

Report to District Development Control Committee

Date of meeting: 5 February 2008

Subject: North Weald Redoubt (part of former Radio Station Site), North Weald – Use of Section 106 Contributions



**Epping Forest
District Council**

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Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249**

Recommendations:

- (1) That up to £20,000 of the £30,000 contribution being held by the Council for the management and future maintenance of the North Weald Redoubt (under the terms of a planning agreement signed in 1998), be used to part fund the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for this Scheduled Ancient Monument; and**
- (2) That the Council enter into a Deed of Variation to vary the term of the section 106 agreement dated 29/07/98 so that up to £20,000 of the £30,000 contribution may be used for the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for this Scheduled Ancient Monument.**

Report Detail

Background

1. The North Weald Redoubt was built between 1889 and 1904 as a “mobilisation centre” for the protection of London. 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 and used the redoubt buildings for storage. The radio station came under the direct control of the government during World War II and 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 1990’s.

2. The Redoubt at North Weald is one of fifteen London Mobilisation Centres, constructed during the 1890’s, and which formed part of the comprehensive military scheme known as the London Defence Positions, drawn up in 1888 to protect the capital. 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. 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 where troops could assemble and collect tools and supplies. However, by 1905, with official confidence in the Royal Navy restored, the now obsolete mobilisation centres were gradually abandoned and sold off. The North Weald Mobilisation Centre, officially known as the North Weald Redoubt, exhibits a

remarkable level of survival, no doubt largely as a result of the sympathetic reuse of the site as a radio station after the First World War. Unusually, it also retains all the principal elements of its dual-purpose design. The Redoubt was scheduled as an Ancient Monument in 1972 in recognition of its archaeological and historical significance.

Planning background

3. Proposals for the redevelopment and reuse of the former Radio Station site, which included the North Weald Redoubt, were originally submitted under reference EPF/367/96 and comprised the following:

- a) demolition of former radio station buildings and the return of their plots to open countryside use;
- b) construction of residential development;
- c) change of use of part of the site (45ha) to a golf course;
- d) extension of public rights of way;
- e) access to Redoubt (the scheduled ancient monument);
- f) provision of a 2ha public park; and,
- g) relocation of the North Weald Bowls Club.

4. The application was described as “detailed” and an appeal against non-determination was made. Another planning application (EPF/863/96) was submitted as a duplicate. Plans Sub Committee considered the original application at its meeting on 29/08/96 and resolved that it would have refused planning permission, because it was contrary to emerging planning policy. An indicative scheme for the residential development showed 68 houses with a total footprint of 6,200m² on 3.9ha.

5. On 29/04/97 Development Committee accepted in principle revised proposals for 72 houses on 3.6ha. No layouts were presented but Members were advised that the total footprint should amount to 5,500m². The appeal against non-determination was consequently withdrawn.

6. After considerable negotiation, the content of the planning application was revised to include the following proposals:

- a) change of use of 45ha of agricultural land to a pay and play golf course, and for change of use of 5.7ha of land to a “pocket park”;
- b) 3.6ha of residential development (outline permission) and the construction of a clubhouse; and,
- c) the contribution of a sum of money to the Parish Council to be used for the creation and maintenance of a pocket park and the extension of the car park.

7. Planning permission was eventually granted in July 1998 subject to a section 106 agreement that required, inter alia, a payment of £30,000 to the District Council, which was to be used for the management and future maintenance of the Redoubt in accordance with a management strategy for the protection, landscaping, access and enhancement of the Redoubt. The strategy was also intended to secure the necessary funding for its future management and maintenance. The District Council (or other appropriate body) were also given an option to take direct ownership of the Redoubt once the management strategy was agreed. If this option was not exercised within three years, then the ownership would remain with the developers subject to maintenance and security provisions set out in the Agreement.

8. The Management Strategy was never completed and the developers continue to own the Redoubt, subject to the maintenance and security provisions. These required security fencing to be erected and maintained around the Redoubt, and to allow access to it by prior appointment, until the date of freehold transfer, the provision for which was set out in the Agreement.

9. The District Council has been holding the £30,000 contribution for the management and future maintenance of the Redoubt, although none of this sum has been spent to date, for that purpose. Advice from the Council's Legal Service has indicated that, since this money remains unspent for the purpose for which it was intended, and noting that ten years will soon have elapsed since the Agreement was signed, that a request from the owners for the money to be returned to them in full might be hard to deny. The owners have further suggested that, rather than seek the return of the money at this stage, the money should be used to appoint consultants to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the Redoubt.

10. A brief for such a Management Plan was prepared by the owners and it was considered essential that any Management Plan would have to consider, and cost, the conservation repairs required, as well as proposals for the future use of the site and how it would be managed and financed. An estimate to carry out this work was received from a team of specialist consultants in the order of £40,000.

11. Officers consider that the use of some of the section 106 money for this purpose, is not significantly different from the intent of the relevant clause in the Agreement, that is "for the management and future maintenance of the Redoubt in accordance with the strategy ". Accordingly, the recommendation seeks approval for £20,000 of the sum to be spent on the preparation of a detailed Conservation Management Plan, provided that the owners also contribute the necessary matched funding to enable consultants to be appointed to prepare the Plan.

12. If Members agree with proposed course of action, then in order to formalise the arrangement, and to ensure that the Council would not be in breach of the original section 106 agreement, a Deed of Variation should be entered into.