

Old Sarum Airfield: response to main objections raised during public consultation

The following sets out the Atkins Heritage response to the comments of the three main respondents to the Old Sarum Airfield Character Appraisal and Assessment of Eligibility for Conservation Area designation. These respondents prepared objections in the form of full reports or extended letters, and are:

- Feilden and Mawson, on behalf of Blanefield
- Pegasus Planning Group on behalf of Service Developments Limited (Sarum business Park); and
- Mr. Beal of OSAF Projects Ltd

The responses below intend to answer the main objections of the three respondents, although not necessarily in the order of their comments, both to avoid repetition, and in order to make clear the key points with which these parties take issue.

Feilden and Mawson Critique on the Conservation Area Assessment, on behalf of Blanefield, 19th October 2006.

Feilden and Mawson take no issue with the methodology for assessment (save in terms of designation criteria, answered below first point), and do not dispute the WWI significance of the airfield, citing much of English Heritage's Thematic Study of Military Aviation Sites and Structures, Lake 2001. In terms of their general introductory remarks, we acknowledge that the terminology in the report may be inconsistent, and although all efforts were made to standardise terms, some inconsistencies may remain. For the sake of clarity, the 'airfield' includes the whole site, buildings and associated areas. The 'flying field' is the open grassed area.

<p>Section 8 and 10.1 Lack of district wide criteria for designation</p>	<p>The District Council have not, until recently, had the opportunity to revise their local plan to include such criteria, so in the meantime specific criteria have been devised by Atkins Heritage for the designation of conservation areas in the district, to avoid the loss of important historic areas in the period between development plan revisions.</p>
<p>Section 9 (and 10.1.2) The airfield no longer looks or feels like a military base, and very little of the WWI airbase survives in its original form.</p> <p>On entry to the site, the character is not evident.</p>	<p>The character appraisal demonstrates that the majority of WWI technical buildings do survive (as supported by the English Heritage Thematic Study, Lake 2001) and that the 'character' is provided by more than just the technical buildings – the open feel, planting and associated domestic military architecture of WW1 and other periods. The site entrance has lost its character, but this could be remedied somewhat through the reinstatement of formal signage, or formal planting, to reflect the formality of the original entrance.</p>
<p>Section 9.7, 9.8, 9.9 The site at Yatesbury demonstrates better survival. The airfield is not unique.</p>	<p>Conservation Area designation is not a relative exercise – other airfields with similar or better examples of certain features are also important. Old Sarum airfield is important for the reasons set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal. 'Uniqueness' is not a criterion for designation of Conservation Areas (or any historic or archaeological site).</p>

<p>Section 10 The appraisal concentrates on the built structures</p>	<p>Atkins does assess 'group and area quality' as well as the individual buildings – this is in fact one of our criteria for designation and one which is well met by the airfield.</p>
<p>Section 10 There are no policies or proposals for future management</p>	<p>Policies for future management would be formulated within a 'Conservation Area Management Plan', should the airfield be designated.</p>
<p>Section 10 There is no 'vulnerability analysis'</p>	<p>The effects of or vulnerability/sensitivity of the site to modern development is clearly described in the appraisal p32. Those areas where modern development has removed or diminished the airfield character have consequently been left out of the Conservation Area, as described on page 37 of the appraisal.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.2 The study area should be set prior to assessment</p>	<p>The study area chosen for assessment included the maximum extent of the airfield, although some areas were not accessed physically (e.g. the area of the firing range), clear views were gained into them. This is made clear on p7 of the appraisal. In fact, a larger area was surveyed in search of boundary markers, to ensure all surviving markers were identified.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.5 photographs Demonstrate that there is intrusion to views of the airfield</p>	<p>Alternative views can be had, however, which do offer an idea of the airfield's historic character, for instance from just north of Ford where views can clearly be gained to the hangars (see p23 of the report). This, and other views, are also described in the report (p23, 25 and 26). In any case, intrusion or interruption of views need not detract from significance.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.3 The Countryside Agency's Landscape Character description gives no impression of the airfield area</p>	<p>In relation to the issue of landscape, we agree that the Countryside Agency description is too broad to do the area justice. A more detailed description of the surrounding landscape is not, however, necessary for the Conservation Area appraisal. The setting of the ancient site of Old Sarum, while important for that site, is also irrelevant to the rationale to designate Old Sarum airfield. Any future management plan for the site may identify an area which could overlap with the Conservation Area of Old Sarum, much like a buffer zone, to ensure the consideration of its immediate setting. If so, associated policies would need to be adopted that were agreed with all stakeholders.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.6 The airfield is not flat, so was not all usable for flying</p>	<p>We agree that the airfield was probably landscaped for drainage purposes during its development as an airfield and is in fact convex (but not to such an extent that one side of it cannot be seen from</p>

	<p>the other). This has been backed up by two visits to the airfield where the hangars were seen clearly when looking north from Manor Farm Road (see picture on p23 of the report). Also, the use of the 'airstrip' or in any case a main area for taking off and landing, was only one of the functions of the flying field, which would also have been used for the servicing, taxiing, and parking of aircraft. For example, during the D-Day operation the site was extensively occupied. We believe the flying circles reproduced on p11 were in fact used for bombing simulations (Jeremy Lake pers comm.)</p>
<p>Section 10.1.7 & 8 Regarding present and future land use - no information is given in the appraisal</p>	<p>The extent of the present 'airstrip' is not relevant to the assessment of historical significance of the site (when there was no designated 'strip') and to our knowledge the only current agricultural use is by the adjacent pig farm. Present and future land use of the area is not relevant to the rationale for designation. Future use will be guided by any future management plan and possibly the granting of planning permission.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.9 Currently, additional boundaries divide up the site internally. The boundaries as indicated by air ministry markers is not considered, nor boundaries that could have included requisitioned land such as at Ford Farm</p>	<p>Regarding the internal boundaries of the site, we accept that the site has been divided with fences. However this does not affect its historic integrity (boundaries can always be removed). In relation to boundary analysis, our understanding of the originally designed airfield (1917) has come from Air Ministry Plans. This boundary does not include additional land requisitioned/used temporarily (i.e. not part of the enduring airfield design) Regarding the boundary stones of 1924, we would be pleased to establish the survival of further markers – only those accounted for in the appraisal were spotted during our survey, but all were searched for, again using Air Ministry Plans.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.12 Listed Buildings and their curtilage are already protected</p>	<p>We agree that Listing protects these buildings and their immediate surrounds. However, without the enveloping protection of a CA, these buildings could lose both context and setting.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.13 The archaeological potential of the site is not described in detail</p>	<p>While the buried archaeology of the site may be important, its significance (in particular in relation to periods outside those of the airfield's development and use) has no influence on the historic character of the site. Any future planning or development in the proposed conservation area would fall under the remit of PPG16 in which the archaeological context would have to be assessed.</p>

<p>Section 10.1.14 Aerial photographic analysis was pioneered at Old Sarum</p>	<p>Original drawings and Air Ministry plans were used by Atkins Heritage in appraisal of the conservation area. Aerial photographs are useful additional detail for the site, however they are not essential in assessing its historical development or current character. Making something of the contribution of the site to the history of aerial photography could be explored in any future management plan.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.15 The Report does not identify which buildings contribute to character</p>	<p>The Atkins Heritage appraisal presents the site in various ways, firstly in Figure 7 (p51) the extent of the surviving airfield is illustrated and secondly in Appendix A (gazetteer of historic buildings and features, p55) surviving structures of the airfield are illustrated and described. The surviving buildings listed in each section of the 'physical development' chapter can be considered to be those that contribute to historic character.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.16 The gazetteer is referenced using OS coordinates, but no plan is given or cross referencing</p>	<p>In reference to the gazetteer, OS coordinates identify precise locations for the record. The precise locations need not be shown for the purpose of the appraisal. Figure 7 shows the locations of the main buildings.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.17.2 & 10.1.18 Although detractors are identified, their impact is not considered in the report's conclusions</p>	<p>The focus of our appraisal is the surviving historic character of the site (always the focus of a conservation area appraisal) and not the modern structures of the airfield. However we do describe in some detail the modern areas, intrusions and damage to the special qualities of the airfield on page 32. We agree that less space is given over in the report to the detractors to the significance of the site, but we persist in the judgement that despite these intrusions the historic character of the site is strong. In summary, there are detractors but not so much as to negate the overall importance of the site, and this feeds into our conclusions on page 37.</p>
<p>Section 10.1.19 The CA boundary is unjustified</p>	<p>We refer you to the comments regarding the boundary above but reiterate that the presence of listed buildings on the site does not ensure survival of the airfield. In addition, historical area assessment of the type we have carried out does not attempt to fix a site at a certain timeframe in its history. It acknowledges change over time, landscape re-use and the creation of new landscapes. Within the remit of any future management plan, the possibility of a buffer zone, i.e. an area outside the conservation area that could be agreed with stakeholders to ensure the protection of the airfield's setting,</p>

	may also be considered.
Summary The report contains no cost benefit analysis.	Conservation Area Appraisal does not require cost benefit analysis.

Pegasus Planning Group on behalf of Service Developments Limited (Sarum Business Park), Objections, 18th October 2006

We are pleased that the respondent is broadly supportive of the Conservation Area status for Old Sarum Airfield, but have taken into consideration their objection to the boundary in the northern part of the airfield, within the area of their client's premises.

Section 1.7 There will be constraints to further development if the CA is designated.	Should the Conservation Area be designated, any restrictions that are placed on particular buildings or areas will be targeted at those buildings that represent the significance of the airfield best. Areas that are secondary to the importance of the airfield will be controlled less stringently, and development proposals here could be tested to show whether they would detract from, or indeed enhance the setting of the Conservation Area.
Section 2.12 The inclusion of the two older Technical Area buildings has caused part of the respondent's site to be included in the CA. The boundary might otherwise have been along the road to the hangars as far as the Metal Workshop and Power House, where there is a firm boundary.	Indeed, the older buildings fronting the tree lined avenue do help conserve the character of the approach to the hangars, and are isolated survivors from this part of the site – making them all the more significant. (See below for reconsideration of boundary, however).
Section 2.13 Changes have been made internally and externally to the Technical Stores building and Salvage Shed within the objection site. The inward looking nature of the Business Park means that the 'character' of the CA is not experienced here.	While acknowledging significant change has been made to the Technical Stores and Salvage Shed, many of the changes are reversible and do not affect the exterior character of the buildings to such an extent that they are unrecognisable. The buildings still provide a sense of scale and function, to those passing along the tree lined avenue, and are in fact the only memories of the important original approach to the hangars. Within the Business Park, it is acknowledged that the character of the rest of the technical area is not able to be experienced (is 'unrecognisable' according to our methodology for selection for inclusion in the CA p37 of the appraisal), due to the contained nature of the Park, and lack of views through to the rest of the site. We therefore propose that the boundary be moved to include the Technical Stores building and Salvage Shed, but not the row of buildings along the Portway within the Business Park. The boundary would therefore run to the south of the buildings along the Portway within the Business Park

	up to the Power House and Metal Workshop boundary (buildings 33 and 34 on our figure 7), and would then turn back towards the Portway, and continue as currently proposed (see amended plan of boundary).
<p>Section 3.4 The appraisal uses an out of date OS Map.</p> <p>The 'fabric and layout of its historic development' does not survive within the objection site. There are no surviving links, no military feel from within the business park, and modern building is more prevalent.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that the OS base plan is slightly out of date (2005). However, our site survey did identify that only two buildings survive in the area of the Sarum Business Park.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the boundary was not tightly drawn enough in this area, and it is recommended to be re-drawn as described above.</p>
<p>Section 3.10</p> <p>The objection site does not reflect important topographic character of the site, and nor do the buildings.</p>	<p>We agree to some extent, but the contribution of the two older buildings to the group value of the site - 'inclusion within an outstanding group of buildings and related features', qualify them for inclusion within the boundary.</p>
<p>Section 3.16 No mention is made of the Business Park in the assessment.</p>	<p>We have not singled out particular areas or buildings for attention within the modern development on the airfield. We only wish to make the case that areas of significant modern development be excluded from the CA. Our original boundary, taking into consideration the survival of the Salvage Shed and Technical Stores, drew a generous boundary through the site that also included some new buildings. It is proposed to be re-tightened and still meet our criteria for designation (see above).</p>
<p>Section 3.17-34 and 3.35-3.37 The character of the objection site and architectural interest are compromised. They do not meet the criteria for designation.</p>	<p>On reconsideration, we think that the boundary could be redrawn to better fit the criteria for and analysis of significant character that we describe (see above).</p>
<p>Section 44 There is no detailed recording of changes to the buildings on the objection site</p>	<p>CA Appraisal is not the place for detailed recording, which should be the subject of policies in any future management plan (should the area be designated). Our expert recognised the form and function of these buildings from what remains, and they are included in our gazetteer.</p>

Mr Beal of OSAF Projects Ltd, letter regarding the Old Sarum Conservation Area Appraisal, 19 October 2006

<p>The boundary The boundary is not suitable</p>	<p>Atkins have reappraised the boundary, and find that, based on the principle of inclusion of all of the surviving areas of the designed WWI airfield, it should remain predominantly as proposed. However, the buildings along the Portway, within the Sarum Business Park, are now being recommended for exclusion on the basis that here 'significant modernisation' has occurred, to the extent that the historic character is no longer recognisable' (p37 of the appraisal, basis for inclusion/exclusion)</p>
<p>Mr. Beal's land There has been a lack of investigation in some areas of the site.</p>	<p>Mr. Beal's land was viewed clearly from Green Lane, and changes within it are considered to be of a temporary nature, not affecting the long term significance of the airfield.</p>
<p>Paul Francis Paul Francis is not an independent party, and is linked to English Heritage.</p>	<p>Paul Francis works neither for English Heritage nor for Atkins. He is an independent consultant, and the acknowledged expert in this field in the country.</p>
<p>Current use of the airfield, and future plans The main site is private, and used by the flying club, so promises of public benefit can never be carried through.</p>	<p>How the Flying Club continue to use the airfield, and how the public might in future be able to appreciate it, are considerations for a Management Plan, should the area be designated.</p>
<p>The surviving historic character It is too late to designate, as all the key buildings have now been demolished.</p>	<p>All the WWI technical buildings survive, and a good range of domestic buildings from other periods of the site's development. The strong historic character of the area, however, does not rely on total survival, but on other elements such as the relationship between buildings and areas, the importance of open spaces and the relationship between buildings and those open spaces.</p>