

London Borough of Havering

RAF Hornchurch Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals



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RAF Hornchurch Conservation Area

Character Appraisal

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 The historical development of Havering

The London Borough of Havering, the second largest London borough, has a population of about 225,000 and covers an area of 11,227 hectares (approximately 40 square miles), half of which lies within the Green Belt. To the north and east, the borough is bordered by the Essex countryside and, to the south, by a three mile River Thames frontage; but although the M25 defines its outer edge, the character of the Essex landscape and its villages extends into the borough well within both the motorway and the administrative boundary between Greater London and Essex. Pevsner¹ remarks of Havering that *“the character of its buildings is shared equally between the suburbia of its western neighbours and the rural vernacular of the Essex countryside. This mix is unique in East London, comprising still remote medieval parish churches along the Thames marshlands, tiny rural villages, farmhouses set in open fields, a scattering of mansions, leafy Edwardian suburbia, and at its heart the brash commercialism of Romford.”* This summary is also an appropriate description for the range of conservation areas in Havering.

- 1.2 The London Borough of Havering was created in 1965 from Romford Borough and Hornchurch Urban District, reviving the name of the medieval Liberty of Havering, to which they once belonged. The administrative origins of Havering are in the medieval parishes which were grouped together to form the administrative units of Chafford Hundred in the south, and the Royal Manor and Liberty of Havering in the north and west. The Liberty consisted of three large parishes²: Romford, as the market town; Havering atte Bower, where the royal palace stood till the 17th century; and Hornchurch. Chafford Hundred had a cluster of much smaller parishes of isolated farms and hamlets, and included Cranham, North Ockendon and Upminster, of which Corbets Tey was part, and Rainham, a little port on higher land above the marshes where the Ingrebourne River meets the Thames. Topography has naturally dictated most administrative boundaries and the pattern and chronology of settlements - from the grazing lands of Rainham marshes and the alluvial Thames floodplains, to the siting of the royal palace at Havering atte Bower on the high northern ridge; and in the 20th century the location of the RAF airfield at Hornchurch.
- 1.3 For most of its history, the villages and manors of Havering were part of the agricultural life of Essex, with many manor houses set within parkland. From the later 17th century and through the 18th century, the area gained popularity as a rural retreat for merchants from the east end of London, who often became active benefactors, their manorial role extending – as with the Benyon family at

¹ Cherry, O'Brien, Pevsner: The Buildings of England: London 5: East (Penguin, 2005)

² A parish is understood to mean the smallest administrative unit in a system of local government, having its own church.

Cranham and North Ockendon – to the funding of new churches and schools. Trade focused on Romford and Hornchurch, important towns on the road to London, and on Rainham, transporting local produce and passengers to London and the continent along the Thames.

- 1.4 Development of Havering in the 19th century followed the broad pattern of most outer London boroughs, particularly those to the north and east of London, which absorbed expansion from the crowded east end of London. The establishment by a Shoreditch parish of the Cottage Homes for destitute children and orphans at Hornchurch, now St Leonards Conservation Area, is a reminder of the acute problem of poverty and poor living conditions in the east end in the late 19th century and the contrast with then-rural villages such as Hornchurch. The extension of the railway network during the second half of the 19th century initiated suburban development around station locations, both in established centres, or at new locations such as Gidea Park. Gidea Park was a late example of the local landowner as entrepreneur; the social ideals of the garden city and late Arts & Crafts movement combining with shrewd land investment to establish a discrete high quality suburb. But it was only in the 1930s, with the combined circumstances of the sale of most of the large estates, new arterial roads, the Underground, low interest rates, cheap buildings material (and the opportunism of building societies in encouraging a desire for the light and air of rural suburbia), that speculative development flooded into the spaces between settlements. This blurring of the boundaries between village and countryside was only halted by Green Belt legislation in the 1930s and the post-war planning acts.

1.5 **Background to the conservation area appraisal**

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are areas of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'³ and were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation imposes a duty on the Council, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area⁴. In fulfilling this duty, the Council does not seek to stop all development, but to manage change in a sensitive way, to ensure that those qualities which warranted designation are sustained and reinforced, rather than eroded. Designation also imposes a duty on the Council to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas and to consult the local community about these proposals.⁵ These duties have been emphasised by BV 219 (see below).

- 1.6 Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, the display of advertisements, and the lopping or felling of trees with a trunk diameter of more than 7.5cm.⁶ It does not, however, control all forms of development. Some changes to family dwelling houses (known as

³ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 section 69

⁴ *ibid*, section 72

⁵ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, section 71

⁶ More details of the effects of conservation area designation and property owners' obligations can be found on the Havering Council website, www.havering.gov.uk/planning

'permitted development') do not normally require planning permission. These include minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors or the alteration of boundary walls. Where such changes would erode the character and appearance of the area, the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4(2) directions. The result is that some or all permitted development rights are withdrawn and planning permission is required for such alterations.⁷

1.7 *Character appraisals*

A conservation area character appraisal aims to define the qualities that make an area special. This involves understanding the history and development of the place and analysing its current appearance and character - including describing significant features in the landscape and identifying important buildings and spaces and visible archaeological evidence. It also involves recording, where appropriate, intangible qualities such as the sights, sounds and smells that contribute to making the area distinctive, as well as its historic associations with people and events. An appraisal is not a complete audit of every building or feature, but rather aims to give an overall impression of the area. It provides a benchmark of understanding against which the effects of proposals for change can be assessed, and the future of the area managed. It also identifies problems that detract from the character of the area and potential threats to this character, and makes recommendations for action needed to address these issues.

1.8 The present programme of conservation area character appraisals, of which this forms part, supports Havering Council's commitment in its Unitary Development Plan policy ENV 3 to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of its conservation areas. The assessment in the character appraisals of the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the character of the Conservation Area is based on the criteria suggested in the appendix of the English Heritage *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (February 2006), reproduced in Appendix A to this document.

1.9 *Best Value Performance Indicator BV 219*

A local authority's performance in defining and recording the special architectural or historic interest of its conservation areas through up-to-date character appraisals is currently monitored through a culture-related Best Value Performance Indicator (BV 219). This measures annually, based on the total number of the authority's designated conservation areas, the percentage with up-to-date character appraisals.

2.0 **Planning policy framework**

2.1 **National planning policy framework**

The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* and PPG 16 *Archaeology and Planning*.

⁷ Where applicable, listed building consent may still be required even if works benefit from being permitted development.

2.2 Regional policy

Havering's planning policies operate within the broad framework of the London Plan (published in February 2004 and now amended), prepared by the Mayor of London. The London Plan also includes Sub-Regional Development Frameworks for all areas of London, as an intermediate step between the London Plan and the boroughs' Local Development Frameworks. Havering is within the East London Sub-Regional Development Framework.

2.3 Conservation policy and guidance in Havering

Unitary Development Plan policies

Havering's current policy framework is provided by the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 1993. The UDP is the development plan for the borough and serves two purposes: to bring forward proposals for the development and use of land in the borough, and to set out the Council's policies for making decisions on planning applications. UDP policies can be read on the Council's website. The UDP policy on conservation areas, ENV 3, explains how the Council will implement planning legislation and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of its conservation areas. The UDP also contains a specific policy, ENV 23, for the Gidea Park Conservation Area. The UDP will be replaced in due course by the new Local Development Framework (LDF), explained below.

2.4 Existing supplementary planning guidance

To assist residents and developers, the Council has also issued design guidance, which remains a material consideration when planning applications are being assessed until replaced in new Supplementary Planning Documents (see below). Gidea Park has its own design guide to assist in the detailed interpretation of Policy ENV 23, Article 4(2) directions, and the Gidea Park Special Character Area. There is a Shopfront Design Guide for the Rainham Conservation Area, whose principles are applicable in other conservation areas.

2.5 Environmental Strategies

Within the UDP policy framework, the Council approved in September 1993 a Heritage Strategy for the Borough. In April 2000, a more detailed Heritage Strategy for Romford and Hornchurch was agreed, which is due to be incorporated in the proposed Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document on heritage by December 2007. These strategies emphasise that heritage conservation, which was once limited to listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas, now extends to all aspects of the environment which contribute to a sense of place and a sense of history and are of lasting value to the community. In July 2005, the Council approved the Romford Urban Strategy to provide the key partners in central Romford with an economic and physical vision for the future. This was adopted as Interim Planning Guidance in June 2006 pending the planned adoption of the Romford Area Action Plan in December 2008. This and the Hornchurch Urban Strategy will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents within the Local Development Framework.

2.6 *Local Development Framework*

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the current UDP in due course. The LDF will consist of a portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDD), which collectively will guide development in the borough up to 2020. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) will expand policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPD) and the Council intends in due course to prepare a SPD for heritage issues, including local heritage. This will be supported by the adopted and published conservation area character appraisals and related management proposals.

2.7 **Conservation areas in Havering**

There are nine conservation areas in Havering, representing a variety of survivals from different periods of its past. Although all are distinctly individual in character, some share common characteristics because of their location or origins. The southern group of Corbets Tey, Rainham, Cranham and North Ockendon, for example, share medieval administrative origins in the Chafford Hundred, and three of them also maintain their strong focus on the parish church; some retain their manor or manorial farm, which reinforces the surviving village character, even when the modern settlement is partially engulfed by suburbia, or closely pressed by industrial development. Havering atte Bower in the north of the borough also strongly retains this impression, with all the above components present. St Leonards, RAF Hornchurch, and Gidea Park, although totally different from each other, are all survivals of single historical periods and their particular ideas and architectural style. Romford, although originating with its parish church, today represents the evolution of the shopping function - from market to parade to arcade to modern mall - which defines its special interest as much as its medieval core.

3.0 **Summary of special interest of RAF Hornchurch Conservation Area**

3.1 **Designation of the conservation area**

The Conservation Area was designated on 7th June 1989 and covers an area of 0.93ha (2.31 acres). It includes (in Astra Close) Astra House, the former Officers' Mess, with Astra House North, East and West, the Single Officers' quarters; and Nos 89 - 99 Wood Lane, the Warrant Officers' quarters, which are three pairs of semi-detached houses. The boundary of the conservation area links these across Wood Lane. Astra House and the former Single Officers' Quarters to the rear are included in an initial list of Buildings of Local Heritage Interest in the Heritage Strategy for Romford and Hornchurch approved in 2000, as are the Defence Buildings at Squadrons Approach in the Hornchurch Country Park nearby.

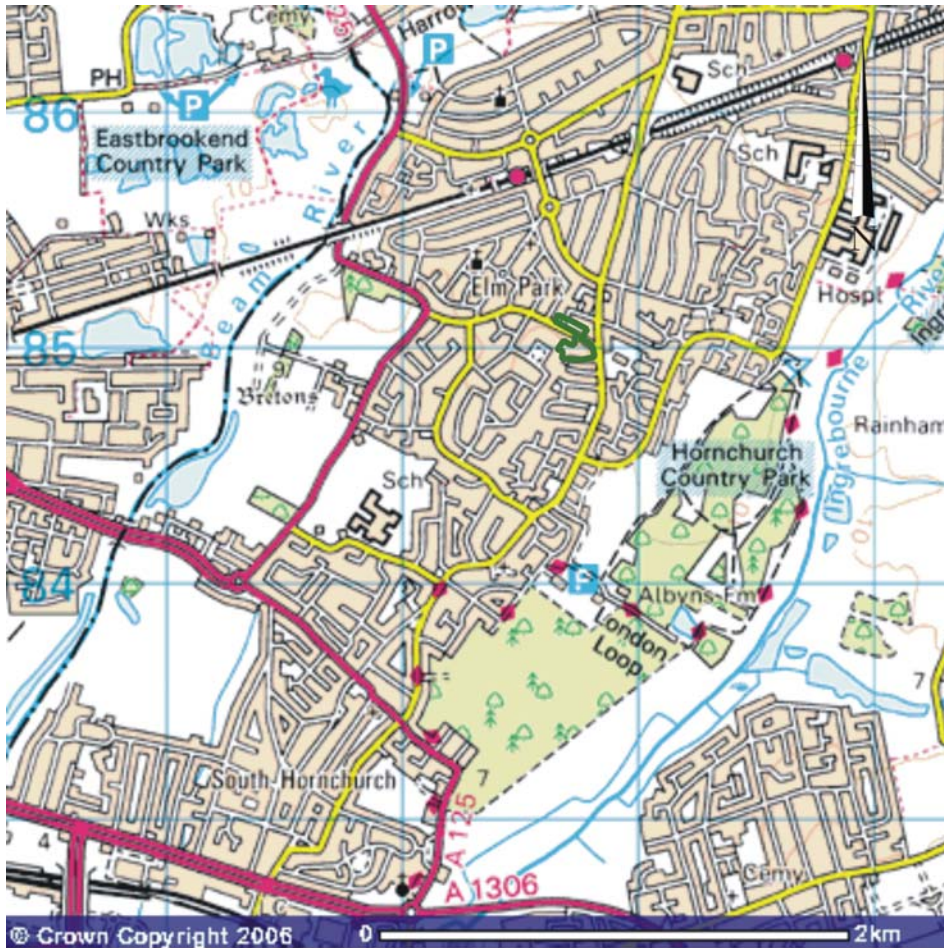
3.2 The designation report identified the following features of special interest justifying designation:

- It is an historically important group of buildings representing an important period of World War II history to which there is strong local commitment
- The re-survey of the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest in 1979 identified the buildings as of local interest.

- The buildings have a similarity of austere design and materials
- The main core of buildings are within neat well-treed grounds

3.3 Additional qualities identified

The above qualities still apply, but, because the area is so small and currently limited in its range of buildings, it is not possible to identify any additional qualities now. At the time of building, the group was relatively isolated, but post-war development of the area has closed tightly around it, although the style and size of the Astra House group ensures it still stands out from its setting. But it is of relatively low architectural value and its special interest is mainly historical, through its associations with RAF Hornchurch's Spitfire squadrons. The single storey central block and its two wings still form an enclosure enhanced by mature trees, including a fine Copper beech to the left side of the central wing. These trees make a significant contribution to Astra Close and South End Road, as well as to the character of the Conservation Area.



RAF Hornchurch conservation area character appraisal map 1: Location map

— Conservation area boundary

4.0 Assessment of special interest

4.1 Location and setting

The Conservation Area is located in South Hornchurch, to the north and south of Wood Lane at its eastern end and near to the edge of the urban area of Hornchurch. The area is clearly visible from both Wood Lane and South End Road to the east, as well as Astra Close where its main entrance is located.

4.2 Landscape setting, topography and archaeological potential

The immediate setting is an area of densely built up mainly mid- to late-20th century housing, but the view opens up across the grounds of the primary schools to the east of Wood Lane. Hornchurch Country Park - formerly RAF Hornchurch airfield until 1963 - is a short distance to the south east. The entire Conservation Area lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone and the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service must be consulted about any applications involving 0.4ha or more.⁸

4.3 General character

The Conservation Area is very small, comprising six blocks of buildings, of which three are pairs of semi-detached officers' houses. Because the back of Astra House faces Wood Lane, where the houses are located, it is difficult to appreciate any connection between them. Astra House and its adjacent wings are the focus of the Conservation Area, appearing as distinctly different from their surroundings in scale, materials and form. There is currently little to indicate the original function of the complex, particularly in the case of the houses. There is a strong 1940s/1950s feel to Wood Lane, which needs to be retained.

4.4 Origins and historic development

RAF Hornchurch was first established in 1915 when a military airfield to defend London from Zeppelins was opened at Suttons Farm. During World War II, the well-known Spitfire fighter squadrons from Hornchurch were prominent in the Battle of Britain. Flying ceased in 1944, but the site was retained by the RAF until sold in 1963 for mineral extraction; subsequently it became the site of the Country Park. Also in 1963, the RAF sold the Astra House complex to a local developer who converted it to offices, and converted the Single Officers' Quarters at the rear into flats. In 1989, a planning application was received to demolish Astra House and replace it with a block of flats; this was the incentive for the designation of the Conservation Area, and the application was withdrawn.

⁸ Further information can be obtained from the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service at English Heritage.

4.5 Spatial analysis



The car parking areas

The setting of the Conservation Area on a narrow *cul de sac*, Astra Close, is formed by dense housing development and is intensively parked with cars associated with the terraced housing. The courtyard in front of the central wing allows the set-back frontage to be appreciated - when this is not also full of parked cars. Mature trees conceal much of the view of the wings, Astra House East and West, and the only associated open space is the car park to the east. From the approach along Wood Lane, the back of Astra House and its wings is clearly seen, but this is not a view complimentary to the group. There is a tenuous connection – relying on prior knowledge rather than any visual information – between the two parts of the Conservation Area, which have no apparent connection with each other.



RAF Hornchurch conservation area character appraisal map 2: character analysis

- Conservation area boundary
- Building making a positive contribution to the area
- Neutral building
- Area with a negative impact
- Poor view

4.6 Character analysis

Activity and uses

The buildings in the Conservation Area were constructed by 1938 and were in use by the RAF until 1963. Astra House was the Officers' Mess and the adjacent wings the Single Officers' Quarters, with additional accommodation in Wood Lane. Since 1963, the main building has been in office use, and the rest (the rear block of Astra House, the two wings and the houses across the road) has been in residential use.

4.7 Architectural quality and contribution to special character

The Astra House group was built to a traditional and symmetrical good-mannered design of 17th century inspiration, in dark red brick with tall mullion and transom casement windows. The single storey central wing has a recessed porch framed by rusticated brick piers, and a bellcote with a copper dome.



Astra House main entrance, and the former Warrant Officers' accommodation

The wings are taller, with similar windows. All windows have now been replaced with modern units imitating the earlier design. These blocks constitute the main architectural interest of the Conservation Area, its principal importance lying in its historical associations with the Second World War. The houses across the road at the rear – the former Warrant Officers' quarters – are reserved in design and typical of war time construction: they have no obvious stylistic or visual connection with Astra House

4.8 Greenery and green spaces

The trees within the Conservation Area, some of which are good mature Copper beeches, make a very important contribution to the Conservation Area and its wider setting.

4.9 Negative element: loss, intrusion and damage

The car park is currently poorly surfaced and detracts from the buildings, as does the tarmac parking area in front of Astra House. The replacement of the windows in the wings with PVCu units is unsympathetic to the age and architectural character of the buildings. If the replacement is recent, it should not have taken place as permitted development, since the building is divided into flats. The view of the rear of Astra House is not attractive and has little relationship to the houses across the road included in the Conservation Area.

4.10 *Problems and pressures*

The original designation was prompted by a proposal to re-develop, and was justified by historical associations, rather than by architectural interest. The generally poor appearance of the Conservation Area is due to its unsympathetic conversion, and a lack of investment in the setting areas. Apart from this, the main issue is the cramped setting on Astra Close, where a narrow road and parking pressure have inevitable consequences. This means that the setting of the Conservation Area is dominated by parked cars, many of them on the footways. Overall, the Conservation Area lacks cohesion; the two parts on either side of Wood Lane fail to relate to each other and give no indication of why they are included in a Conservation Area.

4.11 *Capacity for change*

Options for improving the setting are limited; better surfacing of the car parks, both in front of and to the east of Astra House, would help, as would limiting the parking in front of the central wing and re-surfacing it in a more sympathetic manner. Improvements to the rear setting of Astra House would improve the view from Wood Lane. Since it is unclear to the casual observer why this area should be designated (but the local associations with the RAF occupation are apparently still strong), it would be beneficial to have some explanation in the form of a notice-board or explanatory plaque.

5.0 **Boundary changes**

No boundary changes are currently proposed for the Conservation Area, but there are associated contemporary areas of RAF housing of moderate interest to the north (Kilmartin Way), south (Cavenish Avenue and Crescent) and west (the ATC centre and properties on the corner of South End Road and Wood Lane) which could justify further study. However, the effects of any development proposals on the existing setting of the Conservation Area would be a material consideration in the planning authority's handling of such proposals. English Heritage's *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (2006), para 3.15, reiterates the advice in para 4.14 of *Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15* and points out that the effect of proposed development outside a conservation area on its setting, or views into or out of the area, "should be taken into account by the local planning authority when considering the proposal". Further work beyond the scope of this appraisal may be required so that more detailed policy guidance can be provided on features of interest in the setting area and/or to assess its potential for future designation.

6.0 **Summary of issues**

The main issue is the marginal value of the Conservation Area other than for its historic associations with the RAF (which is also demonstrated in various street and building names), and the reduction of the already limited architectural interest through alterations such as windows in unsympathetic modern materials, which should not have been permitted. De-designation could be considered, but would probably cause considerable local objection. If there is commitment to maintaining the designation and making the best of it, the following are issues:

- Management of parking in the immediate frontage and the wider setting, including pavement parking
- Better surfacing and boundaries for the private large car park
- Need for improvement of the appearance of the rear of Astra House
- Provision of information on a visible notice or plaque on the street about the history and significance of the buildings

7.0 Contact details

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Management proposals

8.0 Introduction and background

- 8.1 The management proposals for Havering’s conservation areas are based on the character appraisals and provide detailed strategies for the positive management of change within these areas, in order to preserve and enhance their distinctive character. The proposals aim to *preserve* each conservation area’s positive characteristics by the detailed application of planning policies and the implementation of some new controls; and to *enhance* the character of each area by encouraging the improvement or re-development of sites which detract from its character.
- 8.2 English Heritage’s revised guidance on conservation area management (February 2006) states in paragraph 5.1 that “The character appraisal should provide the basis for developing management proposals for the conservation area that will fulfil the general duty placed upon local authorities under the Act, now formalised in BV219c, to draw up and publish such proposals. The proposals should take the form of a mid- to long-term strategy setting objectives for addressing the issues and recommendations for action arising from the appraisal, and identifying any further or more detailed work required for their implementation.”
- 8.3 The English Heritage guidance also suggests (paragraph 5.2) what issues a management strategy might cover. Relevant issues for Havering’s conservation areas appear to be:
- the application of policy guidance, both national and local, and site-specific development briefs
 - establishing procedures to ensure consistent decision-making
 - establishing a mechanism for monitoring change in the area on a regular basis;

- a rapid-response enforcement strategy to address unauthorised development
- proposals for Article 4(2) directions, following detailed survey and justification, which will restrict permitted development rights by requiring planning consent for specific alterations to residential properties;
- intended action to secure the future of any buildings at risk from damage, vacancy or neglect;
- enhancement schemes and ongoing/improved management regimes for the public realm
- a strategy for the management and protection of important trees, street greenery and green spaces; and
- proposals for an urban design/public realm framework for the area (setting out agreed standards and specifications for footway surfaces, street furniture, signage and traffic management measures).

9.0 Management proposals for RAF Hornchurch Conservation Area

- 9.1 The character appraisal of RAF Hornchurch Conservation Area sets out in section 3.0 a list of key characteristics (or 'positive factors') which provide the special interest of the conservation area. These are summarised as the 'Definition of special interest' of the conservation area. The management strategy sets out the Council's proposals for protecting these key characteristics. Similarly, the character appraisal examines problems and pressures (or 'negative factors') in each character area, summarised at the end of the appraisal as 'Issues affecting the conservation area', and the management strategy addresses these with proposals for improved management, enhancement or re-development where appropriate, in consultation with stakeholders.
- 9.2 In the following table of proposals, the first column shows the general categories of proposals; not all conservation areas will generate issues to be addressed in all these categories.

APPENDIX A

Criteria for assessing unlisted building in a conservation area
[from English Heritage guidance *Conservation area appraisals* (2006)]

When considering the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, the following questions might be asked:

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

Any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.

APPENDIX C

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S THEMATIC STUDY OF AVIATION SITES AND STRUCTURES

2.3.0 Historical development and Survival

2.3.4 1923-1940

More than 100 stations were built in permanent fabric between 1923 and 1939. Trenchard's expansion of the air force, given Parliament's blessing in 1923, was centred upon the building of offensive bomber bases in East Anglia and Oxfordshire, behind an 'aircraft fighting zone' some fifteen miles deep and extending round London from Duxford in Cambridgeshire to Salisbury Plain (*Hornchurch falls into the latter category*). This principle of offensive deterrence, although subject to fluctuations which reflected events on the world stage and varying degrees of political support, continued to guide the siting and layout of stations after 1933, when Hitler's rise to power and the collapse of the Geneva disarmament talks forced the British government to engage in a massive programme of re-armament. The continuing development of existing bases (some dating from the First World War) and the building of new bases was thus concentrated on the establishment of training and maintenance bases behind an eastern front line - extending from Yorkshire to East Anglia - facing Germany.

Survival

The airfields of this period, which comprised the bulk of those retained as the core bases of the RAF and USAAF after 1945, have survived in the best condition. The completeness or otherwise of inter-war bases - and the extent to which they have retained their architectural detail, external fittings and inter-relationship as part of planned groups - is closely linked to the nature and intensity of post-war use. Upper Heyford, for example, which was the test bed for the planning of Trenchard's Home Defence Scheme stations, was greatly extended and adapted as key USAF site in the Cold War period. Less intensive use - at present for administration, storage and glider training - of another one of Trenchard's Oxfordshire bomber bases, has ensured that Bicester is the most complete group representative of developments on bomber airfields for the period up to 1939. Hullavington in Wiltshire, faced in Cotswold stone further to representations by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, is in every respect the key station representative of the improved architectural quality of post-1934 expansion. Duxford in Cambridgeshire survives as the most outstanding multi-period site and fighter base in Britain, with buildings of both inter-war expansion periods added to a uniquely well-preserved suite of hangars and technical buildings of 1918. Kemble (on the Wiltshire/Gloucestershire border) has the greatest range of advanced hangar types on any of the 24 Aircraft Storage Units built between 1936 and 1941.

(Hornchurch also has important associations with World War II.)

2.5.0 Historical importance

2.5.1 ...During the Second World War, Britain's entire layout of military airfields was involved in the war effort, there also being a diverse range of nationalities associated with these sites. 15% of Fighter Command's strength in the Battle of

Britain came from overseas pilots, Czechs and Poles making up the largest European element (see Northolt), and training units such as Bicester took in many thousands from overseas. Some sites, however, can be more readily associated with key military episodes than others. Association with the Battle of Britain has already formed a basis for the Conservation Area designation of Biggin Hill, in 1993, and the listing of its officers' mess, the Conservation Area designation by Havering Borough Council in 1989 of the area around the considerably more altered mess building at Hornchurch and the listing of the 'Spitfire Club', formerly the NAAFI and chapel, at Tangmere in 1986.

- 2.5.2 The Battle of Britain involved a limited number of sites, mostly concentrated in 11 Group in the south-east which took the brunt of the Luftwaffe attack: significant building groups have survived at Biggin Hill and Northolt, an airfield landscape at Kenley and the command bunker at RAF Uxbridge, preserved exactly as it was described by Churchill in 1940. Duxford's distinguished wartime associations related to its role as a sector station in 12 Group to the north and a USAAF fighter base in support of the daylight bomber offensive. These stations continued to play a key role in air defence and activities over occupied Europe during the conflict, West Malling, for example, being the only site identified in this survey which played a key role in Operation Diver's defence against the V1 rocket from 1944. The decisive role of air power in the Battle of the Atlantic finds reflection in three important English sites (Calshot, Dunkeswell and Hooton Park, in addition to the single seaplane hangar surviving at Mount Batten) buttressed by two in Wales and one in Northern Ireland. In contrast, the strategic bomber offensive of 1942-5 was longer, less focused, and involved a much larger number of bases, mostly 1930s Expansion Period stock, plus many wartime temporary airfields. Scampton's association with 617 Squadron's raid on the Ruhr dams in 1943 is an exception to the general rule that the scale and diffused nature of the bombing campaign does not allow for a special historical distinction to be applied to specific sites, in contrast to the Battle of Britain's involvement of a relatively small number of airfields. There is a case for the statutory protection of control towers on Second World War airfields with distinguished operational histories, both their operational nerve centres and as memorials to the enormous losses sustained by American and Commonwealth forces in the course of the Strategic Bomber Offensive.