

ADDRESS

T2 HANGAR AT FORMER RAF MARSTON MOOR (UNIT 86), MARSTON MOOR BUSINESS PARK, RUDGATE, TOCKWITH

Parish TOCKWITH
District HARROGATE
County NORTH YORKSHIRE

Case UID: 169279

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Outcome: No, do not list

Recommended Grade: NL

20-NOV-2009

BACKGROUND:

After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

CONTEXT

Unit 86 at the Marston Moor Business Park is a former RAF hangar, once part of RAF Marston Moor. It is proposed for demolition (NY/2009/0176/FUL), the planning application having a target decision date of 15 Dec 2009. The applicant asked us to assess the hangar for listing (being that building currently under threat) but also to consider the rest of the former RAF station. None of the buildings are included within a Conservation Area.

HISTORY

RAF Marston Moor was constructed during 1941: aerial photographs taken in March that year show concrete runways but few buildings, with some being under construction. It was one of around 50 new airfields constructed across the country for Bomber Command between May 1940 and February 1942. RAF Marston Moor became operational at the end of 1941 and served until the end of 1945 as a training airfield for bomber crews converting to heavy bombers, mainly the Halifax bomber. Leonard Cheshire was the station commander until he was transferred to Woodhall Spa to take command of 617 Squadron in October 1943, this squadron being better known as the Dambusters after their attack on the Rhur dams in May 1943. It is believed that the actor Clark Gable also served at RAF Marston Moor for a time as a member of the ground crew. The airfield had a profound effect on the adjacent village of Tockwith, effectively expanding the local population by around 2000 service personnel between 1942-45. Probably the most dramatic incident occurred on 9 October 1945 when a Stirling bomber crashed along the main street of the village killing the local postmaster and damaging a number of buildings. Flying operations ceased at the RAF station in the following month, but the airfield was retained, mainly on a care and maintenance basis, until the early 1960s. However, part of the airfield remained in government ownership until the final buildings were sold off in 1988.

Unit 86 at the Marston Moor Business Park is a former T2 hangar: T2 being one of the forms of the basic Type T design of hangar. This was designed by the Department of Works and Buildings in collaboration with the Teeside Bridge and Engineering Company in circa 1940. It was one of the forms of hangar developed from the late 1930s that used mass produced, interchangeable parts, being designed for rapid assembly. A total of 906 Type T hangars were constructed on RAF

stations both at home and overseas, being one of the most common forms of hangar built during the war.

DESCRIPTION

Although for security reasons the airfield was not depicted in detail on the Ordnance Survey map of 1952, the layout of RAF Marston Moor is clearly shown on vertical aerial photographs taken by the RAF in 1946 and 1948. These photographs show that the main concentration of buildings, including six hangars, was in the area now forming the Marston Moor Business Park. This was the technical and maintenance area of the airfield. However, as was typical of the time, there were other buildings and structures widely dispersed around the airfield.

Unit 86 is one of the six hangars clearly shown on the post war photographs, and all of these hangars appear to survive with varying degrees of alteration, with Unit 86 possibly being one of the least altered as it has not been re-clad. However, modern roller shutters have been inserted into its doors which are reported to have been welded shut. In addition to the hangars, a large number of other original buildings also survive across the technical and maintenance area. This includes the watch office (the control tower) and a wide range of hut types. The WAAF Officer's Mess, barrack huts, bomb storage bunkers and a guard house are all reported to survive. External inspection also identified a water tower and a former motor transport shed which are also likely to be part of the original RAF station. However, mixed throughout this area there are several post war buildings, many being quite recent. Some of these new buildings have replaced RAF structures, with others infilling formerly open areas.

Of the wider area of the airfield, large sections of runway, taxiway and dispersal areas also survive, although many areas of hardstanding for aircraft have also been lost, including a large section of one of the three runways which is now covered by modern housing. A large aircraft dispersal area to the south west, including a number of other features clearly shown on post war aerial photographs, has been returned to agriculture.

ASSESSMENT:

CONSULTATION

The consultation stage has been omitted because of the shortness of time before 15 December, the target date for the planning decision.

ASSESSMENT

The listing selection guide for military sites highlights that while RAF stations often have strong local resonance, national designation will only be appropriate for a selection of sites, given the large numbers involved and the high degree of standardisation of structures. Second World War RAF airfields have been the subject of extensive study and were covered by a Thematic Listing Survey in the 1990s (English Heritage, 2000). This survey identified key surviving airfields nationally that represented the development of military aviation from 1910-45, and those which were most strongly representative of functionally distinct airfield types. RAF Marston Moor was not identified as being one of the key sites nationally. Beyond these selected airfields, it is only buildings of strong intrinsic or associational importance which have been recommended for protection such as those of clear architectural special interest or those with direct links to pivotal wartime events.

The design of RAF Marston Moor appears fairly typical of the large number of airfields constructed for Bomber Command during the war. Although the overall survival of the technical area, with its six hangars and wide range of other buildings, is relatively good, the airfield as a whole is extensively

altered. Even the technical area has undergone many alterations with many new buildings as well as modifications to original RAF structures. Thus although the area is clearly of local interest for Tockwith's history, and also a notable survivor documenting the importance of Yorkshire to Bomber Command in the Second World War, in a national context RAF Marston Moor does not meet the criteria for designation.

The two historical associations that have been highlighted also do not justify a listing recommendation. Leonard Cheshire is of national historical note for his connection with 617 Squadron and their development of precision bombing. However 617 Squadron was not based at RAF Marston Moor, and they carried out their most famous raid before Leonard Cheshire joined them. The connection between Clark Gable and RAF Marston Moor is also not of significance in a national context. Gable is believed to have served at a number of stations, and if he was part of the ground crew at Marston Moor, he presumably earned his Distinguished Flying Cross later in his career when stationed elsewhere.

Nationally some hangars have been listed, either in isolation or in groups, for their intrinsic interest. These include rare surviving examples of hangars built for the First World War, ones of special architectural interest such as good examples of the 1936 Lamella design, or ones with direct and significant historical associations, such as the four C Type hangars at RAF Scampton, one of which was used by 617 Squadron at the time of the Dambusters Raid. There is no presumption that there should be a listed example of each type of hangar. With the more common designs such as the Type T, it is particularly difficult to justify listing because of the large numbers still surviving nationally. In fact there appears to be no Type T hangars currently listed in England, even where well preserved examples survive with group value with other listed buildings such as at Dunkeswell Airfield in Devon. Thus although Unit 86 is a relatively well preserved example of its type, in a national context it is not of special architectural or historic interest to justify listing. The hangar makes a positive contribution to the historic interest of the former RAF airfield as a whole, but again, in a national context, RAF Marston Moor does not meet the criteria for listing.

CONCLUSION

Unit 86 is not recommended for listing, either in isolation or as part of any wider designation of the former RAF Marston Moor.

SOURCES

East G.C., 1993 "The Story of the Village of Tockwith"

English Heritage, 2000 "Survey of Military Aviation Sites and Structures" (Thematic Listing Programme report)

RAF oblique photographs, 6 March 1941, MSO 31116 (held by English Heritage NMR)

RAF vertical photographs, 16 May 1946, RAF/106G/UK/1512 frames RP3017-19 (held by English Heritage NMR)

RAF vertical photographs, 28 March 1948, RAF/CPE/UK/2557 frames RP3139-45 (held by English Heritage NMR)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

Unit 86 of the Marston Moor Business Park (a former Type T hangar at RAF Marston Moor) is not recommended for designation for the following principal reasons:

- * Standard Design: The Type T hangar was one of the more common standard designs and it is not of special architectural interest in a national context.
- * Historical associations: The links with Leonard Cheshire and Clark Gable to RAF Marston Moor are not of significance in a national context.
- * Wider airfield significance: RAF Marston Moor is not identified as a key airfield either

illustrating a particular type or a particular development in military aviation.

VISITS

18-NOV-2009 External only

COUNTERSIGNING

Countersigning Comments: Agreed: This hangar does not exhibit the level of interest to justify listing a fairly common building type in the national context. 27.11.2009

Second Countersigning Comments:

HP Director Comments: