

**REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 7 MARCH 2007**

**SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT NOISE CONTOURS AT RAF LOSSIEMOUTH AND KINLOSS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The Ministry of Defence have provided the Moray Council with revised noise contours for RAF Lossiemouth in relation to the current Tornado GR4 aircraft. This environmental noise information requires to be taken into account in particular in relation to proposed noise-sensitive housing development that falls within the designated noise contours.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D(1) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as Planning Authority.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **The Committee approve the guidelines that a Noise Impact Assessment is required for planning applications for noise-sensitive housing development falling within Noise Exposure Category C of the noise contour maps, otherwise a recommendation for refusal will be made.**
- 2.2 **The Committee agree that noise-sensitive housing development within Noise Exposure Category D be refused.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

**3.1 The Noise Exposure Category principle**

The Noise Exposure Category principle is detailed within the Scottish Executive Planning Advice Note (PAN) – PAN 56 – Planning and Noise. They refer to noise-sensitive development within areas subject to road, rail, air and mixed transportation noise. These are detailed in Annex 1 of PAN 56 and are reproduced in detail in **Appendix 1** of this report. The summary table of Noise Exposure Categories A to D is represented below:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>A</b> | Noise need not be considered as a determining factor in granting planning permission, although the noise level at the high end of the category should not be regarded as desirable,  |
| <b>B</b> | Noise should be taken into account when determining planning applications and, where appropriate, conditions imposed to ensure an adequate level of protection against noise. For proposed development subject to the high end of the category a Noise Impact Assessment will assist authorities in identifying appropriate noise mitigation measures. |
| <b>C</b> | Planning permissions should not normally be granted. Based upon the evidence contained within a Noise Impact Assessment, however, it may be possible to grant permission subject to measures that ensure an adequate level of protection against noise.  |
| <b>D</b> | Planning permission should generally be refused.   |

### 3.2 Previous Ministry of Defence policy and current suspension of Noise Insulation Grant Schemes (NIGS)

Historically the Ministry of Defence have administered Noise Insulation Grant Schemes (NIGS) to offer insulation packages to existing properties within defined contours. The contours were defined through a combination of on-site measurements around the airfields and acoustic evaluation of the number of take-offs, landings, spins, overshoots, etc. Those residential properties found to be eligible were contacted and given the offer of taking up the Scheme. Previous noise contours for eligibility were those found within a 70decibel (dB) zone, as measured over a 12 hour period. Nationally NIGS Schemes have been suspended with no current prospect of resumption. Recent advice to this Authority clarified that the MOD would not consider new build property as eligible and would instead look to the Local Authorities to apply National Government Advice contained with PAN56. Furthermore, previous NIGS were voluntary and placed no obligation on householders to uptake the Scheme. Application of the Noise Exposure Category principle therefore ensures a more consistent approach to new build property.

## 4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

### (a) **Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

The content of this report complies with the aims of the Social and Environmental Programmes of the Corporate Development Plan and one of the key aims of the Community Plan to encourage safe, healthy and caring communities.

**(b) Policy and Legal****(1) Interpretation of revised contours**

The Authority was provided with the review of the aircraft noise contours in November 2005 for the Tornado GR4's (**Appendix 2**). This represents the long term environmental noise levels around the airfield to at least 2016. The Authority has to have regard to the contours for outline and full planning applications, in accordance with PAN56. Substantial research and internal discussions on the implications of this information have taken place and at the time of writing work is continuing regarding evaluation of settlements around Lossiemouth for the emerging Local Plan.

This Authority therefore takes cognisance of these contours for future land use allocation and for outline and detailed applications. In order to determine the category of sites close to Noise Exposure Category boundaries the Council will have regard to its GIS system and digital mapping information from the Ministry of Defence. Noise-sensitive development found within Noise Exposure Category C, ie  $L_{Aeq}$  16 hr 66 to 72 dB, would require to be provided with a Noise Impact Assessment. This would detail measures to reduce external aircraft noise to acceptable internal levels within living apartments, ie living room, dining rooms, bedrooms, etc. Bathrooms and kitchens would be excluded. The Noise Impact Assessment would have regard to "BS8233: 1999 Sound Insulation and noise reduction for buildings – Code of Practice".

Noise Exposure Category D extends south west and north east from the principle runway (Runway 23) and highlights those areas subject to the highest level of aircraft noise. PAN 56 highlights that  $L_{Aeq}$  72dB is the limit of standard acoustic insulation packages that would achieve reasonable internal noise levels. Furthermore the amenity of external garden areas associated with housing development would also be affected.

From the noise contour map, it can be observed that major towns, villages and settlements do not fall within NEC D although the south-west extension covers a significant proportion of agricultural land and existing individual properties. In this area planning permission should generally be refused.

Applications for outline permission are also considered in respect of the noise contours. Again, those applications for outline planning permission within NEC D are recommended for refusal. In respect of noise sensitive housing development within NEC C, the absence of detailed plans will dictate that outline planning permission will require to be refused. As an alternative, applicants

will have the option of submitting an application for full planning permission on the basis of which, a detailed noise assessment can be carried out prior to planning permission being granted. Elsewhere suspensive conditions could be used where they are considered to be necessary.

(2) Future changes to aircraft type

The Ministry of Defence advised this Section in January 2007 that the expected arrival of the replacement for the Tornado, ie Joint-Combat Aircraft (JCA), is not anticipated prior to Financial Year 2015/16, thus taking it beyond the Current Local Plan Review timeframe of 2013. They therefore confirm that the current Tornado GR4 noise profile be used to guide current Development Control and Development Plan review purposes. The Authority is advised that as the emerging JCA commences testing and evaluation, further information will be provided to the Council.

In particular, the existing tornado noise contours are based on the predominant runway 10/23. The cross-runway is in minimal use and therefore does not significantly influence the long term noise profile. On the basis of current information the JCA may require the use of the cross runway for operational purposes and future planning decisions will require to take account of this, in order to avoid potential incompatibility of uses with the existing airfield and future housing development. Further to this, the Authority is writing to the Ministry of Defence on this particular aspect.

(3) RAF Kinloss Noise Contours

Whilst this report principally covers the revised contours at RAF Lossiemouth, it is considered of value to advise the Committee of the situation at RAF Kinloss. In general terms, it can be considered that the noise contours at RAF Kinloss are less impactful on existing residential development than at Lossiemouth. NIGS contours were last reviewed in 2001 at RAF Kinloss and it is acknowledged that the original survey of 1985 is still valid. **(See Appendix 3)**

It should be noted that the noise contours are based on historical NIGS values of  $L_{Aeq}$  12 hour 70 dB, 75 dB and 83 dB. Conversion of these figures to 16 hour Noise Exposure Category values involves a deduction of 2 decibels at each contour. Subsequently, those planning applications for noise-sensitive development within the 70dB contour correspond with Noise Exposure Category C and the requirements for a Noise Impact Assessment are as detailed for the same category at RAF Lossiemouth. The 75dB contour corresponds with Noise Exposure Category D and applications for noise-sensitive development would be recommended for refusal, in accordance with PAN 56 and the

procedure highlighted in this report for RAF Lossiemouth. The latest available information is that there will be a temporary migration of some existing Tornado GR4's to RAF Kinloss on arrival of the JCA to RAF Lossiemouth. This is not likely to be until beyond 2015/16. The replacement of the existing Nimrod MR2 to the MRA4 is not due to take place until at least 2017. Prior to that date, environmental impact assessment will be undertaken by the Ministry of Defence and reported to this Authority at an early opportunity. The approach highlighted above will therefore be subject to review when new information is available.

**(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

None.

**(d) Consultations**

The Planning and Development Manager  
The Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing)

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1** The provision of revised noise contours for RAF Lossiemouth and existing contours at RAF Kinloss (See **Appendices 2 and 3** respectively) has provided the Authority with environmental information that assists in determining the Noise Exposure Category of proposed residential development. These contours are also to be used for Development Control and Development Plan Review purposes.

Author of Report: Environmental Health Manager and Development Control Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: DMcK/AS/DC/BDH