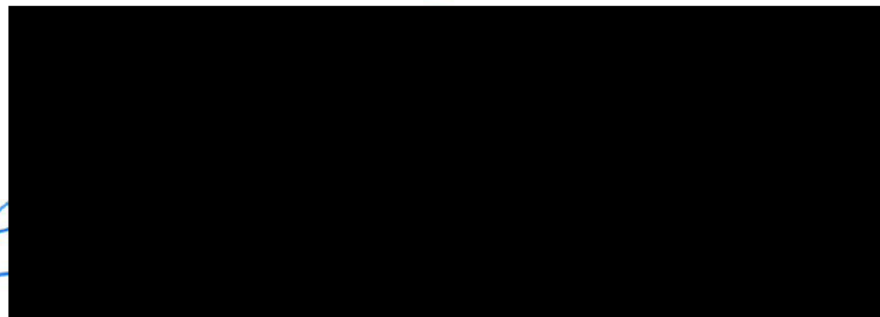
Thank you for your letter of Wednesday 4 September 2019, providing an update about Chalgrove Airfield and enclosing additional analysis of the impacts of the proposed housing development on the operations of Martin-Baker Aircraft Company Limited (MBACL).

As you are aware, general aviation (GA) is a high priority area for the Department for Transport. The government wants to preserve the benefits derived from GA and ensure appropriate and proportionate protection for the significant parts of the network that underpins that contribution. I know that Chalgrove Airfield offers a wide range of services to aircraft and emergency services, and these are of vital importance.

I also appreciate that MBCAL has significantly contributed to the aviation industry, saving over 7000 lives with its ejector seats and engaging with customers both domestically and internationally.

I have therefore passed on the information you sent me to my officials, who are currently looking into the proposed development affecting Chalgrove Airfield. They will then provide me with advice on the options to explore, and I very much encourage you to work with them.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

