



### ***Our Development Plans are progressing with some changes***

Working hard with officers from Wiltshire Council we have made really good progress in resolving issues they have raised. At the behest of the Council's landscaping and urban design officers we have very reluctantly offered changes to our plan. We have removed residential accommodation for the owners of the new hangars and we have taken a slice from the southern boundary of Sarum Landings. Both of these changes undermine our principal aim of making the new owners of the homes an integral part of the airfield – visually and functionally - see Sarum Landings below. There will be a period of further public consultation arranged by Wiltshire Council shortly.

### ***Vibrations and Noise from Equinox will Stop by August***

We have agreed with the owners of Equinox that they will stop the use of their Colgar Shear which as we know from our survey has caused local businesses and homeowners nuisance over many years. The agreement means that neither the Shear nor any similar equipment can be operated by Equinox within three miles of the airfield. The company ultimately decided that they would cease their operation at Old Sarum and they will close later in the year. The steps we have taken are a significant benefit to the local community in stopping this nuisance and preventing the loss in the value of homes affected if the nuisance had continued. It also removes a heavy and relentless burden from the shoulders of Wiltshire Council. Negotiating and finalising this agreement has come at a high (7 digit) cost to us. In the long term we hope it will be a tangible benefit to all.

### ***We have agreed that Aircraft Noise levels will not increase***

We have come to agreement with Wiltshire Council subject to planning permission being granted that, for the first time, there will be noise controls over aviation at the airfield. This will mean that in future aircraft noise will be no greater than it was in 2015 when none of those neighbours closest to the airfield responded that aircraft noise was a nuisance.

### ***A bit of history***

In 2007 there were some 60,000 aircraft movements each year with incessant complaints from local residents so Salisbury District Council spent considerable time and money seeking control over flying. The Airfield has vested planning rights to unlimited flying by all types of aircraft at all hours and SDC finally learned that they could not achieve their aim without massive financial penalties unless they came to an agreement with the Airfield owners.

The Council's purpose in agreeing what is now Core Policy 25 (CP25) was to eliminate aircraft noise nuisance without compensating the Airfield owner but somehow retaining the Airfield's 100 acres of green space and retaining limited daytime flying activities.

This Policy sought to place the entire financial burden of its mutually exclusive goals on the airport owner (restricting flying yet retaining the resulting loss-making operations). Following agreement in principle in 2007, the owner has voluntarily been restricting flying, both by the type of aircraft (light, modern and quiet), hours of operation and number of movements (now about 35,000) to successfully minimise the nuisance to neighbours. The owner has borne all of the resultant operating losses as well as the loss of the profits that could have been earned by accommodating the heavier, noisier aircraft night and day.



To provide an incentive to give up the bulk of the flying revenues; to compensate the owner for the lost revenue; and to provide capital to invest in aviation facilities that would support viable restricted aircraft operations into the future; the Core Policy provided that the owner would be permitted to develop housing on the surplus land adjacent to the operational and safety areas of the airfield.

### *The Alternatives*

Had there been no agreement the alternatives would have been:

- 1) Continued growth in aviation activity that would have brought much heavier, more lucrative but noisier aircraft to the airfield both day and night; or
- 2) The closure of the airfield and the likelihood that the whole site of some 150 acres would be redeveloped as brownfield land.

Either of these would result in excellent financial returns for the airfield owner, however he chose neither. Having subsidised the airfield for nearly 30 years he does not want to lose this important piece of British heritage so chose to work with the council on a long term plan.

The unlimited flying rights still exist and their value is growing larger as other airfields with noise controls are forced to exclude the heavier, noisier aircraft. The threat of closure of many airfields due to development pressure is also increasing the number of aircraft and operators wishing to move to Old Sarum. (See AOPA below).

There is little doubt that the number of movements could easily be increased to over 100,000 over a few years which would quickly turn the airfield from its 2007-2015 loss-making position (simply due to honouring the agreement with SDC) into a very profitable business. This would be a straightforward, low risk, low investment choice with the airfield's value continuing to grow over the years as aircraft movements grew and alternatives for the owners of the noisier aircraft became more scarce.

While this choice would be financially advantageous for the Hudson family it would be disadvantageous to thousands of families in Wiltshire, a fact which Matthew Hudson weighed carefully. He decided instead to proceed with a high-risk, high investment redevelopment coupled with surrender of the profitable portion of the flying rights, but only if a unique and sustainable aviation community could be developed.

### *New Helicopter Operations*

Some of you may have noticed that there have been more helicopter operations over the last month. This is because we have agreed that Vantage Aviation can use the airfield to train their student helicopter pilots at the airfield. The students are Chinese pilots who will undergo training to become fully qualified Search and Rescue pilots when they will return to take on their duties at home in the PRC. We recognise that this will create a little more noise to some people particularly to the south of the airfield but as is explained elsewhere in the newsletter we felt we must take this opportunity to increase the airfield revenue and to keep our options open. If we are successful with our plans for the airfield the helicopters will be constrained together with fixed wing operations to manage noise in accordance with our proposed agreement with Wiltshire Council. If the current proposals are not acceptable, Matthew will be forced to abandon his lengthy and costly attempts since 2007 in which case Vantage will be the vanguard of the new flying.



### ***Aircraft Owner and Pilot Magazine***

We have taken the opportunity to include a copy of the AOPA magazine with this newsletter. It includes a letter from me setting out our rationale for what we propose for the airfield as well as an editorial and some other items covering the pressures facing General Aviation in the UK with the threat of closure of so many airfields (page 12). We really do believe that our unique plans for Old Sarum are the very best to support GA and to provide a long term future for the airfield in harmony with its neighbours as well as enhancing a broader understanding of its heritage but they do not generate the best financial return for the owner.

### ***Highways Improvements – Less congested and safer roads***

We know from our surveys that congestion along Castle Road is one of the main concerns of local residents regarding any development in this area. We are sure that many of you will be pleased to know that we have agreed with Highways England that we will computerise the traffic lights at the Castle Roundabout estimated by them to cost £500,000. The changes to the roundabout will give significantly increased capacity, certainly much more than the slight increase in traffic generated by our proposals.

In addition, we have agreed to improve the highways around Ford by installing new footpaths, traffic calming measures and a crossing point. Since the new school is nearing completion and the country park perhaps now looking like a reality, this will provide much easier and safer access for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Ford. With the new footpaths and cycleways around the airfield, people from Old Sarum wishing to walk or cycle south to the country park, school or beyond will be able to do so in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

### ***Airfield Viability and the Future***

Much gossip has been put about on social media by those Nimbys who wish to dupe others regarding the operation of the airfield and its future plans.

The Hudson family has owned the airfield for nearly 30 years and does not want to lose its heritage, so has been paying the operating losses in order to keep the airfield open and therefore preserve this important piece of British heritage. The alternatives are clear.

Unlimited flying is a risk-free way to keep the airfield open and save the heritage – albeit without enhancing the understanding, the access or providing highway improvements. However, the Hudsons are also aware of the life-style damage and financial (resale) losses due to the noise that will accompany unlimited flying, so have voluntarily accepted 9 years of higher losses (60,000 movements in 2007 ratcheted down to 35,000 in 2015) and have spent £1.7 million in planning costs simply to try and avoid these damages to thousands of Wiltshire families.

#### ***The Airfield Value.***

Continuing with our plans to implement CP25 and restrict flying will take perhaps 15 years to complete and is worth **at most** the same as the unlimited flying option after 10 years. Whilst flying will continue to grow in value, the development option is one time and done.

#### ***Risk.***

The development option is high risk, high investment perhaps 10 to 15 times the flying. The unlimited flying option is low risk and something Matthew has successfully done before.



### **Choice.**

The commercial choice is self-evident.

Bizarrely some of the planners and some in Heritage England are blind to both: (i) the importance of eliminating large numbers of heavier, noisier aircraft (that pay much more) flying at all hours, night and day; and (ii) saving the heritage.

Our concept plans were carefully crafted over several years by a multi-disciplinary team including heritage experts, yet we have reluctantly had to agree changes which are negative to the scheme with no public benefit due simply to the uninformed and highly personal demands of some in Heritage England and three WC officers.

The economic work done shows that no developer will have any interest in the development option because the loss of flying is worth about the same to the owner as the potential profit available for developing the 462 homes after paying the unique costs imposed by CP25.

If the planning hierarchy of WC recommend the revised scheme with controls to prevent an increase in aviation noise over the 2015 levels then, in the near future, the choice will be up to the elected officials.

The politicians' choice. Do they want this excellent, unique scheme, which can only exist based on the public-spirited generosity of an airfield owner who is prepared to give up his valuable vested flying rights and be his own developer; or do they want him to pursue his unlimited flying operation – with less risk, far less investment and less personal involvement.

### ***Sarum Landings and Sarum Field***

Some of you may be wondering why we have named the two developments Sarum Landings and Sarum Field.

Our aim is to bring together the owners of the new houses and the airfield, so that its nearest neighbours feel part of the airfield and want to participate in its future, perhaps by flying, getting involved in the ground operations or working on new or vintage aircraft. Their choices will be simply watching the airfield activities including air shows, visiting or participating in the heritage centre, using the new restaurant or the new viewpoints, picnic areas and cycleways. This is very similar to the communities that build up around marinas either on the ocean or along river banks – hence Sarum Landings. A meeting of sky and land.

We thought that we should differentiate between the two areas of development – Sarum Landings will be high quality homes designed to complement the military past but with a modern contemporary twist. The design of the low density homes to the south by Ford will take their cue from the 1920s arts and crafts design of the original airfield married quarters in Green Lane. At that time airports and airfields were simply referred to as Flying Fields or when given names just Field. Perhaps the best known being Wright Field in the USA which predates Old Sarum by only a few years. Although there were never any flying activities on the area where we will be building houses (due to its topography) it is fitting to give the area an aviation theme – hence Sarum Field

Grenville Hodge

Old Sarum Airfield Ltd

April 2016