



Hangar Homes in the United Kingdom

GRANT BOYD

The residential airpark concept originated in the United States in the 1940's and has since been replicated in several other countries. These airparks, many of which were inspired by or modeled after ones in America, are in: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Africa, Sweden, and several other nations.

Surprising to many, though, is that the United Kingdom does not contribute any airparks to the roughly three dozen located outside of the States. This is not to say residents of the overall general aviation friendly country have not tried. There have been several efforts in the past, all of which have been stopped dead in their tracks, mainly because of local objections to the potential noise created by aircraft operations at a new airport location.

WILL UNITED KINGDOM PILOTS EVER GET TO EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF LIVING ALONGSIDE THEIR PLANE?

Peter Day, a UK resident who has been flying for more than forty years, took notice

of these failed projects and has come up with a solution that could work in the United Kingdom. He deduced that in order for the residential airpark concept to “fly,” they would need to be located on existing general aviation airfields. Nearby residents would not be able to complain of noise caused by residents at current airfields, because there would be no “change of use” to the airport, as planes would still be flying into and out of it. Finally, with this approach, it appears there may be a way around the caveat that had frozen previous developments.

Even so, some planners have real difficulty in understanding the concept of homes on airfields, which will be made much easier when one example becomes available in the UK. Also, some airfield owners are against such developments as they see the real value of their land as housing or industrial estates in the future and the last thing they want is a development that would help safeguard the airfield and make it more sustainable.

Day has spent more than six years and a lot of his own money to make residential airparks a reality across the pond; efforts which appear may pay off this year. Of the six developments he has been actively working on, the most likely to happen is at Enniskillen in Northern Ireland and Lee-on-Solent on the south coast of England, which is Day's “home” airfield.

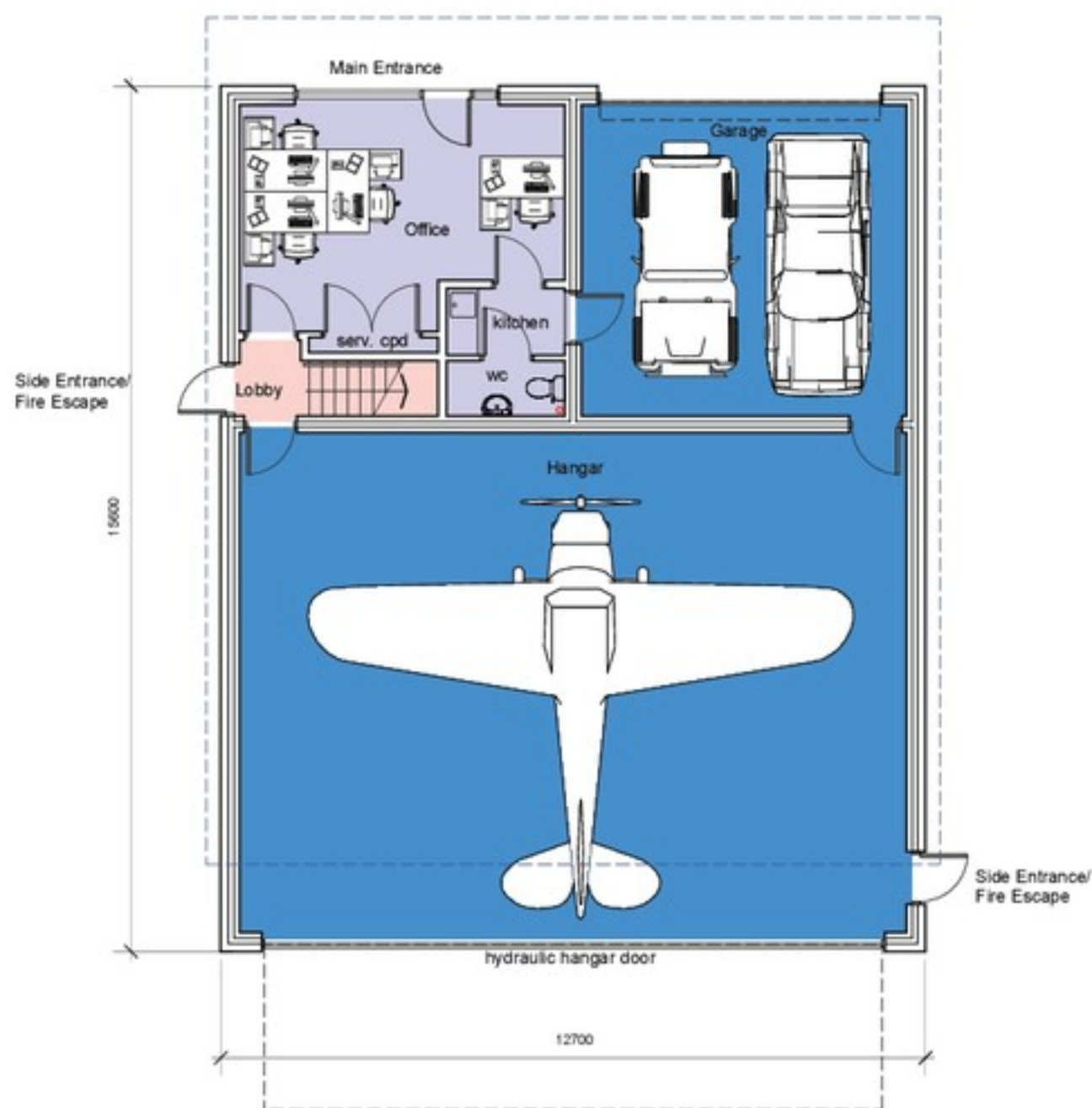
WHAT WOULD THE CONCEPT LOOK LIKE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

The proposed concept for hangar homes in the United Kingdom is a little different than in the United States and elsewhere, both due to their determined need of being based at an existing general aviation airfield, as well as the fact that some of those airfields, like that at Lee-on-Solent, could only have “live/work” hangars built in order to comply with their employment zoning. These types of hangars are exactly what one would guess they are, based upon their title. They are domiciles where one can both live and work—with a hangar, office, and garage on the bottom floor and living space on the top.

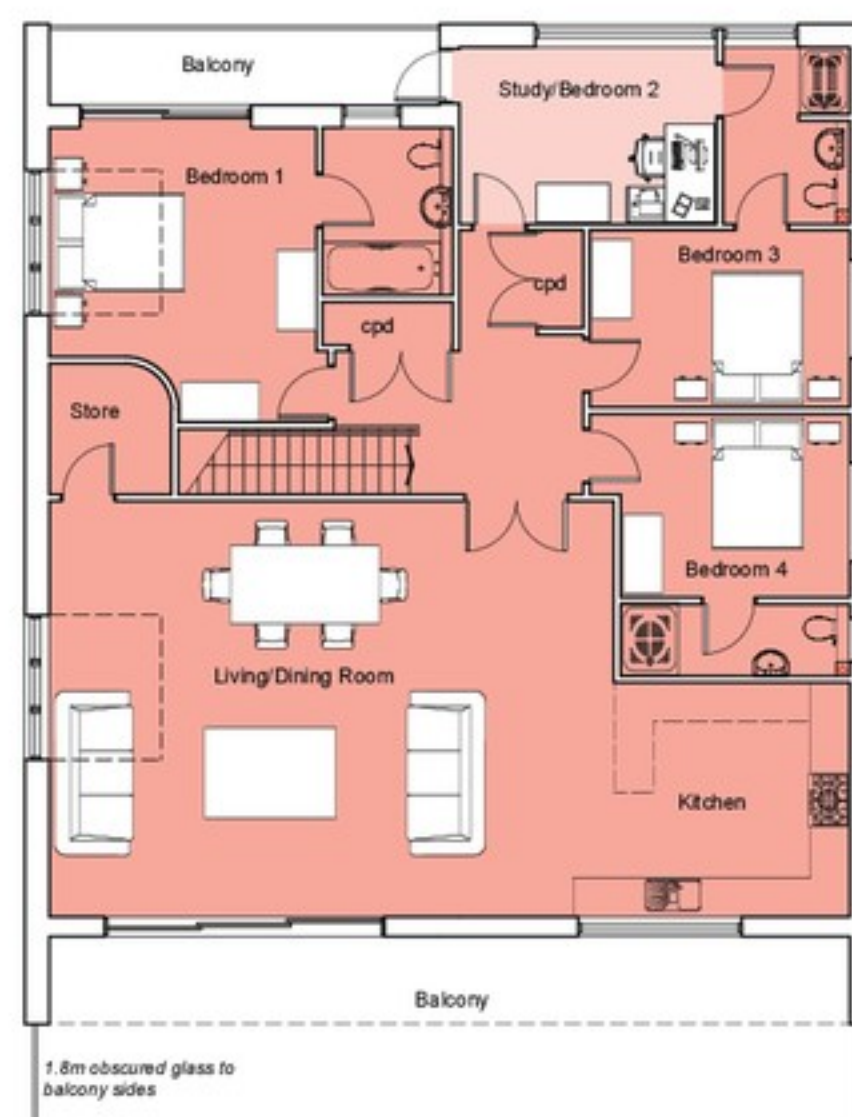
This will set the precedent for future developments, “as planners could see that they [‘live/work’ hangars] work well with the existing airfields to make them more sustainable.” There too will also be other developments that will cater towards a more residential type of hangar home arrangement, with those being on airfields like Enniskillen, Perranporth, Plymouth, and Shoreham.

There are several criteria that Day has found an airfield must have in order to be an ideal candidate for development, with those being: a great location, hard runway with suitable length (not too long to attract business or commercial jets), and both airside and roadside access (with security fencing between units) so that planes do not mix with cars and pedestrians. Overall, there have been about twenty airfields which fit these

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requirements. He also says that, “none of these developments would make the airfield into a residential airpark as such but introduce ‘live/work’ or residential-only hangars to general aviation airfields alongside the existing businesses.”

Once all needed approvals are obtained, development at the airfields can begin. All work at the proposed sites will be spearheaded by Day and local construction companies will be contracted to build the “live/work” or residential-only hangar homes, both of which are based on the same design.

Ultimately, the construction process will look different than in other countries, too. Day notes that, “these will not be like a residential airpark where buyers purchase a plot and build their own hangar home on it. Instead, the company would purchase the site and build one unit as a ‘show home’, which would be retained

and rented out short-term to interested buyers or pilots wishing to stay for a few days or weeks there. All the other units would be built to order and paid for in stages, thus being self-funded other than the cost of the site and first unit at each airfield.”

VISUALIZING A POSSIBLE FORTHCOMING DEVELOPMENT

Enniskillen Airfield in picturesque Northern Ireland is one site where development is hopeful to begin this year. As www.hangarhomes.co.uk, the website dedicated to the effort to bring hangar home living to the United Kingdom elaborates:

“The airfield was first built in 1941 and used during World War II as RAF St. Angelo, from where Spitfires and Hurricanes flew. Since 1996 it has been in private ownership as a civilian airfield with scheduled flights operating from there

until 2006. It is one of only five licensed airfields in Northern Ireland and is an ideal base to tour both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, making it ideal for hangar homes used as either primary residences or as holiday homes.

With the support of both the airfield owner and the land owner of the field adjacent to the disused part of the eastern taxiway, a planning application is being submitted for ten hangar homes. This also includes one to be used as a clubhouse for residents and visiting pilots, with a 10m x 5m swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna and steam room in the ‘hangar’, a gym in the ‘garage’, changing rooms and showers in the entrance hall, as well as a restaurant and bar upstairs overlooking the airfield and the lakes. Should planning permission be granted, then all the hangar homes should be built by Summer 2021, after which the clubhouse will be built.” ■



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