

Subject: Planning application at Old Sarum Airfield PL/2023/07368

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Author: Lainey Barker

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends that the Parish Council objects to the planning application to build 315 dwellings at Old Sarum Airfield.

2. Background

- 2.1 Old Sarum Airfield is one of only three surviving WW1 grass strip airfields of its type in Britain and so is not only of local importance but of National importance.

- 2.2 It is the most valuable Heritage asset in our Parish.

- 2.3 It is at present deemed as a Conservation Area.

- 24 In 2019 an earlier planning application for housing on this site was taken to appeal by the scheme promotor. The Appeal Inspector concluded that harm, to both the airfield conservation area and setting of Old Sarum scheduled monument could not be satisfactorily mitigated under any circumstances. In fact, she concluded that the damage to the Heritage aspect would be so severe, that it alone was enough for her to deny permission. She did not even consider the lesser aspects of the application. The Airfield and Old Sarum are classified as being of National Heritage Significance. Wiltshire Council has subsequently decided any level of development on the airfield will compromise the open area of the conservation area as well as detract from the setting of the scheduled monument."

- 2.5 A new application reference PL/2023/0736 was submitted in September 2023 and a large number of local residents made representations to the Parish Council in objection to the application at the October 2023 meeting.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Parish Council should object to the application on the following grounds-

- 4.2 After carrying out a systematic evaluation of local housing needs and a comparison of suitable sites with the potential to address this, Wiltshire Council has deleted the current Core Strategy 25 from the emerging local plan concluding that other sites are more suitable for development and that “the necessary protections for the site are already provided for through national and local planning policy...”

Therefore ,to allow development on this site would undermine the emerging Wiltshire Plan.

- 4.3 The existing Wiltshire Council Core Strategy 2 and Policy 1 in the emerging local plan both identify Ford as a small village, only suitable for small scale infill development to meet community needs. However, the proposed development of Old Sarum Airfield is intending to build 155 houses in Ford flies in the face of these long established policies. It will almost double the size of the village of Ford and significantly erode the distinctive settlement pattern of the parish which is protected through Policy 1 of the Laverstock and Ford Communities Neighbourhood Plan.

- 4.4 We have serious concerns over whether it would be effective as an enabling development securing the future of the listed assets in the airfield. There is a lack of clarity as to the ownership of the listed hanger that is the centrepiece of the development and the fact that it has been allowed to fall into its current shocking state of disrepair shows a lack of regard for statutory obligations. The application does not contain a detailed statement of how the site will be operated in the future to maximise heritage asset and to work in co-operation with other occupiers of the Conservation Area.

If permission was to be granted we would request that a clear timescale for works to the hanger should be set out via planning conditions/s106 agreement with remediation of the hanger roof being required within a year of the granting of planning permission.

- 4.5 The continuation of flying activity at the airfield is central to the concept of the development, and in the opinion of the parish council, essential to the preservation of the heritage asset. However, this proposal does not contain any mechanism to prevent future residents of the 315 new dwellings on the airfield site from making a complaint of noise nuisance which could lead to the prevention of flying activity. Without a legal mechanism to prevent this happening this proposed development poses a long term threat to the heritage asset and the continuation of flying activity which has taken place for over one hundred years on this site.

- 4.6 One of the key heritage assets of the airfield is the fact that it is one of only two surviving First World War grass strip airfields and that the perimeter of the field is largely unchanged. At the previous appeal, the Planning Inspector found the development of this part of the airfield would represent an erosion of the Wider Conservation Area diminishing the openness of the grassed operational area with consequential harm

to the appearance and character of heritage assets and their significance. This development will cause irreversible damage to that appearance and character through the substantial development of three areas of that perimeter.

- 4.7 The proposed development in areas A and B will lead to increased car use due to the limited facilities available within walking distance. There is a doctor's surgery in Bishopdown Farm but this is more than a 3 mile walk there and back from Area A and involves using a muddy unpaved, unlit, narrow footpath. Residents have to go into the centre of Salisbury to be able to access these services. There is one full time nursery in Longhedge but this would involve approximately a mile walk to reach it. Old Sarum primary school serves both Old Sarum and Longhedge. Since the last planning application was made public transport services in Old Sarum have been reduced by 50%, from a bus every 15 minutes to a bus every 30 minutes and they are unreliable, often running late or not at all. This will increase pressure on already congested local roads, particularly Castle Road into Salisbury. The emerging Wiltshire Plan has been taken account of the existing traffic and planned future development. Adding further housing in this area beyond that in the local plan could put unsustainable strain on the local highways.

- 4.8 The highways impact of development in area C is even more significant. The Roman Road in Ford is already one of the most significant highways concerns in our parish. Due to the lack of pavements it is frequently used by pedestrians from the village accessing the Country Park and local footpaths, and it is also regularly used by recreational horse riders and cyclists. However it is also a notorious 'rat run' for traffic from the A30 and A36 trying to access the A345 particularly in the evenings and nights excessive speed is frequently a problem, with the highest speed recorded by the Parish's SID being over 80mph in a 30mph zone. The road is also narrow and wider vehicles are unable to pass safely at speed in several places.

Adding all of the traffic created by the planned 155 dwellings in area C and the creation of an additional significantly used junction would further exacerbate these problems, and due to the character of the road the parish council believes that no effective mitigation is possible.

- 4.9 The airfield site currently provides a wildlife corridor, connecting Green Lane to the open landscape beyond the Old Sarum historic monument. We believe that development of this site would therefore cause significant harm both the ecology of the site but also the wider area.