EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Aerohub Business Park @ Newquay Cornwall Airport

Key Issues –
The site had a number of key issues which were addressed in the EIA process. These include:

- A flexible approach to EIA to allow for a range of development within the design parameters.
- A probable prehistoric/Romano-British settlement close to the site and potential for below-ground remains on the site.
- The removal of some historic Cornish hedgerows.
- Major ground works and the introduction of new urban elements will have adverse impacts on the attractive agricultural landscape pattern and valley side character.
- Presence of legally protected species including bats, dormice, badgers, reptiles and nesting birds.
- The inclusion of the drainage strategy and SuDS techniques to minimise impacts on surface water, flood risk and private water supplies.
- The creation of a number of new jobs in an area that suffers from higher than average unemployment.

Purpose of the project
Cornwall Development Company is working with Cornwall Council to secure a Local Development Order (LDO) for a Business Park within an Aerohub Enterprise Zone at Newquay Cornwall Airport. An LDO provides permitted development rights for specific types of use within a designated area. This designation reduces business rates, simplifies the planning process and will allow the site to realise its true potential to create jobs and economic growth.

Description of the project
The 35.5ha site, currently used as grazing land, is located in a rural area south west of Newquay Airport, Cornwall. The business park could provide a flexible development area of up to 115,000 sqm over 3 storeys of predominantly B1, B2 and B8 use, plus a hotel, developed over 15 to 20 years. Existing areas of woodland and some Cornish hedgerows will be improved or retained and the site layout will include landscaping and ecological mitigation.
Lessons learnt

An extensive team made up of the client, architects, local landscape designer, planners and multidisciplinary environmental specialists had to work together to deliver an LDO application in a tight timescale. Regular face to face meetings provided a useful way to share information, discuss issues and develop the design together. When meetings weren’t scheduled, the use of email actually made this process slower!

The final proposal had to integrate environmental, economic and design aspirations. The whole team needed to understand the implications of how these aspects impacted on one another. For instance, in order to maximize the development area, the visual and landscape impact increased, and therefore more mitigation was needed in design. Again, clear communication across the team was needed.

The inclusion of planning expertise was fundamental to understanding the LDO and Enterprise Zone Planning Process and what was required in the EIA.

Lessons learnt cont.

Early mobilization of baseline surveys and immediate feedback of results ensure that key environmental constraints were addressed at the outset of project development.

Better coordination was needed between traffic team, air and noise specialists. A better understanding of deadlines and format required for traffic data would have reduced the pressure on air and noise team.

With limited time available for consultation, the use of the Newquay Airport Environmental Steering Group (including statutory consultees), the Cornwall Design Review Group and a public consultation day enabled key issues to be raised and addressed prior to submission.

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