



B USHFIELD CAMP Winchester

A Study of the Camp & its surroundings

AFR-9

PREFACE

A draft Bushfield Camp Study was first published in December 1994, in conjunction with the deposit Winchester District Local Plan, for the purposes of public consultation and discussion.

That document, prepared by the City Council, was intended to bring before the owners of the land, local people, their representatives and other interested parties the history and evolution of the Camp and its surroundings and, in looking ahead to the future prospects for this area, to outline possible topics for debate.

A process of consultation having been completed, the Study document has been refined and updated, additionally reflecting the policy proposals contained in the Local Plan. It is now being published as The Bushfield Camp Study.

In its revised form the Study has been adopted as a statement of the City Council's policy, to amplify the policies contained in the Winchester District Local Plan. It, therefore, sets out the planning principles which the Council would expect to see incorporated in any applications for planning permission to develop or effect land-use changes, within the Study area.

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Bushfield Camp Study

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Bushfield Camp Study

The Purpose Of The Study

The area containing Bushfield Camp has become the subject of increasing local awareness, both with regard to its present condition and its prospects for the future. This Study is aimed at responding to that interest and is based on an open-minded approach to the character and attributes of a somewhat neglected, and possibly under-appreciated, part of the City's environs.

In addition, the Camp and its surrounding land, much of which is under-used, are the subject of specific policies in the Winchester District Local Plan. These quite specifically recognise the need for this detailed planning study, in order to consider the overall site and its latent possibilities, from various points of view. Amongst these is the assessment of its potential for sport and recreation, given that there is, currently, an additional need for such facilities in the Winchester area. Furthermore, the Local Plan considers: the provision of access to the site; the possibility of developing a Park And Ride facility; and the creation of a small Country Park, to meet the need for purely informal recreation.

This study is, therefore, intended to draw together and examine those factual elements relating to the site and its surroundings and to move forward to consider the limitations and opportunities which arise.

1. Key Features

Location

- 1.1. The Bushfield area is located on the south-eastern edge of Winchester City. The Camp and the land immediately surrounding it which, together, make up the project area are situated within Compton and Badger Farm Parishes. Although Bushfield is bounded by the main railway line, the Badger Farm estate and Badger Farm Road it, nevertheless, marks the beginning of that broad swathe of generally open countryside, to the south of Badger Farm and the City, which reaches out to Compton, Twyford and beyond.
- 1.2. The overall project area, as defined on Plan 1, is approximately 63 hectares. Of this, some 15 hectares represent the area covered by the former hutted army camp, which was established during the Second World War and continued in use until the mid 1970s, when it was effectively abandoned by the MOD and most of the camp buildings progressively demolished.

Topography

- 1.3. In topographical terms the site divides into three parts, as shown on Plan 2:
 - (A) Land to the north-west of Whiteshute Lane, which has a typical downland scarp face, sloping down to meet the built-up edge of Badger Farm.
 - (B) Approximately one third of the total area, which is roughly triangular and north facing, sloping quite steeply down towards St.Cross and the main Winchester-Southampton railway line. A central, dry-valley feature follows the general slope, bisecting this part, before appearing to stop beside the embankment carrying the main railway line.
 - (C) The remainder, which is roughly rectangular and south facing, contains the camp remains and slopes more gently down to a long frontage directly onto Badger Farm Road.
- 1.4. The two slopes, to the south of Whiteshute, break at a distinct ridge line feature which runs east-west across the greater part of the site. This ridge line is marked by a double line of maturing Beech trees which are now closely knit together and create not only a positive visual barrier but, in views of the site across the surrounding landscape and townscape, present its most distinctive and recognisable element.
- 1.5. There are, in addition to this planted tree belt (which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order), a number of other trees and a great deal of developing vegetation, which is slowly establishing itself over much of the site.
- 1.6. However, there are also parts of the site which are currently farmed, with varying degrees of intensity.

Trees

- 1.7. The site overall is of a chalk downland character. Although the perimeter of the site is generally well defined by hedgerows with trees, which are broadly characteristic of the soil type and general topography, there are no significant blocks of woodland present in the main area of the site. However, in addition to the double line of Beech trees where the slope breaks, there are various deciduous trees planted by the military. These generally follow the outline of the camp roads and in one or two places form attractive avenue features, which further help to conceal what is left of the buildings.

- 1.8. Mixed coniferous and broad-leaved trees also occur along the main railway embankment and provide a strong feature on the eastern boundary. A tree belt follows the downland where Whiteshute Ridge slopes steeply down to meet the edge of the Badger Farm development. In addition, some areas of naturally generating thorn scrub have achieved a sufficient size to be apparent in quite distant views of the site (See Plan 3).
- 1.9. During the recent 1994/95 planting season the Church Commissioners carried out a programme of additional tree planting on those parts of the site which they own : Plan 3 illustrates these new linear features, intended to supplement the planting carried out by the military authorities and which is now beginning to mature.

Ecology

- 1.10. The site has been surveyed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, albeit at a time of year when it was not possible to precisely establish the area's full ecological or habitat potential.
- 1.11. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there is a good deal of interest with many plant and other species present. This is partly due to its history as enclosed downland pasture and partly as a result of plant colonisation in the area covered by the remains of the camp (See Plan 4).
- 1.12. In summarising the area's overall ecological value the Trust has advised that:
"Much of the site's interest comes from the differences between the various parts, reflecting subtle differences in past management and there is no doubt that, from a conservation point of view, the ideal future for the site would be to treat it all as chalk grassland, while maintaining the individual character of the parts. Allowing present arable and ley to tumble back down to grass could add extra interest... the buildings will presumably have to go, so protecting the 'best bits' will be difficult. However, the brick cliff. [the range butt].. could be kept and modified for Kestrel and Jackdaw nest sites."
- 1.13. Since that appraisal took place the open area of Whiteshute Ridge, which is held by Badger Farm Parish Council, has been designated a Site Of Importance For Nature Conservation, by Hampshire County Council.

Land Quality

- 1.14. In the summer of 1994 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food conducted a detailed field analysis in order to establish the characteristics of the Bushfield site, in terms of its standard agricultural land classification.
- 1.15. From a total area of 63 hectares surveyed an area of 10.8ha., corresponding to the main railway line and the former army camp, was classified, in accordance with normal practice, as "urban land". A further 24.0ha., the most steeply sloping parts of the study area, were given a non-agricultural grading. In addition to that, a total of 4.4ha. were classified as "woodland".
- 1.16. The major part of the remainder of the site (24.1ha.) which, overall, consists of variable clayey topsoil over hard chalk, was classified as Subgrade 3B. However, as a result of the relative steepness of the hillside at one point, a small sub-area to the north-west of the Ridge (0.1ha.) was allocated to Grade 4. Subgrade 3B is classed as land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally cereals and grass or lower yields of a wider range of crops. Grade 4 amounts to poor quality agricultural land with severe limitations (See Plan 4).
- 1.17. The site does therefore have agricultural potential but does not fall within that part of the standard classification range which contains "the best and most versatile" agricultural land.

Roads and Rights of Way

- 1.18. The site is bounded by three differing transport routes: the main railway line; the relatively modern Badger Farm Road, which essentially post-dates the Army's occupation of the

Camp; and the ancient trackway along Whiteshute which linked Winchester, the then capital, to Romsey and the royal hunting preserve of the New Forest.

- 1.19. Badger Farm Road has "County Distributor Road" status and provides an essential circulatory link on the south side of the City which ties into the M3 motorway, via a new link road. Visibility up and down the site's frontage onto this road is generally good and the former entrance into the Camp is, in practical terms, situated at what could be regarded as a favourable point for safe access/egress (See Plan 5).
- 1.20. Whiteshute Lane, which represents one of the few remaining stretches of Winchester's mediaeval road network in this area, has a "Road Used As A Public Path" status. It also forms part of the long distance footpath which links Winchester, Kings Somborne and Salisbury and is known as The Clarendon Way.
- 1.21. A network of completely informal pedestrian paths has gradually been opened up on the other side of Whiteshute Lane and has, in recent years, effectively extended local residents' use and enjoyment of the open Ridge onto much of the Bushfield site. However, there are currently no formal rights of way or recognised permissive paths over any part of the area which is south and east of the Lane.

Archaeology

- 1.22. The site has been assessed by Winchester's Museums Service, in order to gauge the possible archaeological content of the area and the constraining effect which that might have on any future changes of use.
- 1.23. In general, the area shows a higher concentration of sites, monuments and find spots than is usual for similar locations, indicating a long history of human occupation. However, a proportion of the evidence indicating archaeological features has tended to follow the line of Whiteshute Lane, with additional Bronze Age finds towards the south-east corner of the site. Indeed, that area is possibly the most important from an archaeological point of view, as the discovery of urns from the Bronze Age period may indicate the presence of a more extensive burial ground (See Plan 4).
- 1.24. Similarly, a large number of Roman finds can perhaps be linked with the major road of this period, which runs just east of the study area and connected Winchester with the port at Bitterne, Southampton,
- 1.25. Broadly speaking, the known archaeological features are not so "important or extensive as to preclude or limit any development". However, dependent on the siting, nature and extent of any re-use proposals, some archaeological intervention may be required.
- 1.26. Such intervention would clearly be less, if indeed necessary at all, in the case of open agricultural or recreational uses.

Ownerships

- 1.27. The area to the south and east of Whiteshute Lane is in two ownerships. The Camp site itself, together with land to the south-east and north-east is in the ownership of the Church Commissioners. This totals some 32 hectares. The smaller area between the camp and Whiteshute Lane, is in the ownership of Hampshire County Council (See Plan 6).
- 1.28. The land to the north-west of Whiteshute Lane, known as Whiteshute Ridge, is currently held by the Badger Farm Parish Council, on a very long lease from the City Council and is dedicated to use as public open space. Whiteshute Lane itself is believed to be in the ownership of Winchester City Council.
- 1.29. Both the Church Commissioners and HCC have agricultural tenancy arrangements at Bushfield. In the case of HCC this applies to a single tenant who farms the County's landholding as an adjunct to Bushfield Farm, to the south of Badger Farm Road.

- 1.30. The Church Commissioners have one long term tenant, who has arable rights over the former allotment area at the north-eastern tip of the overall site. In addition, there are short-term grazing licence arrangements to the east and west of the camp (See Plan 6).

Land Uses

- 1.31. Apart from the Whiteshute Ridge land, which is managed and maintained purely for purposes of public access and enjoyment, the remainder of the site area falls into three broad categories of land use:
- (i) The site of the Camp itself which, although technically derelict, has now reached the point where the removal of most of the original buildings, together with a combination of maturing MOD tree-planting and natural regrowth over much of the site, has led to a gradually diminishing "presence". Evidence that the Camp existed at all is not now particularly noticeable, in most views into the Bushfield site. Some significant traces do remain, however, in the former parade square and the skeletal buildings which flank it on the north-west side. Further to the north-west, the Camp's football pitch area still remains, in reasonable order. This continued to be used by local amateur and youth teams until the late 1980s.
 - (ii) The area of land to the north of the Camp, which tapers down almost to a point with the convergence of Whiteshute Lane and the railway line, is not cultivated and its upper portion in fact presents a typical example of naturally regenerating downland, with extensive areas of thorn and elder scrub very much in evidence. The lower portion of this land, the former allotment land, has been worked until fairly recently but now shows all the characteristic signs of a "set-aside" field.
 - (iii) The fields to the east and west of the camp are currently in agricultural use, based on the grazing licences referred to above. The large field, situated where Whiteshute Lane meets Badger Farm Road, has been under regular cultivation. The other fields, at the margins of the camp, have been used in recent years for grazing and silage purposes (See Plan 6).

Buildings

- 1.32. The remaining buildings on the overall site are confined to the area of the former Camp. In addition to the partly clad frames of buildings which still stand alongside the parade square, there is a strongly built, single-storey building at the centre of the Camp which may have been an operations centre. There is also a rather imposing small-arms firing range "butt", which takes the form of a curved brick wall, in the north-eastern corner of the Camp. Otherwise, building remains above ground amount to little more than fragments. With the possible exception of the small, central blockhouse, no other structure or building appears to be re-usable (See Plan 5).

Services

- 1.33. As has already been made clear the site is well served by access from the road network. In addition, the Bushfield site can also be reached by those on foot or on bicycles. In that sense it is particularly well located in terms of Oliver's Battery, Badger Farm, St.Cross and Stanmore (See Plan 5).
- 1.34. A major source of Winchester's electricity supply passes across the site in the form of a pole-mounted overhead power line. This runs closely parallel to Whiteshute Lane, on the south-east side and as it is seen marching down the long slope towards Mead Road, in St.Cross, presents an obtrusive and unattractive feature of the site in near-distant views (See Plan 5).
- 1.35. The physical presence of such a feature would act as a constraint on any future use, although the degree of constraint would depend on the nature of the use or uses. In any event, diversion or the under-grounding of this particular service element may not be

economically viable or feasible options. Nevertheless, diversion or undergrounding of the overhead line would enhance the appearance of the study area and, therefore, represents a desirable objective.

- 1.36. The current availability of other services, to the various parts of the site, has not yet been precisely established. Clearly, further investigation will be needed, although specific requirements would depend on future uses. It is quite possible that basic service supply to the Camp area i.e. water, would be capable of re-connection.

2. Site Setting

General

- 2.1. Whiteshute Ridge and the spur on which Bushfield Camp is located, form part of Winchester's magnificent topographical setting. The ancient City, now covered by the modern central area, lay at the crossing of the River Itchen below what is now known as West Hill, on one side, and St.Giles' Hill on the other. Although present-day Winchester has grown far beyond these original enclosures it still reflects this underlying characteristic, in that it appears to be contained within a broad basin of surrounding hills.
- 2.2. The Ridge, with its fine sweep of open downland and the most ancient trackway of Whiteshute Lane, has long been regarded by the City Council as the natural edge of the built-up area. In addition, the Ridge, with its particular length and alignment, effectively screens the modern suburbs of Oliver's Battery and Badger Farm, in views from the south and east and also the lower parts of the river valley.
- 2.3. The elements of the site to the south and east of Whiteshute Lane are seen with that natural screen acting as an effective backcloth. The prominent spur surmounted by the remains of the Camp, with its distinctive Beech trees, is clearly visible from the south and south-east; from Oliver's Battery, over the top of Badger Farm; from Hurdle Way, Compton; from Shawford Down; and from Twyford (See Plan 7).
- 2.4. From the east and north-east the pasture and regenerating downland, which embrace the double line of Beech and the camp remains behind that feature, are even more clearly seen. There are high-level viewpoints both within the City and on the downland beyond the river valley, which provide clear views of the site's north facing slope: the public open spaces of St.Giles' Hill; the Butterfly Reserve at Magdalen Hill Down , which is also open to the public; the downs above Chilcomb; and St.Catherine's Hill. It is this, latter, viewpoint which gives probably the most striking high-level view of the site, directly across the river valley with virtually no intervening obstructions.
- 2.5. At the lower level of the valley floor, the site's northern slope can be seen from a number of points. From Tun Bridge, where Garnier Road crosses the Itchen Navigation, the Chapel of St.Cross Hospital can be seen standing in the lush meadows with the slopes of Bushfield Camp and Whiteshute Ridge rising directly behind. Similar views are to be had from much of the entire length of the Navigation below St.Catherine's Hill and Plague Pits Valley.
- 2.6. It would be difficult to over-emphasise the importance of these particular vistas, not only in terms of the historic setting of the Hospital and the importance to Winchester of this ancient charitable foundation, but also in terms of the far wider importance of St.Cross in reflecting the cultural, ecclesiastical and architectural evolution of Britain and, indeed, Western Europe.
- 2.7. Given that the Bushfield site itself provides extensive views over the oldest parts of the City, the water meadows, the far slopes of the river valley and the downland of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty beyond, it is evident that this site occupies a naturally prominent location which is not only tremendously important to the setting of essential elements of the City and its surroundings, but also acts as a commanding viewpoint in its own right.

St Cross Hospital

- 2.8. From a national perspective, and in terms of its archaeological significance, Winchester is among the forty most important historic towns in England and Wales. Closely connected with this is the fact that the City contains major mediaeval institutions, among these St Cross

Hospital which, both individually and as an ensemble, provide the dominant structures upon which the modern-day character of Winchester is based. Especially noteworthy is that they all contribute to the City's skyline; each having the added advantage of a setting against which this can be more fully appreciated.

- 2.9. The importance of St Cross Hospital, as a national monument, has already been referred to. Indeed, its official description declares it to be "one of the most beautiful groups of buildings in the country".
- 2.10. Founded in the 12th century the Hospital has continued in use as an almshouse foundation from the early mediaeval period to the present day. It now represents a most illustrious member of that very small group of similarly surviving institutions (which has progressively dwindled from an original total of seven hundred in England alone). It has the further distinction of appearing to retain the immediate setting and atmosphere of a small village beyond which, and when seen from a number of viewpoints, still gives the clear impression of being situated "in the country".
- 2.11. In that particular sense, the Bushfield Study area is undoubtedly vital to the setting of St Cross Hospital. However, it is also of importance for its wider contribution to the setting of Winchester and to that characteristic of the City which still provides such a crisp and pleasing transition from town to countryside and where, in the case of the Itchen Valley almost immediately below the east-facing slopes of the Study area, the countryside goes on to penetrate deeply into the urban zone.
- 2.12. A major part of the Bushfield site provides an entirely appropriate green backdrop to the Hospital and its Chapel. That contribution is vital and must be protected in order that future generations can continue to enjoy the Hospital not least for a setting which, in certain respects, has changed little from mediaeval times to the present day.

3. Planning History

- 3.1. Since the effective abandonment of the Army Camp by the military, in 1975/76, that part of the overall site, together with other parts which front onto Badger Farm Road, have been the subject of some planning activity.
- 3.2. In 1977, the Property Services Agency sought the views of the Local Planning Authority regarding alternative uses (W/GSL/2). In response, the City Council expressed the opinion that the only appropriate alternative uses for Bushfield Camp were agriculture and/or recreation. Hampshire County Council concurred with that view.
- 3.3. In 1980, the Agency formally introduced the possibility of residential development over the Camp area (W/GSL/5). The City and County Councils both maintained that this was inappropriate. As a result, the Agency referred the matter to the Secretary of State for the Environment, for an "opinion". In the event the Secretary of State supported the view of the Local Planning Authorities noting, in his reply, that:
'Having considered all the representations and the report of the site visit, the Secretary of State is of the opinion that for amenity reasons the Council is justified in resisting the development of the Camp for residential purposes... He further considers that the policy grounds, on which the Council's objection is also based, are well founded and represent a reasonable interpretation of the relevant provisions. In his opinion therefore, the Secretary of State considers that the residential development of this site would be inappropriate and an appeal against the refusal of planning permission would not be upheld.'
- 3.4. In 1983, Tesco Stores Limited sought to obtain outline planning permission to erect a "superstore, including customer restaurant, four unit shops and DIY store and petrol station, with a 400 metre running track and pavilion, associated service roads, car parking and service yard and landscaping" (W7488).
- 3.5. An appeal against the City Council's non-determination of the application was subsequently lodged and dealt with by Public Inquiry. In accepting his Inspector's findings and recommendations and thereby dismissing the appeal, the Secretary of State drew the following conclusions:
'Considerable weight has to be placed on the conservation policies contained in the South Hampshire Structure Plan and amplified in the Coast and Country Conservation Policy, which emphasise the importance of maintaining and conserving the countryside and of restricting development to that appropriate to the countryside. The draft Winchester Area Local Plan also reinforces the countryside policies of restraint and conservation... The appeal site is clearly in a pleasant rural setting and there is little doubt that the proposed development would interfere with the natural contours of the landscape and, notwithstanding proposed planting and earthworks, would inevitably intrude into views of the area. The Secretary of State accepts the Inspector's view that Whiteshute Ridge should continue to form a boundary of urban development. Although he agrees that the removal of derelict buildings would be desirable, this is not a justification for allowing an inappropriate use of the site. The same conservation policies apply to adjoining sites and he therefore fully concurs with the Inspector's conclusion that a major development such as that proposed is likely to be seen as setting a precedent for further encroachment into the countryside.'
- 3.6. In 1986 a planning application was lodged with the City Council which sought to construct both open tennis courts and covered teaching facilities, in order to create a tennis coaching centre on the site of the Camp. However, that application was withdrawn prior to any formal decision being reached.