

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Conservation Advisory Group.  
Conservation, Sustainability &  
Community Planning Portfolio Holder

**AUTHOR/S:** Conservation Manager

8<sup>th</sup> December 2004

### Duxford Imperial War Museum – potential designation of a Conservation Area

#### Purpose

1. To brief the Conservation Advisory Group on the historic and architectural value of Duxford Airfield, to consider whether the possible relocation of Marshall Aerospace from Cambridge Airport to Duxford would represent a threat to the future wellbeing of the buildings and their setting, and to consider whether the designation of a Conservation Area at the airport would be the best way to its ensure the long term future.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	Designation of a Conservation Area together with a detailed Conservation Area Appraisal will add to the quality of the planning process in considering any planning applications for development at the airport.
Village Life	There are a significant number of dwellings immediately adjacent to the probable boundaries of a Conservation Area (north of the A505). Having an up to date and comprehensive Conservation Area Appraisal in place for this area will help preserve the quality of life for those residents.
Sustainability	The designation of a Conservation Area and the associated preparation of a Conservation Area Appraisal will provide information essential to ensuring high quality of design for any development at Duxford Airfield.
Partnership	Draft copies of the proposed Conservation Area boundaries and Conservation Area Appraisal will be circulated to the parish councils, GO East English Heritage and the Imperial War Museum for comment prior to preparation of the final reports.

#### Background

3. In October 2000 a report was brought to the Conservation Committee on Duxford and Bassingbourn Historic Airfields. The purpose of that report was to inform the Committee about a study undertaken by English Heritage in 2000 on *Military Aviation Sites and Structures* which in turn recommended at Duxford the listing of 28 buildings (including the operations block which was recommended to be listed II\*) and the upgrading to II\* for the 3 World War I hangers currently listed grade II. The English Heritage study further noted that the creation of Conservation Areas at a number of airfields (including Duxford) could 'also have a significant role in maintaining the character of what we consider to be the sites most strongly representative of their type and period'.

The minutes of the October 2000 Conservation Committee meeting includes: *‘ that the Conservation Service be requested to investigate in more detail and following consultations with English Heritage and other interested parties, the designation of a Conservation Area for Duxford airfield, and to report back to a future meeting of this Committee.’*

A meeting was held in March 2003 with the Imperial War Museum and English Heritage to explore the implications of designation of a Conservation Area at the airfield. This meeting concluded with support for the proposal from all parties but it was decided to delay implementation until after confirmation by the Secretary of State of the proposed listings recommended by English Heritage at Duxford, since these would form a substantial part of the Conservation Area Appraisal that would need to be prepared to support the designation of the Conservation Area.

Conservation areas were introduced through the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. Conservation areas are defined as *‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.’* Designation of a conservation area brings certain duties to the local planning authority:

- To formulate and publish from time to time proposal for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area and to submit them for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate;
- In exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Historic areas are recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance and economic well-being. Determining which areas are of ‘special interest’ is a matter for local planning authorities using local criteria. Conservation areas therefore differ from listed buildings, where selection is made by the Secretary of State using national criteria.

### **Considerations**

4. A decision for the Secretary of State in respect of the listings at Duxford is still awaited. English Heritage has advised that, while the Bassingbourn Control Tower has now been listed grade II, no timescale has been given for a decision in respect of Duxford, though in the meantime three structures at Duxford (the Officers’ Mess, Squash Court and First World War Barrack Block) were all listed grade II in advance of consideration of the other buildings at the airfield, as a result of the proposed hotel development on this site. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent have now been granted by SCDC for this project, which incorporates these newly listed buildings.

The decision to include Duxford as a possible site for the relocation of Marshall Aerospace could have significant implications for future wellbeing of this historically important group of buildings. At the same time it is acknowledged that there may be a conflict between the preservation of the historical setting at Duxford and the realisation of the redevelopment of Cambridge Airport, which is necessary to meet the housing targets set for the region by the ODPM.

### **Options**

5. The Conservation Advisory Group is asked to consider the question of a Conservation Area for Duxford and advise the portfolio holder whether the designation of a Conservation Area for Duxford should:

- a) be undertaken as a matter of urgency, in order to be in place prior to any decision on the relocation of Marshall Aerospace, such that it could inform and influence that process,
- b) be undertaken in tandem with the consideration for the relocation of Marshall Aerospace,
- c) be put on hold until such time that a decision on the relocation of Marshall Aerospace has been reached and the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport has made a decision in respect of English Heritage's recommendations for listings at Duxford.

### **Financial Implications**

- 6. None

### **Legal Implications**

- 7. None

### **Staffing Implications**

- 8. In order to undertake the urgent designation of a Conservation Area at Duxford, some adjustments would be required to the priorities of work within the Conservation Section that in turn may delay the delivery of other tasks.

### **Risk Management Implications**

- 9. Due to the potential conflict of interests between the Council's duty to protect the architectural and cultural heritage of the district and its duty to deliver on provision of new housing within the district and sub-region, there is a risk of criticism being levelled at the Council whatever option is pursued. However, it should be noted that the proposal for the designation of a Conservation Area has previously been discussed with both the Imperial War Museum and English Heritage and both bodies have agreed in principal to the designation. In order to ensure clarity of intent by the authority, there may be some benefit in requesting the portfolio holder to raise the issue at Cabinet level.

### **Consultations**

- 10. In the event that work on a Conservation Area for Duxford is to be further developed, English Heritage, the Imperial War Museum and Duxford, Thriplow and Whittlesford Parish Councils will all be consulted, together with the Local Plans Team within Development Services (who are part of the wider team considering the relocation of Marshall Aerospace).

### **Conclusions/Summary**

- 11. The potential relocation of Marshall Aerospace to Duxford airfield could have significant implications for the future wellbeing of an important site of architectural and historic interest. The designation of a Conservation Area at Duxford could provide a degree of protection, but this in turn may be seen to hamper the relocation of Marshall Aerospace from Cambridge Airport and, as a consequence, could delay the delivery of new housing as required by the ODPM.

## **Recommendations**

12. That the Conservation Advisory Group consider the options outlined above and recommend which option the portfolio holder should present to Cabinet.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

*Survey of Military Aviation Sites and Structures* – a report by English Heritage April 2000  
Papers and Minutes of Conservation Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2000  
Report on the *Relocation of Marshall Aerospace and Cambridge Airport* submitted to Planning Policy Advisory Group on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2004

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