

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

**FINAL DRAFT VOLUME 3:
RISKS, OPORTUNITIES,
VISION AND POLICIES**

JULY 2017

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

COALHOUSE FORT
EAST TILBURY
THURROCK

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6.0 INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 3

This CMP has been prepared as a tool for understanding and managing the cultural significance of Coalhouse Fort and Park. The current understanding of the site is presented in Volume 1 and has been used to assess the significance of the site. Volume 2 has set out each of the individual elements at the site, and assessed the significance of each.

Volume 3 presents the key principles of the CMP, before providing an assessment of the Risks and Opportunities presented by site and the elements within it. The following policies have been formulated to address these risks and opportunities, guided by the key principles underpinning the CMP. The management guidelines provided for each policy are intended to be a practical tool for those involved in the management and development of the site.

6.1 VISION STATEMENT

To secure a sustainable future for Coalhouse Fort and Park, which will allow the site to be passed on to future generations with its historic significance intact. As much of the site as possible will be open and accessible to the public, to allow its significance to be appreciated and understood, balanced against the need to find practical and sympathetic uses for the buildings to ensure a viable and sustainable future.

6.2 KEY PRINCIPLES

The CMP and the policies contained within it have been prepared with reference to a set of key principles. These provide broad guidelines for the conservation management of the Coalhouse Fort site, and are intended to endure through subsequent policy development and review. The key principles are set out below:

- conservation and sustainability will be placed at the heart of future planning, development and site management in order to secure the heritage significance of Coalhouse Fort and Park, and its component heritage assets for present and future generations;
- the preservation of the integrity of the historic site and its component heritage assets, which is key to the significance of the place, will be central to future plans for development;
- the significance and integrity of the site and its components will be protected through the implementation of suitable and effective regimes of repair, maintenance and security, in line with conservation best practice;
- the heritage assets and value of Coalhouse Fort and its components will be enhanced for public benefit;
- understanding of the significance of the site and its components will be enhanced through continued research on the history and development of the site;
- opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of will be explored, through interpretation, education, recreation and working in partnership with other organisations;
- the site and its components will be managed sustainably, and all uses, activities and developments within the site will be carried out such as way as to enable a sustainable future for the site.

6.3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The following legal frameworks and planning guidance apply to the Coalhouse Fort site and its setting:

National and Regional Planning Framework

- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

6.3.1 Heritage designations

Coalhouse Fort is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

Scheduled Monuments (SMs) are nationally important archaeological features (including buildings, earthworks and isolated structures), which are protected by the state through the auspices of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required if work or alteration is to take place within the boundary of the area that has been scheduled. Buildings designated as SMs, or buildings within areas designated as SMs, may also be Listed Buildings, but it should be noted that in such instances, legislation relating to SMs (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979) takes precedence over that relating to Listed Buildings.

6.3.2 Natural conservation designations

Area of grassland to the northeast of the fort, and area of saltmarsh to the southeast, both within the site boundary for the purposes of the CMP, form part of the Mucking Flats and Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with the area of saltmarsh also forming part of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site.

6.4 MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES

The two museums at Coalhouse Fort have no formal museum accreditation.

The CMP does not cover the collections held at the site. Nevertheless, during research undertaken for Understanding the Heritage, photographic archives relating to the fort stored at Thurrock Museum were consulted. This archive clearly contains a wealth of information about Coalhouse Fort, but is not currently archived to modern standards which diminishes its value; this issue is outwith the scope of the CMP, but should be considered in future planning for the site.

7.0 RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Volume 3 outlines risks to the significance of the site, and has defined opportunities to preserve and enhance and the significance of the structures and buildings and to improve their condition, interpretation and general awareness about them.

The fort and associated structures represent a purpose-built defensive military complex which, following decommissioning from its original purpose, has been used for a variety of purposes. Most of the buildings have now been empty for several decades and are in drastic need of both repair and reuse. The CMP recognises that a balance should be found between the preservation of the significance of the heritage assets of Coalhouse Fort and the need to secure a sustainable future use for the site through conservation work and appropriate development, including public access and interpretation. The following risks and opportunities have therefore been outlined with the understanding that Coalhouse Fort will require varying levels of intervention to sustain it for the foreseeable future.

7.1 CONDITION AND SURVIVAL

The condition of upstanding buildings at Coalhouse Fort is in decline, due to lack of maintenance and also problems with water ingress. Further details on the condition of individual elements are provided in the Condition Survey and are not reiterated in full here (Purcell 2017). The following specific issues have been identified at the site:

- Failure of roof structures, particularly in the gorge buildings, has caused ongoing deterioration within the building, including the collapse of timber flooring, loss of plaster and paintwork, poor condition of doors and windows, and has thus rendered the area inaccessible;
- There is extensive water penetration in the magazines, the gun surrounds and shields are allowing damp penetration, and deterioration of the concrete roofs of the casemates are causing leaks;
- Roof level structures are in poor condition, requiring temporary support in places;
- There may be conflicts between the maintenance of the historically significant 1903 structures and rooftop drainage, and the water ingress from the infilled ditch. These elements form historically significant elements of the site, but are causing issues with condition.
- The Fox and Barrett roofing is of historical significance, but is in a very poor state of repair, which means that conservation *in situ* would be difficult, and present future problems with conservation.
- There is a complex interplay between the historic interest of the WWII gun houses, their current condition, national context and rarity, and their intrusive nature in terms of 19th-century legibility.
- One of the key significances of the site is the survival of 19th-century layout and individual elements; the site has suffered few or no major losses. There have been some losses to ironwork, including the gantry of the 1890s. Most lost elements pertain to WWII activity in the parade ground, or to the pre-1860s phases of the fort.

- The condition and survival of interior fixtures and fittings, including fireplaces, paintwork, insignia *etc* is an issue at the site; many of these are vulnerable to rapid deterioration.

7.2 SETTING

Although not a reflection of military use or appearance, the amenity parkland setting of the site contributes to visual and aesthetic value, and allows the building to be appreciated and understood in its landscape context.

- Significance is vulnerable to inappropriate development in the immediate area, especially if it encroaches in views of the fort itself;
- Current uses and amenity function contributes to communal value and works with the fort; this is to be maintained and enhanced;
- Car park and entrance appearance currently detracts from visitor experience and aesthetic value;
- The wider context of the fort, including designated and non-designated historic structures on the shore and in the surrounding park, needs to be drawn out and managed appropriately.

7.3 UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS

The current state of understanding of the site has been set out in Volume 1. Issues relating to understanding and awareness fall into a number of broad areas: what is known about the site, in terms of its history and development; how well this information is disseminated to the wider public that use and know the site; whether members of the wider community are aware of the site at all. Specific issues include:

- there is currently no overarching Research Agenda for the site although research is being undertaken by a number of groups. Historic England has commissioned Oxford Archaeology to undertake a 'National Planning review of 19th century fortifications and associated fortifications' which is due to be completed in 2017;
- understanding of archaeological remains in the park (upstanding earthworks and below ground) is limited; these are possible avenues for further investigation;
- the Coalhouse Fort Project archives contain a wealth of information that is underexploited. The photographic archive relating to the project and the work done is comprehensive but needs archiving/digitising to make it more accessible;
- awareness of the site is hindered by its 'cul-de-sac' location and inadequate signage, which means that there is little or no passing traffic;

7.4 INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

The historic significance and survival of the site affords considerable opportunities for interpretation to the public, and education. Coalhouse Fort currently has an education room and education officer, and is used by school groups. Specific issues include:

- the current interpretation scheme requires updating as the boards are showing their age; a new scheme is in preparation, but this needs to integrate a plan for the interior of the fort with the wider parkland;
- there is currently no interpretation of ancillary structures and features (spigot mortar bases, mine control tower);
- the interpretation of the interior and casemates is problematic due to current conditions and use as storage areas; the Gorge buildings are inaccessible for safety reasons;
- in some places, the museum exhibits hinder legibility of the fort structure and how it functioned – eg masking of the cartridge lifts.

7.5 ACCESS AND FACILITIES

Currently, limited areas of the site are accessible to the public on an occasional basis. Facilities for the public include a café within the fort, and a café and toilet facilities in the park. The following apply:

- there is currently no running water to the casemates, and no toilet facilities inside the fort, issue which will have to be overcome for sustainable use;
- access is limited by safety and current uses;
- the café facility in the Engine House is well-used, but functions outside the fort, so needs to be linked into the ultimate plan for the site;
- access to the fort is provided by bus, foot and car; train station is some distance away;
- the design of the fort, and the need to bring artillery/shells into the casemates and magazines means that disabled/less-abled access to these areas should be possible to facilitate at least in part. The rooftop area and upper storeys of the Gorge buildings may require sympathetic adaptation;
- visitors to the fort would like to see improved access to the fort, in particular to the magazines and barracks.

7.6 CONFLICTS

As with all historic sites, there may be conflicts between different uses of the site, different values attributed to different periods. The following apply:

- Coalhouse Fort preserves evidence from several phases of use and serves to demonstrate the continuity of military significance of this location. All periods have historic significance, but there may be practical conflicts between preservation of remains relating to different periods, particularly where rapid military adaptation has caused harm to the existing fabric;
- there have been some alterations and additions to the site that are not necessarily in keeping with the historic significance of the place;
- there is the potential for conflict to arise regarding governance of the site, and the differing interests of special interest groups;
- a balance is needed between preserving the legibility and integrity of the fort and all its surviving elements, with finding a sustainable use for the site.
- the fort and surrounding areas supports a range of protected and notable species, and

conflict may arise when proposed change to the building or surroundings would make conditions less favourable.

7.7 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

A sustainable function needs to be sought for the fort without compromising its integrity and legibility. Current issues include:

- problems of location;
- lack of surrounding attractions in the immediate vicinity.

8.0 CONSERVATION POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The policies of the CMP have been designed to address the issues and opportunities outlined above, and have been formulated with reference to the *key principles* of the CMP and a set of *aims*, set out below.

8.1 AIMS OF THE POLICIES

The *aims* of the policies for Coalhouse Fort are to:

- provide a framework within which its conservation, repair and reuse can be implemented without unjustified harm to its significance;
- inform potential uses which would enhance rather than erode the significance of the heritage asset, including adaptations and new works which are compatible with the retention of significance;
- retain and make clear its heritage value through appropriate conservation management;
- enable further understanding of the place;
- maximise physical and intellectual access for all.

Risks and opportunities facing the Coalhouse Fort, have been addressed in the formulation of conservation policies which have been grouped into the following categories:

- Conservation management (CM)
- Management and maintenance (MM)
- New work, development and planning (DP)
- Understanding and research (UR)
- Interpretation, access and facilities (IA)
- Safety and Security (SS)
- Tourism and Education (TE)
- Environment and sustainability (ES)
- Research and publication (RP)

8.2 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are according to the definitions below:

Adaptation is modification to suit proposed compatible uses. It does not imply a return to a known earlier state;

Compatible use is a use that involves changes to culturally significant fabric or archaeological deposits which are substantially reversible, or changes which result in a minimal physical or visual impact;

Conservation is all the processes of managing change in ways that will best sustain the significance of the place in its context, and which recognises opportunities to reveal and reinforce that significance. It includes maintenance and may include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation;

Heritage values: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal, as defined in Conservation Principles (English Heritage 2008)

Interpretation is the communication of an understanding of the historic and significance of the place and its occupants and the enhancement of visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the place;

Maintenance is the continuous protective care of the fabric, contents and setting of a place and should be distinguished from repair which is a reactive process;

The place means the entirety of the site, building or monument under consideration;

Presentation means making the place look its best, generally through maintenance, landscaping and tidiness as appropriate, and the ease of access, such as signage;

Reconstruction means returning the site to a known earlier state, often by introducing new or re-used materials. It is not to be confused with conjectural reconstruction which involves alteration of the site to conform to a supposed but archaeologically or historically unproven earlier state;

Restoration means returning existing fabric to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new components;

Significance: the sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a place, often set out in a statement of significance;

Stabilisation is the undertaking of works additional to maintenance which significantly slow down the processes of decay and collapse in a structure. They may include such works as underpinning which have no precedent in the history of the structure;

Sustainability means ensuring that what actions taken today to meet current needs can continue in the long-term without destroying, over-exploiting or causing irreversible damage to the environment or its assets, or stopping future generations from meeting their needs.

8.3 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

CM1 All legislation and statutory designations under the various planning acts will be observed, and the necessary Scheduled Monument consents will be sought as appropriate. Future development at the site will be undertaken in accordance with the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF).

Justification

Coalhouse Fort is protected as a Scheduled Monument, and observing the relevant statutory designations is a legal requirement.

Management

- Pre-application discussions with Historic England should be undertaken as early as possible, to ensure that the correct consents can be obtained for proposed works.
- Any work that would affect the standing fabric or below ground remains of the Scheduled Monument will require Scheduled Monument Consent.
- Undertaking work in accordance with NPPF will ensure that the significance of the heritage asset is not harmed unjustifiably.

CM2 The CMP is the principal strategic framework for guiding the future of the site, and will be regularly reviewed.

Justification

Thurrock Council recognises the importance of adopting the CMP as the primary document guiding the future development of the site. This will ensure that the conservation of the significance of the site is placed at the heart of all actions conducted at the site, while also ensuring that all agencies, individuals and groups involved with the management of the site are working within an integrated approach. Endorsement of the CMP does not affect the statutory obligations of the place.

Management

- The CMP provides the starting point for any ensuing development, and the aims, principles and policies can be referred to in the development of any future proposals, plans, policies, decisions and actions.
- Copies (electronic or paper as appropriate) are to be made accessible to all those involved in the management and use of the place.
- It is intended that the CMP (excluding any confidential information) be made publicly accessible.
- Conservation addresses the care of the fabric and any archaeological deposits, and aims to retain the significance of the place, while recognising opportunities to reveal and reinforce its cultural value. The methods employed will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and the resources available.

CM3 All conservation works will be guided by an understanding of best conservation practice and philosophy.

Justification

Works of repair should be dictated by the significance of the fabric and by its structural condition.

Management

Current guidelines are set out in the Historic England documents *Repair of Historic Buildings: Advice on Principles and Methods*, *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* and in *BS7913:1998 Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

8.4 MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

MM1 A regular inspection, condition survey and maintenance programme will be implemented, to keep the need for repair work to a minimum and the fabric is kept in the best condition possible.

Justification

Keeping the buildings in a good state of repair will assist in minimising the need for larger scale interventions, even if this is simply to mothball the buildings while a sustainable use is being sought. Regular maintenance, such as ensuring rainwater goods are functioning properly and roofs are intact, can prevent unnecessary damage and the need for more costly or intrusive work. Built fabric is vulnerable to lack of maintenance, inappropriate repair and alteration and incompatible reuse.

MM2 The general condition of the site will be maintained to a high standard to reduce the need for substantial repairs in the future.

Justification

Regular maintenance of historic buildings represents long-term and cost-effective management, as set out in the IHBC document *A Stitch in Time: Maintaining your property makes good sense and saves money*. There are some short and longer term maintenance issues which require addressing which will need differing levels of investment. In particular, issues of damp need to be monitored and addressed as an ongoing issue.

MM3 Thorough records will be generated, maintained and curated to ensure that future decision making can be based on the fullest understanding of the place.

Justification

It is conservation best practice to ensure that all works that take place to and around heritage assets are adequately documented, and the information made readily available to those involved in the management of the site.

Management:

- A photographic record should be prepared for the site prior to the onset of any further development work. The gazetteer has identified a large number of original fixtures and fittings which should be documented and photographed to archival standards to ensure that evidential value is not lost in the process of maintenance and repair.
- A system of recording any works to the fabric of the place should be put in place at the earliest opportunity.
- Opportunities to archive existing records of the site held in Thurrock Museum, and use these as a basis for ongoing site recording should be explored.

MM4 The ongoing management of Coalhouse Park will be undertaken to ensure that both the heritage values and nature conservation values of the place are protected.

Justification

The core of the site is protected as a Scheduled Monument, and the wider area contributes to its historic setting. At the same time, the area to the north is protected as a SSSI. Any management decisions undertaken to secure either the heritage or nature conservation values must consider all aspects of the site's value.

Management

- Decision-making regarding management of the Park should consider these values in line with current best-practice.

8.5 NEW WORK, DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

DP1 Coalhouse Fort will be repaired, refurbished and developed, as appropriate, to achieve its sustainable re-use, including the conservation of any affected heritage assets so their heritage value or significance can be enjoyed by current and future generations. Future possible uses will be carefully planned for and managed so that they do not harm the significance of the site as set out in the CMP and by relevant authorities and expert advisors (such as Historic England, Natural England or others). Significance would be the subject of revision in the light of new information or changes in condition.

Justification

The deterioration of Coalhouse Fort can be arrested by identifying suitable uses for the site, and securing funding from appropriate sources for repair and refurbishment. In accordance with the vision for the site, Coalhouse Fort and Park is to be developed in a sustainable fashion, so that it can be passed on to future generations with its significance intact.

Management

- Appropriate specialists in conservation architecture and heritage management should be engaged in all stages of any potential future development of the site to ensure that the heritage significance of the site is placed at the heart of new plans. This will include the

clearance of debris and rubbish from the site, which may contain hitherto unidentified original fixtures and fittings.

- Historic England and Thurrock Borough Council's planning and conservation Officers should be consulted at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that the form and legibility of the fort buildings remains intact, the open aspect of the parade ground is preserved and enhanced, and the surrounding parkland setting is not eroded.

DP2 All development at Coalhouse Fort, including the provision of visitor facilities, must be guided by the ability of the historic structures to sustain the changes, and conform to a design appropriate to the fabric, aesthetics and significance of the site.

Justification

Decisions on all proposals for future development need to be based on, and assessed against, a full understanding of the condition, vulnerability and significance of the individual elements, to avoid unnecessary degradation of the significance of the place. Poorly-designed and positioned new structures have the potential to degrade the significance of the site. The site is protected by statutory legislation which will further guide development and prevent any negative impact.

Management

- Appropriate specialists in conservation architecture and heritage management should be engaged in all stages of any future development of the site to ensure that the heritage significance of the site is placed at the heart of new plans.
- Historic England should be consulted at the earliest possible opportunity.

DP3 Where feasible and desirable, parts of the historic layout of the site should be considered for restoration to their original known configuration and form. Restoration needs to be carefully considered for its appropriateness in relation to the heritage values and significances of individual elements, and of the site as a whole.

Justification

Since the original construction at the site there has been a cycle of adaptation, addition and some demolition at the place. Some of these changes are historically important, such as the infilling of casemates and addition of columns at the turn of the 20th century, and the addition of the World War II structures on top of the 1860s casemates. However, there have been some changes and losses to the buildings, in terms of internal fittings and external features, which have gradually degraded their historic value. In the context of any refurbishment there is an opportunity to restore particular areas for interpretation purposes.

Management

- Development or substantial change should be planned and consulted on at an early stage to ensure that opportunities for enhancing significance are maximised. Reference should

be made to the policies and guidance in English Heritage's Conservation Principles regarding restoration (Sections 126-137)

- Removal of 20th-century historic features, including World War II and earlier features, should not be considered unless structural condition requires it.

DP4 Opportunities to improve the visual character and setting of the fort should be explored whenever possible. The legibility of the fort buildings and the spaces within them, the open character of the parade ground, and the wider parkland setting, should be preserved and enhanced.

Justification

The fort is historically and physically integrated with its setting, and has a direct relationship with the other military installations within the Thames Estuary. The park offers an aesthetic setting for the buildings, which has considerable communal value. Inappropriate development has the potential to degrade this wider setting, and therefore the significance of heritage assets. NPPF paragraph 137 states that LPAs should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance, and that 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.

Management

- Coalhouse Fort Park as a whole, including the historic structures on the shore, must be considered as integral to the heritage asset in future plans for the site.

DP5 The replacement or installation of services within the historic buildings and across the site should be undertaken in a manner which minimises any damage to historic fabric and is visually unintrusive.

Justification

The installation of new services will be required for any future plans for the building, and these have the potential to harm historic fabric and below-ground remains if not undertaken in a sympathetic manner.

Management

- Installation of new services, and the replacement of existing services, should be carried out in a way that avoids direct harm to the historic fabric, and is not visually intrusive. This may include running services through the parade ground or within the buildings. Potential routes could run beneath the floors of access corridors of the 1860s buildings. This will involve careful planning and close liaison with contractors.
- It would be worth considering reinstating some of the original lighting system that was employed within the 1860s magazine which used a system of light boxes and natural light tubes to provide illumination.

DP6 The condition and visual appropriateness of modern structures erected on the site since decommissioning should be reviewed with a view to identifying and undertaking the most appropriate action, whether replacement, removal, reuse or other option.

Justification

While some of the later additions made to the site are of limited visual appeal, decisions regarding actions on their treatment should be based on an understanding of their values, significances, and positive or negative contribution made to the overall significance and public interest of the site.

Management

- The Gazetteer highlights those elements which detract from the significance of the place, and the careful removal or replacement of certain elements of the site would serve to enhance the site.

DP7 Any development at Coalhouse Fort should be undertaken in a manner that is sensitive to the wider landscape and its heritage, and should not negatively impact the significance of heritage assets in the surrounding area.

Justification

Coalhouse Fort forms part of a much wider, interrelated complex of defences and historic features, and inappropriate development at the site could potentially harm the setting, and therefore the significance, of other heritage assets in the wider area. The wider area also has archaeological potential which would be vulnerable to direct impact from development.

Management

- An assessment of the heritage impact of any proposals at the site should take into account the direct and indirect impact on heritage assets and their setting

8.6 UNDERSTANDING AND RESEARCH

UR1 A Research Agenda shall be prepared and regularly reviewed, and implemented as and when opportunities arise, through staff and volunteer involvement, educational links and site development.

Justification

The establishment of an overarching Research Agenda, providing a concise summary of the key gaps in knowledge relating to the site, and how these might be addressed, will provide a framework within which future research opportunities can be maximised. This should be informed by the forthcoming 'National planning review of 19th-century fortifications and associated fortifications' by Oxford Archaeology. While some aspects of research can be addressed as opportunities arise through conservation works, a more proactive approach is required to allow a holistic understanding of the site.

UR2 Any opportunities for research arising from site development, routine maintenance and reparation works will be exploited as appropriate. This work will be undertaken to a clear and agreed research design.

Justification

Regular maintenance and repair works often reveal hitherto unrecorded built fabric or archaeological deposits. Using these opportunities to record and analyse the archaeological remains can be a cost-effective and efficient means of enhancing understanding of the site.

Management

- Works should be carried out according to the recording and data standards set out by Historic England in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE), the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification; the Thesaurus of Archaeological Sites; the Thesaurus of Building Materials; and A Manual and Data Standard for Monument Inventories (MIDAS).
- Specifications for fabric recording will be in accordance with ALGAO document 'Analysis and recording for Conservation and Control of Works to Historic Buildings' and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures.
- All recording and documentary research must be properly analysed and reported to at least research archive level as specified in Section 2.5.3 of MORPHE and the information disseminated through the appropriate Historic Environment Record, to provide useable information for decision-making and future research.

8.7 ACCESS AND FACILITIES

AF1 The provision of facilities and level of access for visitors should be regularly reviewed, balanced against the need to prevent erosion to the site and its significance.

Justification

The current condition of Coalhouse Fort limits its physical accessibility and the variety and extent of facilities that can be provided. The nature of historic buildings means that there are also problems with access routes through the structures, with narrow doorways and corridors in addition to circulation routes which were not originally intended.

Understanding the needs and attitudes of visitors, through media such as the comments box, is essential for providing the right environment for them to enjoy and explore the site.

AF2 Thurrock Council will take into account the full implications of the Equality Act 2010 and Health and Safety regulations in developing and managing the site.

Justification

This is a legal requirement. If areas of the site and parts of the fort buildings are to be opened to the public or made available for other uses, there will be a need to upgrade access in these areas. There would clearly be a potential risk to the historic fabric if these alterations were not undertaken in a sympathetic manner.

Management

- Any works carried out to improve access, conservation, development or that affect access, must follow the policy and guidance set out in the Historic England publication *Easy Access to Historic Properties*.

AF3 Parking provision at the site will be reviewed, and measures implemented to ensure that car parking has a minimal impact on the site and its significance.

Justification

Currently the car park detracts from the aesthetic value of the place, and does not enhance the sense of arrival at the site. Bringing the site into greater active use would naturally increase the demand for parking facilities.

Management

- Recommend that any future developments for the site involve a redesign of the car parking area, to ensure that capacity is maintained or increased, that the provision for public transport to arrive is improved or enhanced and that the area provides a sensitive and attractive point of arrival at the site.

8.8 SAFETY AND SECURITY

SS1 Thurrock Council will undertake or commission regular security reviews and will incorporate the results into the management of the site. The installation of safety measures will take into account the need to protect the physical and visual integrity and significance of the place, and non-intrusive methods should be explored before any physical installations, if deemed necessary, are considered.

Justification

There have been issues with site security and trespassing, and this issue will present more of a problem as more of the site is brought into use. Physical security measures can be highly obtrusive and damaging to the historic integrity of the place. Careful planning and design is required to reconcile these two issues.

8.9 TOURISM, INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

TE1 The interpretation plan for the site, drawing on a variety of media, will be regularly reviewed. This will seek to provide clear interpretation of the history and significance of the site, setting the fort buildings and structures within the context of British history.

Justification

Visitor understanding and quality of experience is largely shaped by the interpretation schemes available at any historic site. Interpretation should be regularly reviewed to ensure that it takes into account any changes in the understanding and significance of the site from new research, changing academic or community interpretation and wear and tear of interpretative media.

The fear of a French invasion in the 1850s resulted in one of the biggest investments in fortification and military installations Britain has ever seen. The Palmerston forts are a well known feature of this period but few can be visited by the public. Coalhouse Fort is a well-preserved example of this type of installation. Providing interpretation of this important site would increase awareness of this aspect of British history within the context of the Thames estuary.

Management

- Work is needed to achieve a clear and comprehensive scheme that allows visitors to make the most of their visit, and incorporates current understanding of the site's history and significance.
- Visitors may include children and adults, groups with specialist interests (i.e. military history) and professional and amateur researchers. Media may include panels, guidebooks, work sheets, audio tours, events and exhibitions.
- Interpretation schemes should be regularly updated
- Guidebooks for the site should be regularly reviewed and updated
- All periods of the site's history should be addressed, with greatest focus on the key periods of the late 19th-century and developing fortification and WWI/II.

TE2 The installation of interpretation schemes should be in harmony with the fabric, visual character and heritage significance of the place.

Justification

This is in accordance with the underlying principle that future developments should not detract from the overall significance of the place or of its visual character.

Management

- Historic England should be consulted at an early stage in any planning of interpretation schemes.
- It would be desirable to develop an appropriate site livery to be employed throughout the site.

TE3 The potential to increase the number of visitors to the site through promotion with partners and other heritage attractions will be explored.

Justification

The fort is not situated in an advantageous geographical position, and does not receive much passing traffic. There is a risk that this comparatively peripheral location may lead visitors to otherwise overlook a visit to the fort.

Management

- Opportunities to improve the profile of the site in the immediate area, through improved signage from main roads, should be explored.
- Opportunities to enhance links with other historic forts, including Tilbury Fort, and other facilities, such as the Two Forts Way, should be explored.

TE4 The site should provide educational materials and facilities, taking into account the requirements of the National Curriculum, and the unique opportunity the fort presents for formal and informal education for local and visiting communities.

Justification

The current HLF funded educational programme and officer have been a great success and involved a large number of local schools. Continuing this programme would benefit the site and the wider community.

8.10 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

ES1 The environmental impact of current and future activities should be assessed and monitored, and strategies devised to minimise or mitigate any environmental damage.

Justification

A responsible approach to sustainable environmental management is desirable. Most of the buildings, if brought back into use, are not intrinsically energy efficient and strategies to reduce their carbon footprint will have to be sought.

ES2 All relevant environmental legislation and best practice will be observed.

Justification

Certain species and habitats are protected by law and cannot be disturbed. Any necessary licences or mitigation must be implemented and incorporated into the planning of repair and restoration works.

Management

The following recommendations have been made by Applied Ecology Ltd (AED), focussing on the fort and surrounding grounds:

- any restoration work to the fort that could impact on hibernating/summer roosting bats (eg physical damage/disturbance, repointing and masonry repairs, blocking up bat access points to changes to favourable condition through lighting, increases in air flow and changes to ambient conditions potentially including as a result of re-roofing) may need to be completed under an EPS (bat) licence and be supported by an appropriate survey and migration/compensation proposals.
- Details of emerging restoration proposals for the fort should be discussed with an ecologist at an early stage in order that potential impacts on bats can, where possible, be designed out, or essential survey work programmed in to avoid delays. The key bat active period is May-September with hibernation checks completed in January-February.
- The fort structure is likely to support nesting birds, including house sparrow and potentially barn owl, and any works that could kill, injure or disturb nesting birds should be completed outside of bird nesting period (ie during September-February) or immediately following confirmation by an experienced ecologist that breeding birds are absent.
- it is possible that reptiles, including adders, hibernate in rabbit burrows (or other holes and ground cavities) around the dry inner ditch, and therefore consideration must be given to any future ground work and re-profiling in this area.

ES3 Every effort will be made to balance the heritage significance of the place with the ecological significance of the place.

Justification

As well as designation as a Scheduled Monument, the fort and the areas of grassland and salt marsh adjacent are protected as SSSI, SPA and Ramsar sites. The importance of this designation must be recognised in future plans for the site.

Management

- Details of emerging restoration proposals for the fort should be discussed with an ecologist at an early stage in order that appropriate survey work can be undertaken, and potential ecological impacts can, where possible, be designed out. See management for ES5 above.



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