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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Assessment has been prepared in respect of the Ongar Park Estate site (the 'Site') at North Weald Bassett, in Essex. The report has been prepared by Peter Stewart Consultancy, a practice which provides independent expert advice on heritage, townscape, urban design and architecture.
- 1.2 The client is promoting the Site as an allocation site in Epping Forest District Council's Draft Local Plan (submission version 2017). This assessment has been commissioned to address the potential effect of development on the Site on the setting of the North Weald Redoubt (the 'Redoubt'), a nearby Scheduled Monument.
- 1.3 Section 2 sets out the relevant national and local policy context, including the emerging local plan policies.
- 1.4 Section 3 assesses the significance of the Redoubt and those aspects of its setting that contribute to this (in line with the NPPF policies on heritage assets). The site visit which formed the basis for this assessment took place on 29 November 2016.
- 1.5 Section 4 provides a brief overview of the masterplan work done in relation to the Site, including the 'North Weald Bassett Masterplanning Study' prepared by Allies and Morrison for Epping Forest District Council in 2014.
- 1.6 Section 5 assesses the effect that the development of the Site (in line with the supporting submission material) would have on the setting of the Redoubt.

2.0 Heritage policy and guidance

- 2.1 This section sets out the national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of the effect of development on the setting of a Scheduled Monument, a designated heritage asset.

National planning policy and guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012

- 2.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has three dimensions; economic, social and environmental.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 2.3 Section 12 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It applies to both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 2.4 Heritage assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as a *"building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and heritage assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)."* Scheduled Monuments are designated heritage assets.
- 2.5 The NPPF requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting (para 128). It goes on to say that *"the level of detail should be proportionate to the heritage asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance."*
- 2.6 The NPPF identifies three key factors local authorities should take into account in determining applications:
- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.7 Paragraph 132 states that in assessing impact, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be given to its conservation. It notes that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.
- 2.8 Paragraph 133 states that *“where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*
- *The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
 - *No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
 - *Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
 - *The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”*
- 2.9 Where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 134).
- 2.10 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 137 goes on to say *“Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably”*.
- 2.11 The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 as *“the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve.*

Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."

Planning Practice Guidance, March 2014

- 2.12 The national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was launched by the Government on the 6th March 2014. It provides a web-based resource in support of the NPPF.
- 2.13 The PPG includes a section entitled '*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*'. This considers the factors that should inform decision taking about developments that would affect heritage assets. It notes that "*Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals*".
- 2.14 The PPG notes that setting is defined in the NPPF and "*is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage*". The PPG states that "*A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.*"

Local planning policy and guidance

Epping Forest District Council's Combined Policies of Epping Forest District Local Plan (1998) and alterations (2006), February 2008

- 2.15 **Policy HC1 'Scheduled Monuments and other Archaeological sites'** notes that planning permission will only be granted on sites of known or potential archaeological interest if the development in question would not adversely affect nationally important remains or their settings.

Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan, submission version 2017

- 2.16 The Epping Forest District Local Plan is currently in the submission version. The Local Plan lays out strategic policies and identifies sites for development and regeneration. The Council are seeking representations from interested parties on the legal compliance and soundness of the Local Plan from noon on Monday 18 December 2017 until 5pm on Monday 29 January 2018. Once formally adopted, the Local Plan aims to set out a strategy for the period until 2033, to meet economic and housing growth in the area.
- 2.17 **Draft Policy DM 7 ‘Heritage Assets’** aims to protect and enhance heritage assets, and to ensure that significant levels of development are accompanied by “*a clear respect for heritage assets*”. This policy notes that permission will only be given for development which does not harm the significance of a scheduled monument or its setting, unless fully justified and necessary to achieve public benefits. It notes that development proposals which may affect a heritage asset must include a heritage statement which should evaluate the impact the development may have on the heritage asset and its setting and demonstrate how the significance of the heritage asset has informed the proposal.
- 2.18 **Draft Policy DM 8 ‘Heritage at risk’** aims to encourage owners of heritage assets to maintain them. This includes the expectation that property owners and partners will work alongside the Council to bring forward proposals for the conservation and enhancement of Heritage Assets at Risk to secure their future.

Location

- 3.4 The Redoubt lies on high ground to the east of North Weald Bassett, a village of low density ribbon development of mostly 20th century housing. North Weald Bassett lies within the Epping Forest District Council local authority area, approximately 3.5km north east of Epping and 5.1km south west of Harlow.
- 3.5 To the north of the redoubt is the A414 running east from junction 7 on the M11, to Chelmsford. To the south is the cutting of the Epping Ongar Railway (now in use as a tourist railway).
- 3.6 The Harlow Area Landscape & Environment Study identifies the land around the Redoubt as “*Typology 21: North Weald Ridges and Valleys*”, and describes it as follows (our bold):

*“Located on a gently rolling landform, this area is predominantly covered by large arable fields, interspersed with smaller irregular fields surviving from the 18th century or earlier. The area is particularly notable for its modern military remains, which dominate the southern half of the character area. These include North Weald Airfield, with its runways, buildings and WWII defensive features, **the late 19th century redoubt south of North Weald Bassett** and the 270 acres of the former 20th century Radio Transmitting Station at Ongar, with its surviving buildings.”*

- 3.7 The Epping Forest District Council Landscape Studies Landscape Character Assessment (2010) provides more detail on the field pattern and identifies the land surrounding the Redoubt to the north, west, south-west and north-east as “*20th century agriculture – boundary lost*”; and the fields to the south-east as “*pre 18th century irregular enclosure*”.
- 3.8 The landscape and wider heritage context is considered in the Environmental Issues report prepared by Liz Lake Associates.

History

- 3.9 The schedule entry, in the section on the reasons for designation, describes the history of the Site as follows:

“The 15 London mobilisation centres, constructed during the 1890s, formed part of a comprehensive military scheme known as the London Defence Positions, drawn up in 1888 to protect the capital in the event of enemy invasion. The scheme was a response to the rapid progress made in warship production by France and Russia during the early 1880s, which had led to official doubts about the Royal Navy's defence capability. Essentially a contingency plan, it provided for the establishment of a 72 mile long, entrenched stop-line divided into ten tactical sectors and supported by artillery batteries and redoubts. The planned stop-line ran from the southern edge of the Surrey and Kent Downs, up the western side of the Darent Valley to the Thames, and then north westwards through Essex from Tilbury Fort to Epping. Although the stop-line and main defence positions were not to be established until an invasion was imminent, it was thought prudent to build a series of mobilisation centres, 13 on new sites, along the projected course, either for artillery deployment or where troops could assemble and collect tools and supplies. By 1905, official confidence in the Royal Navy had been restored, and the now obsolete mobilisation centres were abandoned and gradually sold off. No two mobilisation centres are exactly alike, and a broad distinction can be drawn between the four centres purpose built for artillery deployment, and eight which functioned as infantry positions. However, in general terms there are close similarities: each, for example, was typically enclosed by a rampart, ditch and spiked fence, containing a partly earth-sheltered, reinforced concrete and brick built magazine and stores. Beyond the main compound were associated buildings of a standard type, including a brick caretakers lodge and a large, barn-like tool store. Most mobilisation centres have been the subject of subsequent alteration and/or reuse. As a short-lived and rare monument type, all mobilisation centres with surviving remains sufficient to give a clear impression of their original form and function are considered to be nationally important.

The North Weald London Mobilisation centre, officially known as The North Weald Redoubt exhibits a remarkable level of survival, no doubt largely as a result of the sympathetic (or cost-effective) reuse of the site as a radio station after the First World War. Not only do the earthworks and casemates of the main compound remain substantially intact but, unusually for this type of monument, the contemporary caretakers' cottages and external stores also survive with few modifications when compared to the original War Office plans. As with all more recent military installations, the operational use of the centre is poorly recorded; these plans, however, provide clear documentary evidence for the design and intended use of this, the most northerly of the mobilisation centres within the ring of the London Defence Positions. The Allen-Williams turret is a well preserved example of a comparatively rare form of gun emplacement, a small number of which were produced in 1939-40 by a company specialising in pre-fabricated building components. Unusually, it still retains all the principal elements of its dual purpose design, and its use in this location illustrates the renewed military significance of the redoubt as a radio station during World War II."

The Redoubt

- 3.10 The list entry notes the “*monument includes the main compound, caretakers' cottages and external stores of the North Weald London mobilisation centre, a late Victorian and Edwardian military store and mustering station situated on rising ground to the east of North Weald Bassett (within the grounds of the former Ongar Radio Station), and known variously as the Essex or North Weald Redoubt.*”



View of the south-east corner of the Redoubt



View of the south-west corner of the redoubt site

3.11 It goes on to describe the site as follows:

“The main compound is broadly ‘D’-shaped in plan. A 15m wide, semi-circular ditch defines the north eastern ‘front’ of the installation and a straight channel, some 180m in length, completes the rear of the circuit to the south west. The rear channel, known as ‘the gorge’, contains a sunken roadway and a row of reinforced concrete casemates which extend right along the northern side. These, according to

the War Office specifications of 1893, could be used to accommodate 72 men. The majority of the chambers still retain half-inch steel doors facing into the gorge, as well as wooden doors in the connecting corridors and other internal fittings. The gorge is approached by two vehicle ramps, one at the eastern end, the other descending the outer scarp from the bridge which carries the principal access road across the gorge and onto the reinforced roof of the casemates. The bridge, flanked by high walls and massive cylindrical gate piers, overlies a caponier - a strongly-built passageway linked to the casemates and pierced by loopholes to allow enfilade rifle fire along the length of the gorge."

Uses

- 3.12 Built as a London Mobilisation centre at the turn of the 20th century, the site has gone through a series of subsequent uses and is vacant and in poor condition today. It was most recently used as part of the Ongar Radio Station, strategically located at the highest point in the area and offering all round views. The list entry notes:

"Construction of the North Weald Redoubt began shortly after the land was purchased in 1889 and was largely completed by 1904. It was retained as a military base in the decade leading up to 1914, and it is then thought to have served as an arsenal for the duration of the Great War. In 1919 the site was sold at auction to the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, who established a radio station on the surrounding hillside (the last original radio mast from this period was taken down in 1982) and used the redoubt for storage. The Imperial and International Communication Company took over the site in 1929 and continued operations under the new name of Cable and Wireless after 1934.

The radio station came under direct government control during World War II and this use, plus the site's proximity to the Southern Fighter Command base at North Weald airfield, may explain the presence of an unusual form of World War II gun emplacement, known as the 'Allen-Williams' turret, situated on the south eastern terminal of the rampart above the eastern approach to the gorge. It consists of a rotating steel dome, 1.5m in diameter, set over a concrete lined pit with an entrance passage to the west. The dome contains space for two men, one to rotate the upper section, the

other to operate the armament (since removed) which could include the Bren or Lewis machine gun or the Boys anti-tank rifle. The machine guns could be mounted through the square aperture in the side of the turret or the circular opening above. It could thus be used against both ground and aerial attack. After the war in 1950, the radio station came under the control of the Post Office and the redoubt was used and maintained by the GPO (and latterly British Telecom) until the site was decommissioned in the early 1990s.

The North Weald Redoubt was not intended to be permanently garrisoned, but provision was made for caretakers. Two uninhabited single-storey cottages, brick-built with slate roofs, stand within the line of the original perimeter fence, immediately to the south of the bridge.”

- 3.13 In terms of the use of the Redoubt when originally completed the listing notes:

“Although not essentially designed as a fort, the mobilisation centre did have a defensive aspect and was certainly considered as a potential redoubt from which to maintain resistance if adjacent sections of the defence line were overrun. The earthen bank to the north of the front casemate, as well as serving as a blast wall around the magazine, was also designed with the potential for mounting a battery of six guns behind a series of projecting bastions. Although the main guns were never installed, the casemates were fitted with two forward passages, giving access to hollows in front of the bastions which may have been intended as weapon pits. In addition to this, the entire complex was surrounded by a wire fence set back from the ditch, and the ditch itself contained tall spiked railings known as a dacoit fence. Both these features have since been removed.”

Outlook



View to the north-east / east, standing outside the north-east corner of the Redoubt site.

- 3.14 In terms of outlook from the Redoubt, the most notable views are to the north-east and south-east, where the original landscape setting of this structure can be best appreciated. These are important in appreciating the rationale for its siting in this location, as well as for their scenic qualities today. The views to the north-west and west, by contrast, are of the edge of the settlement of North Weald Bassett, comprising largely post-war housing.
- 3.15 The proposed allocation Site is screened to a large degree in views from the southern side of the Redoubt by the topography and scrub and tree planting, including around the nearby Bowling Green.



View north-west across the Bowling Green (to west of Redoubt) towards the southern end of the Site.

- 3.16 Views looking to the north and west from the north-west edge of the Redoubt, in the direction of the proposed allocation Site, are of the golf course and the built edge of rear of the houses fronting High Road in North Weald Bassett.



View of rear of houses fronting northern part of High Road, from the track to Kerr's Cottage, looking into the Site.



View to the rear of houses along eastern edge of North Weald Bassett from the track to Kerr's Cottage (on Site)

Summary of significance

- 3.17 The Redoubt is of historic and archaeological significance. It was designed to be concealed and appear integrated into and as part of the surrounding landscape, and the main components of interest lie below ground. The above ground brick buildings, whilst of note as part of the site, are essentially unremarkable and utilitarian structures typical of the period. The main element on note above ground is the later Allen-Williams turret (1939-40), at the south-east corner of the Site.
- 3.18 Today, the Redoubt is overgrown and appears as a wooden copse (until you are close to it), rather than a recognisable former military site. It is in poor condition and on the At Risk Register. It does not command a presence in the area or contribute to a picturesque landscape composition or a wider landscape of military sites. The best views from the Redoubt are to the north-east and south-east.

4.0 The Proposed Development

- 4.1 Reference should be made to the other material forming part of this submission including the Peer Ongar Masterplan August 2016.
- 4.2 The Site lies to the north and north-west of the Redoubt, running along the east edge of North Weald Bassett; from High Road (close to the junction with the A414) to the north, to Thornhill to the south. At its closest, it lies some 230 m away from the Redoubt.
- 4.3 The Site boundary follows the boundary suggested in the Allies and Morrison Masterplanning Study prepared for the Council in 2014. The inclusion of the Site as an option for growth in the Masterplanning Study, followed their extensive analysis of the settlement as a whole, as part of an objective and balanced assessment of its potential growth capacity. The rationale in this study was clear, to continue the depth of housing to the east of High Road, as seen in the 1970s estate focused around Emberson Way.
- 4.4 The densities, height and landscape approach suggested in the submission would not result in a scheme that would cause any concerns regarding the setting of the Redoubt. The effect will be able to be tested through a planning application, and NPPF and local policies are sufficient to ensure the development of the Site would be appropriate to its context and of a high quality.
- 4.5 The Allies and Morrison Masterplanning Study provides a plan at page 118 which takes into consideration the setting of the Redoubt and provides a buffer zone in all directions (a dotted circle around the Redoubt). This buffer zone provides protection to the setting of the Redoubt and the Client has adopted the recommendation of Allies and Morrison in its promotion of the Site.

5.0 Assessment of effects and conclusion

- 5.1 The Redoubt is in poor condition today and overgrown. It was designed and used as a military store, and for most of the 20th century until recently it formed part of a larger radio mast site. This mostly subterranean structure does not have a setting overtly sensitive to well considered change, particularly to the north-west, west and south-west, towards the settlement of North Weald Basset, which it lies close to.
- 5.2 Built to appear as part of the landscape and not to draw attention to itself, the majority of the elements of interest are below ground, the main exception being the Allen-William turret to the south east (dating from 1939-40). The Redoubt was never used for the purpose for which it was originally designed (thankfully there was no need).
- 5.3 There are no identified views towards the Redoubt or from it. To the west and north (the direction of the Site) views from the Redoubt are towards the largely post-war built edges of the settlement of North Weald Basset. One of the main qualities of its setting that remain today from the time it was originally laid out, is an appreciation of the elevated position, and this is most noticeable, and remains clearly apparent, to the north-east and south-east. This is where the land drops away more steeply from the Redoubt and where the rationale for its siting can be best appreciated.
- 5.4 It is our view that the development of the Site (subject to normal planning controls on design quality) would not harm the setting of the Redoubt. We agree with the Allies and Morison Masterplan approach, and believe a well considered scheme along this edge of the settlement could enhance the wider area.
- 5.5 The Council commissioned a Site Selection report from Arup to inform the choice of allocation sites. Indicator 1.8a relates to the impact on Scheduled monuments. The Epping Forest District Council Site Selection report recorded a minor negative impact on the setting of the Redoubt. The boundary of the proposed allocation Site used in this assessment was incorrect, it was considerably larger and included the Redoubt. Our assessment of impact using this indicator and based on the correct proposed allocation Site boundary would be '0'. We see no reason why development coming forward on the proposed allocation Site, incorporating a clear landscape strategy, could not enhance the setting of the Redoubt.

- 5.6 There will be no harm to the setting of this Scheduled Monument from the type of developed envisaged as part of the promotion of the Site as an allocation site in the Local Plan. This site allocation would therefore be in line with the policies set out in the NPPF and the existing and emerging local plan policy context.