

Min. Of Aviation and D.H. want to Retain Airfield

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THE de Havilland Aircraft Company, Hatfield, acting in conjunction with the Ministry of Aviation, has lodged a formal objection to the Hampshire Development Plan proposals in so far as these press for the release of Christchurch airfield for housing development within the next 10 years. The objection, expressing the opinion that the development of the Airfield is not in compliance with planning control, is a clear indication that both the owners of the airfield (Ministry of Aviation) and its present users (de Havillands) wish the land to remain an airfield well beyond 1971.

WE HAVE MADE 100 SEA VIXENS



CHRISTCHURCH has now made 100 Sea Vixens against contracts with the Admiralty. Present when the 100th machine left the Flight Shed was Mr. H. G. Sturgeon, Managing Director of the de Havilland Aircraft Company. He appears in this picture with Mr. G. Davis, Mr. P. Withers, Mr. G. Briggs and some of the men who have still to make many more of this most complex aircraft for the Royal Navy.

The airframe structure of the Sea Vixen is an example of some of the finest work of modern aeronautical engineering which has been developed with great skill by the Christchurch men.

The importance of the step and the wages-value of an aircraft industry to a locality is underlined by the accompanying picture of the 100th Sea Vixen, made in Christchurch. and by a de Havilland spokesman's comment that "not many Sea Vixens could be bought for £1,000,000!"

An Uneasy Week

The wording of the de Havilland objection reads:

"I refer to the proposals for alteration or addition to the above development plan which were submitted to you on the 8th August 1961.

The de Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd. is the tenant of Christchurch Airfield, which is Crown property, for a period of years expiring in December, 1978, and which the County Planning Authority propose should be added for development in the period beyond 1971.

I am instructed by the Board of Directors of this Company to object most strongly to the proposals which are not in accordance with your determination dated 8th April, 1952, that the works and use, more particularly referred to therein, should be deemed to comply with Planning Control."

The announcement that de Havillands intend to retain Christchurch airfield does something to counterbalance the unrest which followed a statement by the deputy managing director of the Hawker Siddeley group published last weekend in a Sunday newspaper. Speaking of de Havillands, Sir Aubrey

Burke was reported as saying: "It is fairly clear that there is a lean time ahead. . . . Naturally the outlying factories will feel the draught first. The next places could be our factories at Chester and Christchurch."

M.P.s' CONCERN

Sir Aubrey's remarks arose from a deputation of 14 Labour M.P.s which wished to express its concern to the Ministry of Aviation at employment prospects in the aircraft industry. One of the events which prompted that concern was the impending paying-off of 1,500 men at de Havillands' Portsmouth factory.

No comment was available this week on the situation at the Christchurch factory which is known to be busy on Sea Vixen contracts, parts of the D.H. "Trident," weapons systems and an expanding plastics section.

It would seem, however, that the "outlying factories" have their own defence against Sir Aubrey's roving eye very much in their own hands. The industry has to meet the most intense forms of competition. It does not seem illogical to assume that its constituent parts can best ensure their survival by their own efficiency, productivity and concentration on the job. At any rate, the company has this week given a token of its confidence in the future of the aircraft industry in Christchurch.

(Note: It is estimated that the de Havilland company employs a total of 18,000 workers. Of these, about 3,000 are at Chester, 2,000 at Portsmouth, and 2,000 at Christchurch.)