

LOCAL REVIEW STATEMENT

Reference No: 21/00018/PP

Applicant: Mr Brendan Walsh

Proposal: Erection of a steel building for the storage of airfield maintenance equipment and aircraft and formation of hardstanding area

**Site Address: Glenforsa Airfield,
Glenforsa, Isle of Mull**

Preliminaries

This further statement has been prepared in response to the Planning Officer's comments on the case presented in the Applicant's original Local Review Statement.

It should be stressed that the Applicant never declined to submit supporting information, as again suggested by the Planning Officer. His response to the question he was asked by councillors explains this.

"Over a five-year period, the Applicant spoke to the various case officers, and explained why he needed the building. He also emailed on several occasions, with information, and met case officers on site. He thought that would suffice, particularly as so much of his case related to the requirement to have a building for airfield uses on an operational airfield, which he thought case officers understood. It was only when the application was refused that it dawned on him that it wasn't. Unfortunately, due to an IT issue, he doesn't have his emails to the case officers, but assumes that the Planning Service will have those."

The remainder of this statement responds to the comments made by the Planning officer in the order they appear in his statement.

General Operational Requirement– The Applicant currently stores his machinery and tools outside under tarpaulins, or in the open (see below), with some small tools kept in a storage container in the hotel car park. This temporary solution has sufficed up to now. However, being stored outside has led to deterioration to machinery and tools, and additional maintenance issues and costs, which would be avoided if everything could be kept inside and dry in a purpose-built hangar.



The Applicant's aircraft cannot be stored at the airfield because there is no hangar. Allowing one will, therefore, allow this aircraft, and others that may be trapped at the airfield in bad weather, to be stored in the dry. As many of these aircraft are vintage, they are susceptible to damage, and not having a hangar means that many vintage flyers are wary in flying to Mull other than in perfect weather conditions. If they knew that a hangar existed, they would be more prepared to fly to the island where weather conditions are a bit more changeable.

Economic Benefit – None of the events listed in the original Local Review Statement, nor the tourism and business visits, could happen without the Applicant having the machinery available to maintain the airfield, which need to be stored somewhere, and preferable not outside at risk from inclement weather, damage and theft.

The airfield has no fulltime employees, but does employ various people on a part time basis who otherwise work at the Applicant's hotel. Taken together, it supports the equivalent of 1.5 fulltime posts. If the Applicant can encourage more visitors, and hold more events, then this may increase.

The use also supports other jobs on the island in that the Applicant often needs to employ local mechanics to maintain his equipment, and contractors to undertake specialist tasks such as fencing, drainage etc.



Locational Requirement for a 'Countryside' Site – The reasons why the Applicant chose the site are sound planning reasons. If you exclude the area of the operational airfield, and the areas that are important for agriculture, which includes the Rural Opportunity Area, you are left with very few locations where a hangar could go.

The site chosen has direct access to the airfield, and also has the benefit of a backdrop of trees, so is visually discreet, which again is a planning consideration.

Locating the building away from the hotel and houses is also obvious in that moving and maintaining machinery can be noisy, and the Applicant does not want to compromise the residential amenity of his neighbours.

The only part of the Rural Opportunity Area that the Applicant could have put the hangar on is the field that lies between the site chosen and the hotel and houses. This is used by the farmer as grazing land, and a holding area for livestock, so is part of the ground that is best for agriculture, and so best avoided. Also, the Applicant would struggle to persuade the farmer to allow him to use this land whereas the prospect is better for that agreement to be forthcoming on the site chosen instead, which is of lesser importance to the farmer.

It should also be noted that the Rural Opportunity Area will disappear, once the new Local Development Plan 2 comes into play, with this land, and the application site, having the same status as 'Countryside Area'.

Area Capacity Evaluation (ACE) – The Applicant does not understand why an ACE cannot be undertaken, given that planning officers have visited the site, so have presumably taken site notes, and taken photographs.

The application site is the subject of no landscape or biodiversity designations. It is a flat area of land that has the operational airfield to the front, with the coast beyond that, and an area of woodland to the rear (see below).



From the site you can see across the airfield to the coast. The only views of the building will be from the front (airfield), and from offshore at a considerable distance. There are no formal core paths, or informal footpaths, from which the building would be visible.

The building will have a permanent impact on the landscape that is true. However, in terms of the ACE guidance, and the ‘receptors’ in this area, which we say are the local residents, and to a lesser extent hotel residents and users of the airfield, the impact will be ‘low’ to ‘negligible.’ Even that impact can be mitigated by careful colour choice for the building, and some planting around the building.

Summary – It is gratifying that the Planning Officer accepts that *“there could well be a genuine operational requirement for a new hanger/storage building”* on the airfield, and hopefully the further information provided in this statement will be seen by him as sufficient to now support the proposal.

There is a clear locational necessity and economic benefit that supports the proposed building, as set out in the original Local Review Statement, and this further one, and a cogent case for why the Rural Opportunity Area is not available or suitable.

It is considered that the information provided to councillors by the Applicant demonstrates a clear 'exceptional case' for this development on the airfield as required by policy LDP DM 1 (E).