

ROYAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM - COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP

10 FEBRUARY 2020

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM ATTENDEES

THE SITE

Why do you believe Netheravon Down [ie Avon Camp West] is the right site for the museum?

The primary requirement is for a sufficiently large site on MOD land which is available for use by the Regiment for its new museum. It should be close to Larkhill and have excellent views over the Salisbury Plain landscape where Gunners have trained for over a century. Avon Camp West fulfils all of these requirements. It is also outside the “red flag” danger area, is away from areas designated for their environmental importance (SSSI, SAC, SPA), has direct access from the A345, and has existing utilities connections.

Has the Army already confirmed the allocation of the site for the museum?

The Army has allocated the site for the Regiment’s museum, with both the current and previous Chief of the General Staff (the head of the British Army) having written to the Master Gunner St James’s Park (the head of the Regiment) to confirm this.

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Pennett said as far as Army HQ was concerned Avon Camp West was the “optimum location”. If this is the case it sounds like the local communities are starting on the back foot as no other locations are possible? This would imply that museum could ONLY be sited at Avon Camp West which would mean that Wiltshire Council would start from a position of approval given they are supportive promoting the economic development of Wiltshire. Please clarify?

Following an assessment of the options (which took into account the primary need for SPTA which is to train troops for operational tasks), the Army identified Avon Camp West as the optimum location which could be released for the proposed museum. This does not in any way imply that the planning authority is bound to approve the development. As the Director of Economic Development and Planning made clear at the CLG meeting, the planning application will be considered on its merits and its approval is in no way assumed or guaranteed.

Will RAM lease the site from the MOD? What is the nature of the lease? How long will the lease be?

RAM is currently in discussions with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and the Army over the lease provisions (including its length and conditions). This will be signed once planning permission has been secured.

Is the allocation of the site subject to planning permission or local support, and how will local support be measured?

The Army has allocated the land to the Regiment for the museum, subject to planning permission. The Army has stated that the planning process is the appropriate means by which the suitability of the scheme, including any local support/opposition, is assessed.

Why not site the museum on the old demonstration area to the north-west of Larkhill Camp, or to the west of that barracks?

The areas north-west and west of Larkhill Camp are not available for use by the Regiment, and are in any case unsuitable for a museum for a number of reasons:

- The Army does not wish the museum to be sited there for training reasons, including the resultant restrictions on manoeuvre space and the impact (for options north of the barracks) of museum traffic on the main military range road.

- These areas are designated for their environmental importance (SSSI, SAC, SPA), and are close to Scheduled Ancient Monuments on land which could be included in an extension of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.
- These areas are constrained by other facilities, have no direct access to an A-road, and have no mains utilities on site.
- Sites to the west and north-west of Larkhill would be in the “red flag” danger area, so development would require changes to the Salisbury Plain Bylaws 1965.

Why are there no suitable sites closer to Larkhill?

Following the earlier consideration of sites to the north-west and north of Larkhill Camp, and having established that no site closer to Larkhill was either available or suitable for the project, the DIO/Army asked RAM to consider Avon Camp West as the site for its new museum.

Why is Avon Camp West a suitable site for the new museum?

The site has good access from a main road and utilities/services on site. It is outside the areas protected for their environmental importance and away from the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (and its proposed extension). It also provides the space required for the museum, does not restrict training (it is outside the range danger area) and enjoys good views over the Plain.

Could you confirm if the following sites have been considered and, if so, why they have been dismissed: Bovington, Solstice Park, Ratfyn Farm?

During the options appraisal stage a number of alternative sites away from Salisbury Plain (including Bovington) were considered and rejected for a variety of reasons (failure to meet the statement of need, cost, dislocation from the Regiment, etc). Given the stipulation that the proposed museum was to be sited on MOD land, Solstice Park and Ratfyn Farm were not considered.

The site seems to sit within the danger area.

No part of the site is within the danger area. The western boundary of the site runs along the outside of the Larkhill Range Extension Area as defined in the Larkhill Artillery range Byelaws 1965.

Is RAM already in possession/control of the land [at Avon Camp West] despite no signed lease?

No it is not, but the DIO has authorized RAM to undertake ecological, archaeological and UXO surveys on the site which will provide information for the planning application.

VISITOR NUMBERS

How many visitors is RAM planning to accommodate at the proposed museum? Why have these estimates changed?

Having reviewed the consultants’ estimates for paying visitor numbers, the proposed visitor offer and the anticipated marketing plan, the RAM board and the Regiment decided in late 2019 to adopt the following target visitor numbers:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Paying Visitors	91,000	82,000	87,000	106,000	130,000	143,000	153,000
Events	1,500	3,000	4,500	6,000	7,500	9,000	10,500
Other Visitors	9,608	8,932	9,656	11,780	14,324	15,644	16,644
Total	102,108	93,932	101,156	123,780	151,824	167,644	180,144

Other visitors includes free entries, meetings, etc.

What are the assumptions made to get to these visitor numbers?

Our consultants have analysed the offer, and market tested it against likely target audiences. The metrics they have used are not disclosed as they are commercial in confidence.

What is the split of visitors between weekdays and weekends?

A precise break down of visitors by days is not available, however in common with most family orientated visitor attractions we would expect higher numbers in the summer months, at weekends and during school holidays.

OPERATIONS (INCLUDING EVENTS)

How many days of the year will the museum open?

It is currently planned for the museum to be open daily, other than on a small number of holidays such as Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Is the break-even point at 35,000 visitors per annum? Does this mean revenue of £420,000 (35,000 x £12)?

Yes, the break-even point is currently assessed as requiring around 35,000 paying visitors. The suggested revenue figure of £420,000 is not accurate, since not every visitor will pay £12 for entry, and income will be generated through many other avenues (café, shop, meetings etc).

How long can RAM survive if visitor numbers are well short of the target?

RAM expects to deliver significantly more than the 35,000 paying visitors required to break-even. In the unlikely event that it takes a few years to reach the break-even numbers, it will have sufficient reserves to remain solvent.

Does RAM need re-enactments, equipment displays, armoured vehicle rides, blank firing, immersive experiences, trenches, cafe, playground to be financially viable?

Yes, the business plan assumes visitor numbers, and hence income, based on the availability of this range of attractions.

Will a business plan highlighting forecasts be part of the planning application pack?

No, this is not a requirement for the planning application.

How many major events will be held, how big will they be and when will they be held?

We are planning to hold two or three major events each year, and numbers will be kept relatively low, with daily attendances starting at no more than 1,000 and growing to 3,000 or 4,000. This is below some recent major events on this part of the Plain. The total number of major event visitors is included in the table above. Major events are likely to be held in the summer months.

Is the intention to use the museum as a venue for evening entertaining such as Mess events and parties? Would such events include fireworks displays, and would they be separately licensed by the Council?

As part of the business plan it is intended to hold occasional corporate/mess social receptions/dinners and lectures in the museum in the evenings. Most of these would be delivered within the building, minimising the impact of any music or other noise. It is not currently planned to have fireworks at such events. Specific licensing for such events is unlikely to be required.

Why did Firepower fail, and why do you think this proposal will succeed?

The Regiment believes that RAM's plans will deliver a museum that is financially sustainable in the long term. The new museum will provide a much better visitor experience, with outdoor displays, activities and exhibits that were impossible on the Woolwich site. The new building will allow more of the collection to be displayed, along with a temporary exhibition space and better facilities for visitors, and will also be more efficient to operate. The location offers a more attractive destination for visitors, and allows RAM to tell a broader story, linked to its views over Salisbury Plain.

Firepower was sited in an unattractive locality and stood in the middle of a building site for almost all of its 15 years existence, and it had to compete with two major military museums with free entry in London. There was little opportunity to bring visits to life with outdoor displays, re-enactments and activities, or immersive experiences such as the planned WW1 trench. It also occupied very old buildings which proved very expensive to heat and maintain, and veteran volunteers were not available in significant numbers. Finally, for much of its lifespan many significant artefacts (including the Railway Gun and much of the Cold War and contemporary collection) were not available as part of the visitor journey.

What if it fails, like Firepower at Woolwich? It is assumed that the site would return to the MOD?

In the unlikely event that the new museum proves to be unsustainable it is likely that RAM's lease would end and the site would return to the Army/MOD which would decide on its future use.

TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

Will the planning application consider the traffic generated by the museum in relation to existing traffic on the A345? Have you considered the traffic implications of providing education/meeting rooms and a lecture theatre at the museum? How many cars, coaches etc do RAM assess will come on site each year?

A Transport Statement will be submitted with the planning application. This will consider the impact of traffic generated by the museum in relation to the existing traffic flows on the A345. The Transport Statement will consider the traffic generated by all visitors to the museum site (including those using meeting rooms), staff and volunteers, etc.

Who carried out the RAM traffic survey, when and where?

The traffic survey was carried out at 3 locations on the A345 (south of Upavon, south of Netheravon and north of the Countess Roundabout) over 7 days in October 2018 by PFA Consulting. The results of this survey will be included in the Transport Statement.

Have there been early discussions with the Wiltshire Council highways team? How will Wiltshire Council measure traffic statistics to ensure accurate results?

The RAM team has had early discussions with the Wiltshire Council highways team, and are revising both the Transport Statement and the design of the site entrance in response to the comments received. Wiltshire Council's highways team will test the Transport Statement to ensure that it provides a proper assessment of the likely impact based on its detailed knowledge of the local road network, but RAM is unable to comment on the specific methods which it will use.

Will it affect people using the A345 for daily commuting?

The impact on commuters will be limited as the museum will open at 10am (after the morning rush hour), and close at 5pm.

Would the location of the entry point to the site not be determined by Wiltshire Council rather than by RAM (having consulted with villagers)? Will it not be very dangerous with traffic travelling at 50mph?

Having undertaken an assessment of the site, and consultation with Wiltshire Council and local communities, RAM will submit a proposed design for the site entrance in its planning application. Wiltshire Council will determine if this is acceptable (or make alternative recommendations) when it considers the planning application.

Is the proposed entrance cheaper to construct than the alternatives? Who pays for the new junction?

The proposed design, which must comply with regulations regarding siting, construction and safety, includes a right-turn lane for vehicles arriving from the north, and is more expensive than the simple junction originally considered. RAM expects to pay for the junction.

Is the proposed junction at the existing lay-by?

No, it is at the south east corner of the site, north of the lay-by.

What improvements to the A345 will there be other than at the site entrance (including to the dangerous bus stop)?

RAM will improve the bus stop which is situated closest to the site entrance on the western side of the A345, and will cut back parts of the grass bank to significantly improve visibility for road users and pedestrians. RAM can only deliver improvements within its site boundary. It is not within its power to make other changes to the A345 (although it would support efforts to reduce the speed limit on the section of road from Netheravon to Figheldean) or to the bus stop on the eastern side of the road.

Should the project receive planning approval could the speed limit on this stretch [of the A345] be reduced to 30/40mph?

RAM would support local councillors' efforts to get the speed limit reduced on the A345 between Netheravon and Figheldean, but the decision on this will rest with Wiltshire Council.

What is the maximum car and coach parking on the site?

The number of car and coach spaces is still being finalised, and will be set out in the planning application and Transport Statement.

Will the project result in Avon Camp East becoming isolated, with no access for the Army onto the Plain? What are the Army's plans for Avon Camp East?

RAM's lease will exclude the route that already runs along the northern boundary of the site, and this will provide continued access for the Army between Avon Camp East and the Plain, as well as access to the buildings used by Landmarc. The Army has indicated that it is yet to determine the future use of Avon Camp East but it plans to retain it in its portfolio. RAM understands that in the immediate future it is going to be used as the base for Salisbury Plain's ash dieback extraction project.

Will a Right of Way be created along the River Avon to provide a pedestrian route between the villages of Netheravon and Figheldean?

RAM's proposals are focussed exclusively on the Avon Camp West site. It is not seeking any land to the east of the A345, or the opening up of any Rights of Way there.

ENVIRONMENT

Will the museum building be visible from the A345? Will there be trees in front of the building to make it less visible?

Minimising the impact on the local landscape is part of our design brief. The functional building style is not dissimilar to many existing military and farm buildings on the Plain, and it is proposed to site it on an area which currently includes an unattractive, disused vehicle washdown. As a result of feedback from local

residents and other stakeholders, we have made a number of changes to reduce the visual impact of the building, including:

- Moving the building closer to the tree line;
- Dropping the ground floor level of the building by around a metre ;
- Reducing the area of the top floor by around 75%;
- Removing the “gun barrel” feature proposed in previous designs;
- Utilising green cladding material which will blend in with the landscape;
- Introducing additional banking and planting to help screen the building, parking area and vehicles on the site.

The proposed designs make use of existing trees and new landscaping and planting to reduce the visual impact of both the building and car park, however, it will still be visible from limited sections of the A345.

What about noise? Can RAM provide details of expected noise levels and when these would occur (time of year, day of the week, time of day)?

Taking into account existing noise conditions (including nearby artillery, mortar and rifle/machine gun ranges, helicopter and fast jet flights, and the movement of armoured vehicles in the area), it is highly unlikely that the proposed museum will result in a significant additional noise impact. It is likely that blank artillery firing and other re-enactment noise would peak during the middle of event days in the summer. On other days such noise would be very limited.

Is it still assumed that there is no requirement for an air quality survey?

Yes, RAM is not aware of any Wiltshire Council concerns over air quality in the vicinity of the A345 in the Avon Valley, and the development of the museum is not expected to change this. It is a local authority responsibility to monitor air quality and report on it to DEFRA on an annual basis. Air quality in Wiltshire is predominantly very good with the majority of the county having clean, unpolluted air. The maximum pollution level measured in the county is Low (Index 2 (of 10)) at locations in city or town centres where pollutants can become “trapped” – even at this level its effects are “unlikely to be noticed by those who are sensitive to air pollution”.¹

Given contemporary public concerns about traffic pollution and its contribution to climate change, why is RAM proposing a facility and site which will increase it?

It is anticipated that any increase in pollution on the A345 will be small, even in relation to the existing low levels in this area, and would be more than offset by the rapid rise in the use of electric vehicles. National Grid predictions indicate that the number of such vehicles in the UK could rise from 200,000 (0.5%) in 2018 to between 2.7 and 10.6 million by 2030 (c7 to 25%). Furthermore, for those who are already planning to visit a Wiltshire destination (such as Stonehenge) and are adding on a visit to the proposed museum, the impact of additional pollution in the county will be negligible.

What exactly does additional banking and planting mean?

In response to the public consultations, plans for banking and planting along the southern edge of the site have been expanded, both horizontally and vertically. As well as being ecologically beneficial this will provide greater screening of the museum site (and especially the car park) from the A345 and the highest parts of Figcheldean village.

Cars driving in and out of the museum will be very visible from Figcheldean.

The access route from the A345 to the car park will be partly visible from the highest ground in Figcheldean.

¹ Wiltshire Council Website: Wiltshire Air Quality page and Annual Status Report 2019.

That part of the Plain is pitch black now and will no longer be, especially in winter and when there are evening events.

Although it is unavoidable that there will be some increase in light levels on the site, this will be minimised through the use of non-intrusive security lighting/measures wherever possible. In reality much of the site has experienced light pollution from the existing lighting in the FOB and Landmarc buildings.

The Army noise profile, accepted by local residents, is mostly Monday to Friday. RAM firing will be mostly at weekends (is this correct) removing the peaceful period currently enjoyed by residents. How will RAM plan to manage the diminishing tolerance to continuous firing noise pollution?

Noise generated by the museum will occur at various times during the week depending on the programme of activities and events. Where blank rounds are used these will be generally at the lower end of the noise scale (compared to those used on ceremonial duties in London). The noise is expected to be significantly less intrusive than the live artillery firing, helicopter and fast jet activity which is currently experienced in this area. As live artillery firing continues to reduce on the Plain it is likely that, even taking into account museum generated noise, the overall noise levels in the area will continue to decline.

What pre-planning environmental and ecological assessments are required?

RAM is currently undertaking ecological surveys to determine what flora and fauna are present on the area, and this information will be included with our planning application. We will be proposing measures to minimise the impact on wildlife and enhance the site where possible, including the provision of banking for burrowing animals, new planting, a number of bird boxes and the creation of new meadow grassland from arable land.

What measures will be put in place to compensate for the loss of biodiversity arising from the build?

The areas “under concrete” on Avon Camp West will not increase substantially due to the build as significant sections of existing structures (washdown, road etc) will be removed. Existing trees and hedges will be retained wherever possible. Biodiversity on the north western part of the site will be increased as the area is moved from arable back to chalk grassland creating an enhanced space for indigenous plants and animals.

BUILD PROJECT

**What is the expected timeline from planning application submission to opening in spring 2022?
How long would construction of the initial capital project take?**

The key periods would be (roughly): planning application determination 3 months, construction 12 months (but dependent on contractor appointed), fit-out 6 months.

Have all funds been raised for the initial capital project?

Yes, just over £8m has been secured for this phase of the museum.

How can the SWLEP allocate £1.35m without an up to date OBC? What due diligence has the SWLEP actually carried out?

These are questions for the LEP, not RAM.

What is the capacity of the Harefield Sewage Works? How often are overflow permits breached?

These are questions for Wessex Water, not RAM

Water management – has this been considered? Who is paying for this? Water pipes within Avon Camp East are cracked.

The responsibility for all services in Avon Camp East rests with the DIO.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND BENEFITS

How many staff and volunteers does the museum intend to employ?

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
FTE Staff	23	23	23	31	34	37	40
Volunteers	25	25	30	34	38	42	46

Of the 40 staff anticipated if the museum is a success, how many roles will be reserved for the Army, and how many of the civilian roles will be open to local people? Will local people be prioritised for jobs at the museum?

RAM is an independent charity, and is not controlled or staffed by the Army or MOD. All of the museum staff appointments will be filled by civilians, and applications from local people will be welcomed. The aim will be to appoint the best person for each job, based on their skills and experience.

Please describe what the 40 full time jobs are, when they would be required, and the permanent versus volunteer balance.

A rough breakdown of roles is as follows: one museum director, two assistant directors, six managers, and 31 other posts (including museum assistants, collections, finance and catering staff, cleaners etc). This is the number of full time equivalent (FTE) posts – most would be required throughout the year but around 8 FTE would be seasonal (during the busier summer months). We would expect there to be a minimum of 50 volunteers (and perhaps many more) by Year 7 of the operation.

Some people from Aspire believe many of the jobs will be contracted to them. Please confirm.

RAM has no plans to contract out any of these roles to Aspire.

What is meant by “positive impact on the local tourism economy”?

Visitors to the museum will use other local facilities in the area such as shops, pubs and B&Bs, and this in turn supports additional spending and jobs in the local area. By enhancing Wiltshire’s tourism offer, the museum will help encourage visitors to stay longer (including more overnight stays) and spend more in the county. All such additional usage will increase the viability of local businesses and generate revenue for local communities. Research² demonstrates that these benefits are felt more by less well-off workers rather than those who are financially comfortable. Particular benefits can be expected for school leavers, more of whom begin their working lives in tourism and hospitality than in any other industry in the UK.

Please confirm that use of local suppliers and businesses is not guaranteed to be the case.

Wherever possible RAM will seek to support local businesses through supply and service contracts, for example through for the provision of food and beverages, building and maintenance work. While there is no guarantee that business will go to particular suppliers, we would certainly hope that much of the work will go to local businesses.

Will a footpath along the western side of the A345 be provided linking Figheledean, Harefield Crescent and Netheravon?

RAM intends to play its part in delivering this by retaining the existing grass track alongside the road, and by extending it past the Riding School to the current Avon Camp West site entrance. The completion of the link to Netheravon can only be approved and delivered by the Army/DIO.

Can we see a map of planned footpaths?

The only footpath planned within the RAM site is along the western side of the A345 (see above). It is understood that the Army has no plans at the moment to change its policy regarding public access for

² DEFRA Report: Tourism and Local Rural Communities 13th August 2010.

rambling/dog walking along the northern and southern edges of the site on land which is being retained by the Army/DIO (which are not Public Rights of Way).

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT

Is the whole development programme fully funded for all phases, or will there need to be a fundraising campaign?

The initial capital project is fully funded. This includes the main museum building, display arena, and parking, as well as basic exhibitions and features such as the WW1 trench system and children's play area.

RAM will be fundraising for subsequent projects to enhance this initial offer.

What future development is planned for the site? What are the phases of construction?

The phasing of future enhancements beyond the initial capital project has not yet been determined, but could include:

- Enhanced exhibitions and interpretation, learning resources and immersive exhibits;
- An enhanced conservation workshop;
- An assault course;
- A recreated Armstrong Hut reflecting the military and social history of the Plain;
- An additional display gallery;
- A purpose built archive storage facility;
- A cover for the Railway Gun (which will initially be displayed outdoors);
- Refurbishment of the Cavalry Riding School to provide improved storage space.

Any new build development would be subject to the usual planning application process.

The Archive and Research Centre will be a two storey building so will be easily seen from villages – is this true?

No, the Archive Store will be a single storey building. It has not yet been designed so plans for this building are not available. This building would be subject to the usual planning application process.

How long and high will the Railway Gun Dome be? What guns will you store in this and for what purpose? Where will it be sited?

The Railway Gun will be positioned between the two existing bunkers in the FOB. In due course the aspiration will be to construct a cover over it to protect it from the elements. The design of this cover (and hence its size) has not yet been considered, and would be subject to the usual planning application process.

RAM BOARD

What experience do the trustees have of setting up, building and operating such an enterprise? Who are the trustees? How qualified are they for such a role?

The names of the RAM trustees are available through Companies House and the Charity Commission. They have a diverse range of relevant skills and experience.

FARMING IMPACT

Can the grazing land on the east of Avon Camp West continue to be grazed by farm animals when this area is not in use for car parking? Will the farmer be compensated for their loss of use of farmland (either financially or with use of other comparable land)?

Negotiations have been ongoing with the tenant farmer/his agent since December, and it would be inappropriate to comment on possible future arrangements at this stage.

Who will take responsibility for the relationship with the farmer? DIO or RAM?

RAM will be responsible for any arrangements for future farming use on the site leased to it by the MOD. The tenant farmer will continue to have a relationship with the DIO since the vast majority of the MOD land he farms will not be affected by the museum development.

OBJECTORS

The Protect Netheravon Down group oppose the project, and nothing will change that – how do you respond?

By being open and transparent, and sharing information as it becomes available through public consultations and the Community Liaison Group. It is disappointing that the Protect Netheravon Down group has declined to nominate a representative to attend the CLG, but the invitation to attend remains open as it is important that all views are presented and considered in an open and transparent fashion.