

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 1999
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR 15/1999**

**RESPONSE OF SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL TO A REQUEST SUBMITTED UNDER
REGULATION 5 OF THE EIA REGULATIONS BY HALCION LIMITED FOR A SCREENING
OPINION FROM THE COUNCIL AS PLANNING AUTHORITY IN RESPECT OF
PROPOSED CAR PARKING FACILITIES AT GLASGOW PRESTWICK AIRPORT**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The owners of Glasgow Prestwick Airport have advised the Council that the Airport Company has recently acquired an area of land close to the existing terminal building. The intention of the Company is to consolidate the Airport's existing car park operation by providing some 2000 new spaces in a more centrally located site and to remove the peripheral car parks currently operated by the Airport. The Airport Company has requested from the Council a formal screening opinion as to whether an environmental impact assessment is required for the proposed development.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The approved structure plan for the area is the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan. The key policy within this plan in relation to the proposal is policy W3. This policy states that the provision of airport-related facilities shall be supported subject to adequate mitigation of any harmful environmental consequences. The structure plan also ensures that development does not adversely impact upon water quality through policies G2 and G8.
- 2.2 The adopted Local Plan covering this area is the Ayr and Prestwick Local Plan (1989). Although this plan is considerably outdated and due to be superseded in the near future it remains the adopted plan for the area and for this reason cognisance must be given to its content. The plan identifies the site as being covered by policy REC3 which seeks to retain the site for its existing recreational uses.
- 2.3 The Finalised South Ayrshire Local Plan (2002) prepared by South Ayrshire Council identifies the proposed development site as being covered by policies IND1 and AIR3. Policy IND1 relates to conformity with the Industrial Strategy of the Plan. The Industrial Strategy seeks to safeguard and promote the site for airport terminal facilities. Policy AIR3 is concerned with the expansion of the terminus facilities within this area provided that such development is directly concerned with the requirements of the airport. It is anticipated that this plan will supersede all other local plans within South Ayrshire in Spring 2007.
- 2.4 Within the Wildlife Strategy of the South Ayrshire Local Plan the section of the Pow Burn which passes through the proposed development site is identified as being a Wildlife Corridor. Under the terms of the Wildlife Strategy the Council seeks to protect and enhance the network of green corridors within South Ayrshire.

3.0 Site Description

- 3.1 The proposed development site was most recently in use as a golf driving range; this facility having closed in December 2006. It is located adjacent to the A79 and accessed via Monkton Road which is located along the eastern boundary of the site. The Pow Burn dissects the site before running along its western boundary.

- 3.2 The site is a relatively flat and low lying piece of land with only a few small ridges throughout. It is surrounded by trees and hedges along the western and southern boundaries. Located along the eastern boundary there are some trees as well as a wall which separates the site from the adjacent Monkton Road. A road also runs to the north of the site providing access to the nearby Freight Centre.
- 3.3 Land uses around the site include Airport, residential, industrial and office/business. Glasgow Prestwick Airport is located to the north west of the site whilst one of the existing airport car parks is located adjacent to the proposed development site on its western boundary. The industrial and business land uses within the area are largely associated with the operations of the airport and are located to the north and north east of the site. The residential land is located to the east, on the opposite side of Monkton Road and to the south east.

4.0 Selection Criteria for Assessment to Inform Screening Opinion

- 4.1 The proposal is considered to be an urban development project comprising a "Schedule 2 development" under the terms of the EIA Regulations. This assessment which informs the screening opinion is therefore examining whether the development is likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 4.2 In accordance with Schedule 3 of the Regulations (as reproduced at Annex B to the Circular) the following selection criteria are used to inform the screening opinion.

Characteristics of Development: -

- a) the size of the development;
- b) the cumulation with other development;
- c) the use of natural resources;
- d) the production of waste;
- e) pollution and nuisances;
- f) the risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances or technologies used.

Location of Development: -

- a) the existing land use;
- b) the relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area;
- c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas: -
 - i) wetlands;
 - ii) coastal zones;
 - iii) mountain and forest areas;
 - iv) nature reserves and parks;
 - v) areas classified or protected under Member States' legislation; areas designated by Member States pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora;
 - vi) areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in Community legislation have already been exceeded;
 - vii) densely populated areas;
 - viii) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

Characteristics of the Potential Impact

Consideration of the potential significant effects of the development in relation to the foregoing criteria and having particular regard to: -

- a) the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population);
- b) the transfrontier nature of the impact;
- c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact;
- d) the probability of the impact
- e) the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

5.0 Assessment: Characteristics of Development

- 5.1 Paragraph A.19 of Circular 15/1999 states that development proposed upon sites which have not previously been developed are more likely to require an EIA where the scheme is greater than 5 hectares. Although the proposed site is 6 hectares it has been previously developed as a golf driving range. There appears to be no evidence to suggest any issues of concern in relation to the cumulative impacts of the development.
- 5.2 In terms of natural resources there is the Pow Burn which runs through the site. A section of the Burn to the east of this site is designated as a Wildlife Site, although this designation does not encompass the proposed development area. The site is recognised for having locally rare habitats and nationally rare species as well as locally uncommon species. There may be implications as a result of this designation which should be explored given the potential for the site to be used as a feeding and expansion zone. There is only a small area of built development within the site comprising of the former reception, shop and café of the golf driving range together with the bays for the driving range. The majority of the site is covered in grass.
- 5.3 The Pow Burn is also designated as a Wildlife Corridor within the South Ayrshire Local Plan. Accordingly, the Council suggests that a fully comprehensive assessment takes place into the implications of the proposed scheme upon this corridor. In addition the Council are aware that there is evidence of Water Vole activity further downstream and would be keen to ensure that the development does not result in adverse impacts upon these species or their habitats. It is suggested that mitigation measures will most likely be required in this respect.
- 5.4 The trees and hedges which surround the site are also of importance given that they can often be nesting sites for birds and bats as well as acting as navigational tools through this area.
- 5.5 The volume of waste produced as a result of the proposed development is unknown. There could be a potential increase in pollution and nuisances as a result of the increase in vehicular activity in the immediate area. The risk of accidents could also be increased as a result of the increase in vehicular activity and this would require to be fully addressed as part of a comprehensive traffic assessment.

6.0 Assessment: Location of Development

- 6.1 The proposed development would take place upon a piece of land previously in use as a golf driving range. There are no statutory designated areas within the boundaries of the site. There are two scheduled ancient monuments and three listed buildings within close proximity although it is unlikely that they will be adversely affected by the proposed development. There are no known archaeological interests within the site.

- 6.2 As stated above part of the Pow Burn to the east of the site forms a non-statutory designated Wildlife Site.

7.0 Assessment: Characteristics of the Potential Impact

- 7.1 The consideration of criteria in the examination of the characteristics and location of the development suggest that from its assessment of the relevant matters at this stage the Council is of the view that environmental impact is unlikely to be of a significance that would require a formal environmental impact assessment at this time.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 From the assessment undertaken in accordance with the Regulations and Circular 15/1999 the Council concludes that the proposed development of new car parking facilities on 6 hectares of land at Prestwick Airport, as shown on the map forming part of the screening request, is unlikely to result in effects on the environment which are sufficiently significant to require a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 8.2 However, there are matters of an environmental nature that require proper assessment, particularly in relation to the adjacent Wildlife Site and the Wildlife Corridor within the site, and on which the Council would require competent submissions from an applicant to accompany any planning application for the development referred to in this screening opinion request. As part of its request for a screening opinion the Airport Company provides a 'Proposed Scope of Environmental Report'. The Council considers the content of this, including specifically the identified need for a flood risk assessment, ecological assessment and a traffic assessment to be satisfactory: but reserves its position to request enhanced or additional information at a subsequent date if there is a reasonable basis upon which to make such a request.
- 8.3 Notwithstanding any of the above, the Council, in considering any outline, full or reserved matters planning application for all or part of the development site, retains the option of requiring the submission of a formal EIA, should new information and/or changed circumstances make such a requirement reasonable and appropriate.