

# AT FORT

## Self Analysis Report

on behalf of the Kent Stakeholders Group



October 2012

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# 1. Introduction

The County of Kent is one of the most strategically important areas of the UK and has a correspondingly high number of fortified sites ranging from the Roman period to the Cold War. The defences of Medway, the official partner in the project, are particularly important and include numerous forts, castles and other defensive sites. These were established to defend the Thames and Medway estuaries and north Kent in general, but more particularly the Royal Dockyard at Chatham which was England's main naval base for centuries. Beyond Medway, key defensive complexes also existed around Dover which was always vulnerable as the closest point and port to continental Europe.

The military role for Kent has now largely ended and as a consequence there are a large number of forts that have no function. Some of these are relatively small but others such as at Fort Amherst (Chatham Lines) or the Dover Western Heights are very large indeed. It has been possible to find a sustainable future for some of these sites but for others it has proved very difficult as the sites suffer from a number of issues – the cost of conservation requirements, the limitations the character of the sites impose on potential activities, mixed ownership, problems caused by established usage and the fact that most of the sites are located in some of Kent's most economically challenged areas.

The partners see the AT FORT project as an opportunity to learn about alternative approaches to addressing these problems. Many of the approaches adopted by other partners will have been put to the test already and so we can have more confidence that they can work than if the ideas are purely theoretical. We can also study the pitfalls associated with developing sustainable futures for fortifications which should help us make our own solutions more effective and successful.

In Kent we have successfully found sustainable futures for some sites and we look forward to being able to share these experiences with the partners. One important aspect of our work that our partners may find valuable is the level of community partnership that takes place in the UK. For example, at Fort Amherst much of the land is owned and managed by a charitable trust that carries out a range of activities using volunteers. Similarly, at Dover Western Heights, much of the existing promotion and interpretation of the complex is provided by a group of volunteers. Increasingly in the UK volunteers and charitable organisations are seen as being central to solving some planning issues, particularly where commercial development needs to be integrated with local amenities like forts. Recent planning legislation has also given the local community a greater role in finding solutions to problems like those considered in this project and this perspective can also be shared with the partners.

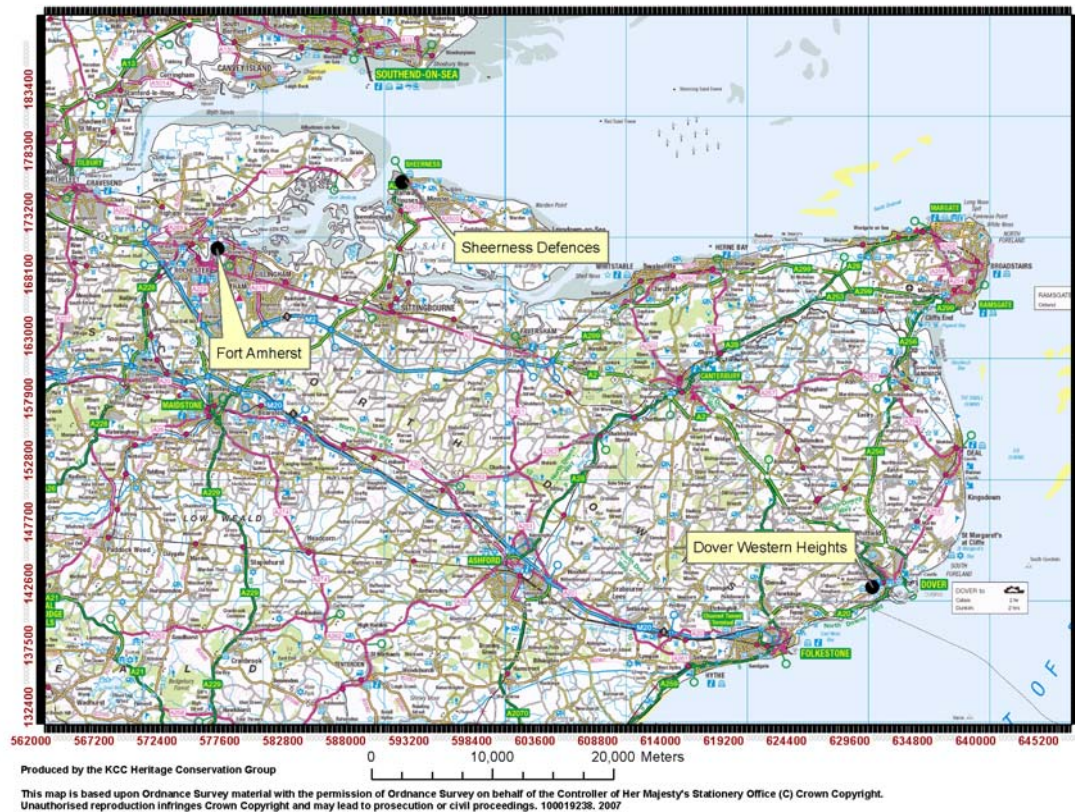


Figure 1. The location of the sites mentioned in this text

## 2. General description of the sites

There are three main sites that we hope the AT FORT project can help us to address. The prime focus will be on Fort Amherst (Chatham) and Dover Western Heights with a subsidiary focus on the Sheerness Defences. Much of the descriptive text that follows is drawn from a series of survey reports by Victor Smith and Andrew Saunders.

### 2.1 Fort Amherst, Chatham

Fort Amherst is located immediately south-east of the Royal Dockyard at Chatham. It forms the southern linchpin of the 18<sup>th</sup> century defensive line to the east of the Dockyard that protected it from land attack. Later, an additional series of detached forts were built around Chatham to strengthen the defence.

Fort Amherst had as its nucleus the Amherst Redoubt of c.1770 located at the southern end of the Chatham Lines to which was added a complex of batteries during the Napoleonic Wars so as to create a citadel.

In 1756 the dockyard at Chatham was enclosed on its vulnerable landward side by a regular bastioned line. Within the lines, two redoubts, Amherst (at the southern end) and Townsend (at the northern end) were added in the 1780s when the ditches were

also re-cut and revetted in brick. Barracks and magazines were constructed around

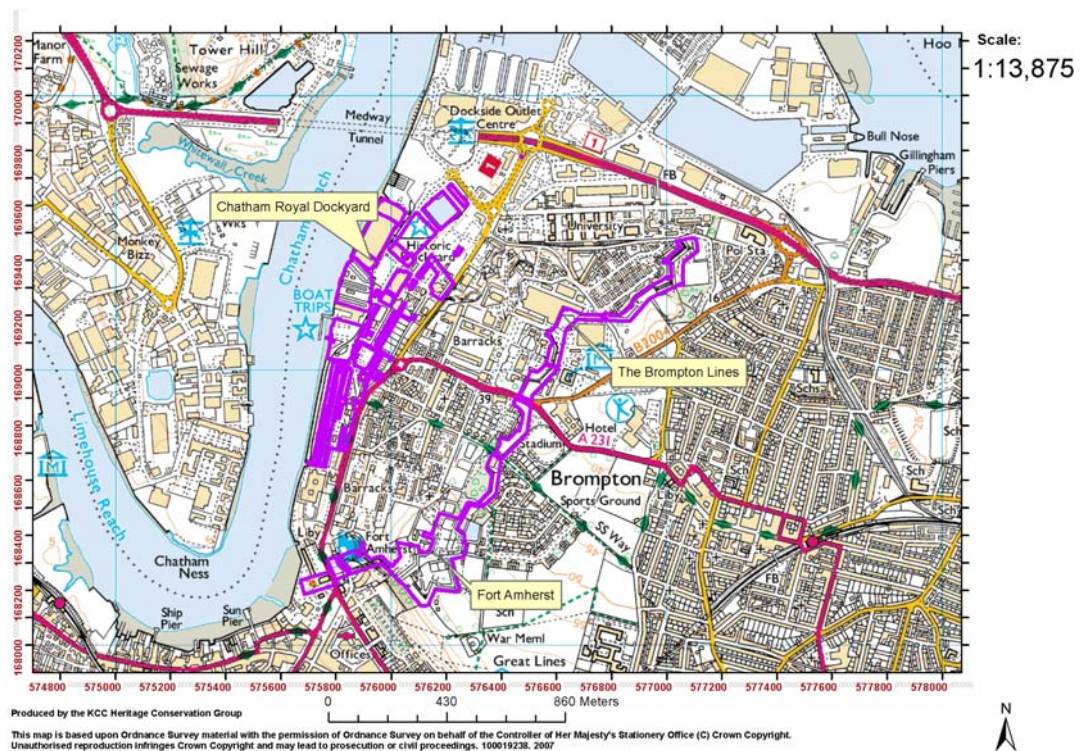


Figure 2. Map of Chatham showing key defence monuments and Fort Amherst

the Amherst Redoubt to the south and the Prince of Wales Bastion was re-trenched to the rear. Belvedere Battery overlooked Prince William's demi-bastion at the end of the Chatham Lines with Spur Battery to the front of the demi-bastion. Most of these works commenced in 1803 and lasted until c 1815. Cornwallis Battery controlled the face of the cliff towards Chatham and also enfiladed the Barrier Ditch. After 1815 the Chatham Lines later became less of an active defence and more of a military training ground for the Royal Engineers including for annual siege operation exercises and other military engineering training. During the First World War Fort Amherst accommodated troops and stores en route for France. In the Second World War the tunnels under Cornwallis Battery were taken over by the Civil Defence for its Medway Towns headquarters. Light anti-aircraft guns were mounted on the earthworks. In 1981 the Fort Amherst and Lines Trust bought the Fort from the Ministry of Defence in order to pursue a policy of restoration.

The Fort is thus part of an extensive complex of fortifications that defended the Royal Dockyard. Between 2008 and 2011 these were mostly incorporated into a public park – the Great Lines Heritage Park. The defences of Chatham, including Fort Amherst, have also been included on the UK Tentative List for World Heritage Site status.

Parts of the complex are still overgrown, unrestored and derelict but there has been an extensive programme of clearance and consolidation lasting many years for the majority.

The fort provides a good opportunity to explain to the partners how the partnership between the local authority, English Heritage the Trust and others works. The Kent partners would like to strengthen the sustainability of the site with an improved business plan for its financial sustainability. A space and facilities audit may help to



match the types of available space at the fort with potential income generation uses. Such a study would also strengthen a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application that is in preparation and which seeks to restore and re-use the Spur battery, including its casemates and the Couvre Porte as a further stage of the Great Lines Heritage park project. Medway Council may need to consult the community about a future use for the former reservoir area at Couvre Porte as part of preparation of a lottery application.

## **2.2 Dover Western Heights**

The Western Heights Defences are a large complex of forts and batteries joined by ramparts and ditches, enclosing the end of the prominent hill overlooking the port of Dover from the western side of the Dour Valley. They were established to help protect the strategic port against attack and capture from the land and were provided with gun positions to fire on the likely sites to be occupied by the siege batteries of an enemy. They also had some guns facing seawards. These works were to act in cooperation with the defences of Dover Castle and others on the high ground on the eastern side of Dover, to which they could be joined by extemporised lines in an emergency. The defences provided accommodation for a large number of troops, envisaged as a strategic reserve or field force to resist an enemy invasion force landed elsewhere in Kent, Dover was prepared to withstand a French siege.

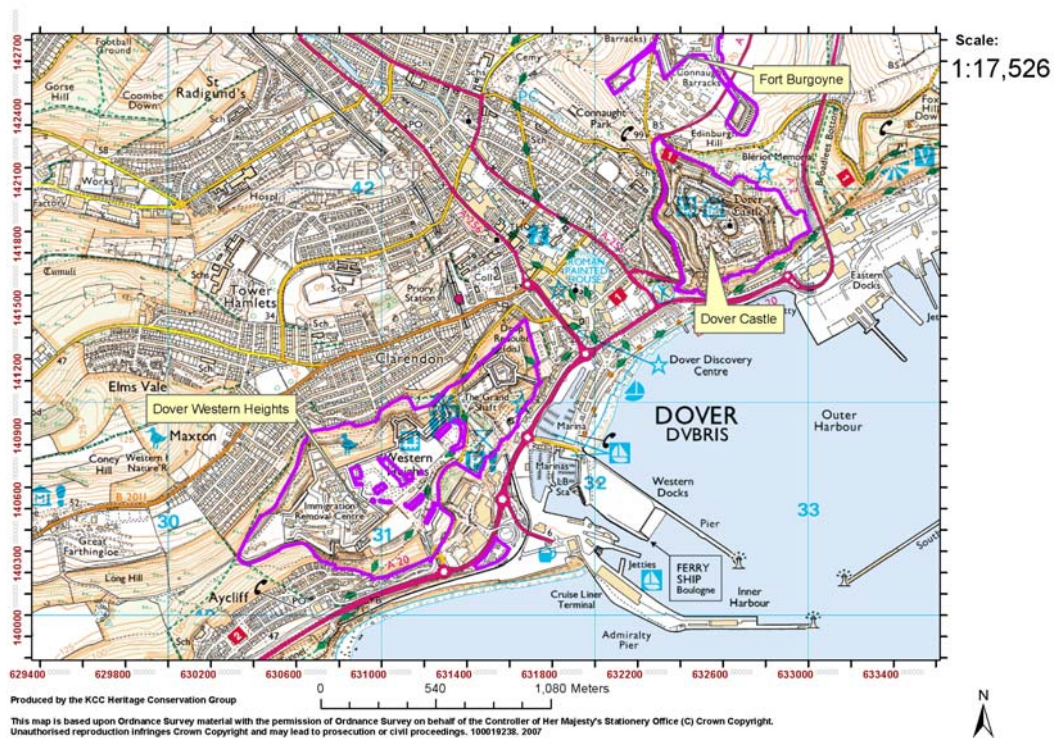
As they appear today, the defences are a composite of structures largely built in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and in the 1850s and 60s programme of re-fortification.

The defences originated as fieldworks established during a period of fear of French invasion at the end of the 1770s. A plan of 1784 shows self-contained works at the Devil's Drop or Drop Redoubt at the eastern end of the hill and a citadel partially completed to the west, with various entrenchments between them. Work on these continued in the French Revolutionary Wars.

During the Napoleonic Wars, a programme began for consolidating the earlier defensive efforts by the building of permanent and semi-permanent works in their place. These included a pentagonal work on the site of earlier fieldworks at the Drop Redoubt, the conversion of the Citadel into a large permanent fort and the replacement of the intervening discontinuous entrenchments with continuous lines. The ground immediately to the east of the Citadel evolved into a parade area for the assembly and drilling of troops and as an encampment ground for soldiers intended to counter an invasion. This was the basis for the gradual expansion, which transformed the Western Heights into a highly impressive hill top fortress.

By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a powerful intermediate work called the North Centre Bastion had been added mid-way along the northern lines and, north of the Citadel, a new work called the Outer Bastion had been built. Near the eastern extremity of the defences the Grand Shaft as a unique triple helical staircase was built as a communication between the Heights and Dover town and large barracks (now demolished) were built near its top. Work planned in the early 1850s and completed in the later 1860s added a protective advanced position known as the Western Outwork on the west side of the Citadel. The revetment of the ditches of the

lines was completed and the latter were fully extended from the Drop Redoubt to the



*Figure 3. Map of Dover showing key defence monuments and Dover Western Heights*

edge of the cliffs and from just to the east of the Citadel to the coastal road near Archcliffe Fort. The ditches were scoured by firing positions in the revetments and by caponiers, which were added to the earlier Drop Redoubt. These were elements of the polygonal style of fortification then current in the United Kingdom. The programme of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century works also included major casemated barracks to hold a permanent garrison but the majority of these have now been demolished.

Seaward firing gun positions were added in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, including at St. Martin's Battery. By 1895 the powerful Citadel Battery was added to the west of the Western Outwork. Also in the 1890s a further landward-facing battery was added immediately to the west of the Drop Redoubt. The Western Heights formed part of the defence of Dover during both World Wars when various infantry works were added, including in the Second World War, some pillboxes and an AA site.

Following the abandonment of the Western Heights by the War Office, in the 1960s, various barracks and other features were demolished and the remainder gradually slipped into decay. The Citadel and the ditched systems to the west of the hill were taken over for use by the prison authorities of the Home Office. However, a recognition of the heritage value of the Western heights began in the 1960s when some scheduling as a legally protected monument took place. Dover District Council secured some of the eastern end of the defences and, by the 1980s, had restored the Grand Shaft and occasionally opened the Drop Redoubt to visitors.

Today, the site is on the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk' register and one of their top 10 priorities for the south-east. The complex faces a range of challenges:

- The threat of loss of open spaces to uncontrolled tree growth and proposed development
- Some inappropriate development or uses including existing housing and first a prison and now an Immigration Removal Centre use for the Citadel.
- The site's fragmented ownership brings with it additional challenges for securing a coherent maintenance strategy for the site
- A view point to see the site as a whole is from the top of the keep at Dover Castle. This means that inappropriate development within the Western Heights could impact on view lines across the valley
- The danger of proposed development harming the setting of the site to the west
- A location for crime and anti-social behaviour
- Significant and poorly understood buried remains
- An extensive Second World War landscape to the west, also in danger of potential harm from change linked to adjacent proposed development.
- The condition of the fortifications is frequently poor or very poor and most areas are closed off to visitors. The estimated cost of conservation is very large.
- The site has ecological and landscape values the conservation of which must be balanced with its conservation as a historic fortress.

### 2.3 Sheerness Defences



Figure 4. Map of Sheerness showing key defence monuments

The Dutch raid on the Medway of 1667 revealed the vulnerability of Sheerness to attack from the sea. A small fort was under construction at the time of the raid but was not completed in time to prevent the burning of it and the small dockyard at Sheerness. The raid prompted a wide review of the defences of the region and led to



the construction of a new fort at Sheerness and other defences for Chatham, designed by Sir Bernard de Gomme in the 1660s and 1670s. Additional bastioned defences were added to this fort from 1783-1816. As part of the 1860s refortification programme the extensive Queenborough Lines, a long water filled ditch defended by artillery, were constructed to protect the landward side of the whilst the 17<sup>th</sup> century fort was replaced by Garrison Point Fort, a rare two-tiered fort that crossed fire with other batteries sited on the Isle of Grain.. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century gun towers were added to the Sheerness fortifications and these were re-armed with coastal artillery in both world wars..

The defences include very significant military remains but these lie within the context of a busy working port with the port activities taking place in and around the defences. For example, Garrison Point Fort is unused but has the port control station built on top of it. The port use means that there is virtually no public access and correspondingly little interpretation or promotion. Space within the site is so limited that storage of containers and other produce crowds the defences and military buildings. There are early stage proposals for additional land reclamation that could change the topography of the promontory on which Garrison Point Fort stands.

The situation at Sheerness is very challenging. At present there is no agreed strategy for the fortifications and the project provides an opportunity for us to engage Peel Ports (the site owner) in discussions about a sustainable future.

#### ***2.4 Other sites in Kent***

Elsewhere in Kent we hope in the longer term (i.e. not within this project) to develop strategies for the future of a number of major individual forts. For example this might include following up on recent English Heritage survey work at Cliffe Fort (Medway). Slough Fort (also in Medway) is a good example of potential re-use as it is located in a major leisure and caravan park where the owner is sympathetic to the needs of the site and its tourism potential. We would also like to develop understanding and enjoyment of the Second World War defence landscape on the cliffs east of Dover Castle.

## **3 Continuation**

### ***3.1 Possible subjects for discussion at the Good Practices Engineering Workshop***

There are a number of areas where the Kent partners would like to learn more from the other AT FORT partners:

#### **Enabling conditions for the re-use of sites**

##### ***Fort Amherst***

An area of particular interest is how vegetation should be managed at the fort. Large areas of Fort Amherst are wooded and the question of whether to remove the trees to aid the visibility of the fort (which brings increased maintenance costs) or to leave them in place (which limits the accessibility of the site) remains to be fully answered. A cost effective solution is required and lessons can probably be learnt from other sites in the network.

### ***Dover Western Heights***

The question of how to resolve the needs of heritage conservation and ecology is very important for the future of the site. The Built Heritage Conservation Framework was forced to concentrate on heritage as it was too complicated to take ecology and landscape into account at that time. The balancing of these issues still remains to be fully addressed. An example of the practical benefit of arriving at a better understanding of the issues is provided by the nearby White Cliffs Conservation Project which aims to control scrub and secure chalk grass land for ecological reasons but which also happens to help the visibility of the monument.

### ***Sheerness Defences***

We would like to find better solutions for the occasional conflict between the needs of heritage and those of biodiversity at Sheerness. It sometimes seems that the protection of biodiversity is more strongly recognised under European law than is the need to protect heritage. We would like to learn of new ways to balance these needs.

### **Redevelopment models for multi-functional use of sites**

#### ***Fort Amherst***

The Fort Amherst Heritage Trust (FAHT) would like to find ways to make the fort more economically sustainable so that its future can be secured and so that the site can be developed further as a community resource. To do this the Trust may seek to improve its business planning by carrying out a space and facilities audit in order to match the available facilities at the fort against potential income generation uses. This would help to strengthen a Heritage Lottery Fund application that the Trust and Medway Council has in preparation for additional external funding. At one of the outlying parts of the fort, the Couvre Porte, Medway Council would like to carry out a study to identify possible uses and management regimes for a former reservoir area.

The FAHT would also like to learn how to improve its ability to access the huge number of visitors that visit the Royal Dockyard but who do not visit the fort. The dockyard trust has received a stage 1 lottery grant for a new project that includes interpretation to visitors of the wider military heritage of the potential World Heritage Site, including Fort Amherst.

#### ***Dover Western Heights***

A particular problem that the Western Heights faces is public safety. The scale, complexity and, in part, poor condition of the remains means that they are a considerable hazard. How do we make the site more visible and accessible without risking unacceptable harm to the public or encouraging anti social behaviour?

We would also like to develop improved ways to link the Western Heights to Dover town more effectively. This would help improve access to the site generally and potentially make the Western Heights a more valued part of the local landscape and something that can contribute to the economic regeneration of Dover.

Finally, we would like to understand better how much change is appropriate to the Western Heights. In order to conserve the fortifications properly investment will be needed. One possible source for this is commercial development but how much

might be needed, and can this be accepted without harm to the significance of the site?

### ***Sheerness Defences***

The partners would like to learn how the defences can be given a sustainable re-use that permits much greater public access. At present a range of factors limits this access and greater co-ordination and improved communication will be needed to resolve them.

We would also like to consider whether it is possible to use the remains as 'routeways'. Some of the linear defences, especially the indented lines, could lend themselves to this but it would require the co-ordination of a number of different organisations including English Heritage, Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council and most importantly the landowners. Nevertheless, if successful this could allow access to much greater areas of heritage while providing the regular use that will help to sustain them in the long term.

### **Governance models**

#### ***Fort Amherst***

The main question regarding governance concerns the long-term future of the Fort. Where will the FAHT be in 20 years time?

#### ***Dover Western Heights***

We want to develop improved ways of bringing together the relevant Western Heights stakeholders in a meaningful and effective way so that real action can take place and a proper Conservation Management Plan developed.

One question to be resolved is how the future of Fort Burgoyne and Connaught Barracks can be co-ordinated. We do not want a vision for the Barracks development but not for the fort. They must work together to be successful.

### ***Sheerness Defences***

The key questions we wish to address at Sheerness are similar to those at Dover Western Heights. We would like to learn how other partners have improved the management of historic defences when there have been a large number of landowners and no overall organisation with the role to co-ordinate action. We also need to find a use for the Boat Store and Garrison Point Fort that is compatible with their great historical importance and the activities of a busy commercial port.

One practical solution that might be usefully developed is to form a local heritage forum for all the various heritage groups that operate in and around the port. This would help to co-ordinate activities so that those parts of the defences that are open to the public can be promoted most effectively. The forum could also campaign for additional areas to be opened and can help local liaison between the port and the community.

### **3.2 Contributions that the Kent partners can make to the Good Practices Engineering Workshop**

#### **Enabling conditions for the re-use of sites**

##### ***Fort Amherst***

The conservation needs of the fort must always be balanced against a desire to open up greater access. An example of this is the current creation of a bridge across one of the defensive ditches. This is an important work that will help to link the fort to the wider landscape and in particular the rest of the Great Lines Heritage Park. An appropriate design has been chosen. There was some debate beforehand, however, as creating a bridge across one of the defensive ditches to some extent undermines the impact of the ditch as a defensive feature. Thus the competing needs of access and conservation need to be continually balanced. We would be happy to explain to partners how the decision was arrived at to build the bridge and why this particular approach was taken.

##### ***Dover Western Heights***

To help suppress the vegetation on the site Dexter Cattle and Konik Ponies have been introduced onto parts of the site. These help to maintain the steep-slopes and chalk downland of the monument. This is an approach that could be shared with the partners to be contrasted with the use of sheep or goats for the same purposes.

##### ***Sheerness Defences***

The Queenborough Lines have acted as an important local nature reserve providing a home for endangered species and a amenity for local people.

#### **Redevelopment models for multi-functional use of sites**

##### ***Fort Amherst***

A particular feature of Fort Amherst's management in relation to other sites in the AT FORT partnership is the leading role taken by the local community through the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust. The Trust is responsible for all of the activities at the fort (although it liaises closely with Medway Council and English Heritage) and as such demonstrates what can be achieved by charitable organisations. The fort also demonstrates the challenges facing such organisations, however, as it is more difficult for the Trust to secure the major finance and professional support needed for full-scale conservation and promotion than it might be otherwise. As the Trust is also staffed by volunteers it logically also follows that it is dependent on the goodwill of the volunteers to carry out the different activities including such routine matters as maintenance.

Another area of good practice that can be shared concerns the excellent relationship that the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust has maintained with the army since they purchased the site. The relationship with the Royal Engineers has been particularly close and this Corps, which has its regimental home at Chatham at its Royal School of Military Engineering, has helped the Trust to conserve various parts of the site. This has given the Trust access to assistance with expertise, equipment and labour that is important to secure the future of the monument.



There are also examples of good practice that can be found in other Medway fortifications. The Royal Dockyard itself is a source of good practice for the multifunctional use of a site. Although a major tourist attraction, the Dockyard maintains a number of alternative uses including commercial businesses that operate out of some of the historic buildings and private housing, again in some of the historic buildings.

Fort Horsted, located to the south of Chatham, is a late 19th century fort built to defend the Chatham garrison from land attack. The fort fell into disrepair, particularly following a fire in the 1970s. It was subsequently sold and has now been converted into a successful small business park with 6 business units, a conference centre and a reception area.

Fort Clarence, also to the south of Chatham, is another early 19th century fort that has been successfully converted into private apartments and which might act as a good example of alternative re-use.

### ***Dover Western Heights***

The Western Heights situation is so complex and demanding that it is difficult to identify good practice that can be shared – at this site we are rather in the position of wanting to learn from other partners good practices. Like Fort Amherst, however, the complex does demonstrate that volunteer organisations, in this case the Western Heights Preservation Society, can play a key role in helping to maintain and promote fortified sites. The volunteers bring a range of experience and great enthusiasm and also act as a key link with the local community that can sometimes be lost when sites are managed by purely professional stakeholders. Some aspects of the Western Heights have also been fully conserved and are in good condition, such as the Grand Shaft staircase and these can be shown to the partners.

Elsewhere in Dover, however, there are examples of how military sites can be sympathetically redeveloped. To the east of Dover a fort was constructed in the later 19th century to protect the town from land attack. This fort, Fort Burgoyne, together with a much later barracks, Connaught Barracks, has now been released by the military and has been proposed for redevelopment. To try to ensure that a suitable use is found for the fort and barracks, and to ensure that the various issues are fully anticipated by the developer, the site has been given to the Homes and Communities Agency, a state body, to prepare it for sale. As part of this work the Agency has begun to carry out essential conservation works and will also produce all the various surveys and studies, including heritage studies, which will be needed by the developer. A Conservation Management Plan for Fort Burgoyne already exists. By this means, the Agency can sell the developer a viable, properly structured scheme, with an agreed vision and well understood constraints, that are shared by all stakeholders including the planning authority and English Heritage.

### ***Sheerness Defences***

As with the Western Heights and Sheerness, the main examples of good practice at Sheerness are the strong role played by the local community. There are a number of diverse heritage groups who have an interest in the site. This has potential for use in securing conservation outcomes for the site.

### **Governance models**

## ***Fort Amherst***

One aspect of governance that could usefully be explained to the AT FORT partners concerns a different trust to the FAHT. The Lower Lines Heritage Park is located to the north of Fort Amherst closer to the Medway river but part of the same defence scheme known as the Chatham Lines. The land was previously owned by MOD and then Mid-Kent College who as part of the construction of a new college. The adjacent historic fortifications were investigated, conserved and opened to the public as a community park. A trust (the Lower Lines Trust) was endowed with a sum to manage and maintain the park and the fortifications. This contrasts with the situation at Fort Amherst where the FAHT has to find the resources for the core restoration in addition to the basic maintenance, a much more difficult situation and it may be a role that some community groups, charities or trusts are more suited to.

## **4 Enabling conditions for the re-use of sites**

The term 'enabling condition' as used in this project does not mean quite the same as generally used in the UK. In the UK 'enabling development' would normally mean development that was permitted to provide funds for other aspects of the scheme e.g. where a certain amount of housing construction was permitted so that the developer could afford to carry out conservation works. In this project, however, 'enabling conditions' are those conditions that must be met before a development is allowed e.g. heritage conservation, biodiversity, accessibility etc. If the development is to be 'enabled', these conditions must be met.

### ***4.1 Protected heritage status***

All the sites in the AT FORT project will have to balance the need for a sustainable re-use of the monument against the heritage and conservation needs of the site. This is certainly the case in the UK.

## ***Fort Amherst***

Fort Amherst is a scheduled monument. This means it is protected under UK law and that it is a criminal offence to destroy or damage the monument, to carry out without consent any "works" which would demolish, damage, remove, repair, add to or alter it, to use a metal detector without consent or to remove any historic or archaeological object found with a metal detector from the site. The owners (Fort Amherst Heritage Trust) must therefore work very closely with English Heritage when preparing any conservation works or new activities. As both the Trust and English Heritage have the conservation needs of the Fort at heart this does not in practice cause any real difficulties and has not greatly limited the activities the Trust want to carry out. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the English Government's advice on development and the historic environment, including provisions for the protection of scheduled monuments and their settings.

## ***Dover Western Heights***

Dover Western Heights is a scheduled monument and similar restrictions apply as for Fort Amherst. This is made particularly difficult because of the multiple ownership of the site (see section 5).

## ***Sheerness Defences***

At Sheerness there is a range of heritage conservation issues that make re-use of the site problematical. The first is that the heritage issues are themselves not fully understood. There has not yet been a completely comprehensive survey of the Sheerness defences and this is needed to get a better understanding of the form, function, condition and needs of the remains. Even those parts that have statutory protection as scheduled monuments need re-assessing. This is seen as a necessary first step for sustainable re-use and without this understanding it is virtually impossible to make meaningful plans.

### **4.2 Access**

All the sites considered in this report are huge complexes of fortifications and as such are key elements in the landscape of the areas in which they lie. It is impossible, and undesirable, to completely restrict access to them and indeed the public have a legal right of access to many parts of the monuments in the form of Public Rights of Way. This need to provide access can conflict with the sustainable re-use of the sites as it can present issues of privacy, health and safety and, potentially, crime.

### ***Fort Amherst***

The conservation needs of the fort must always be balanced against a desire to open up greater access. An example of the need to balance conservation needs with those of access is the example of the bridge created across the defensive ditch as noted previously (section 3.2).

The UK has quite strict requirements for disabled access to both public and private buildings. Heritage sites are to a large extent exempt from these requirements but owners and managers are still encouraged to open up sites as much as possible. As with many forts, Fort Amherst is a difficult site to access. The open ground in the Fort is accessible to wheelchairs although much of the ground is still uneven. The internal spaces of the fort, however, are largely inaccessible to wheelchairs.

### ***Dover Western Heights***

The Western Heights are crossed by a number of protected footpaths, in particular a national trail 'The North Downs Way'. Designated Public Rights of Way are protected by law in the UK and although it is possible to amend them somewhat these need to be taken into account when preparing any redevelopment plans. Other areas of the site are Open Access land which means that the general public have the right to roam and not just pass through (the only rights allowed under the Public Rights of Way legislation). There are also a number of established heritage and nature conservation trails within the Western Heights and these would need to be at least taken into consideration if changes within the monument are proposed.

The complex also faces the same challenges for disabled access as Fort Amherst. Dover Western Heights is a particularly difficult site to access due to the severe terrain, mixed ownership, lack of economic development and relatively poor condition of the fortifications. Part of the site around St Martin's Battery has been developed with an improved footpath to help more people access it but most of the complex, including the Drop Redoubt and Grand Shaft, is completely inaccessible to wheelchairs.

Finally, traffic generation and car parking within the Western Heights are likely to be issues for any proposed redevelopment. Connections to the town are at present poor and open space for parking is lacking. The infrastructure development needed to address these issues could potentially have a major and detrimental impact on the monument.

### **4.3 Wildlife**

Fortified sites can offer unique environments within which a range of flora and fauna can thrive. The scale of the monuments considered in this report make these issues a commonly recurring theme that must be considered when developing sustainable re-use scenarios.

#### **Fort Amherst**

The Fort is immediately adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). This is a local designation that does not impose any legal restrictions on activity although landowners are encouraged to take proper account of the needs of biodiversity when managing the land and to obtain advice on nature conservation from appropriately qualified experts. Where the landowner is a public body this is regarded as a public duty. Legally protected species of wildlife might be found at the fort.

There are bats living in the fort that are protected and must be taken account of. Fortunately a 2012 survey concluded that the bats are not hibernating within the fort. This means that the issue should not affect operations at the fort too much although regular surveys will be needed to make sure that bats do not need to be given a higher priority.

#### **Dover Western Heights**

The Western Heights are also locally important for nature conservation reasons. With the exception of an area towards the eastern end of the complex, all the outlying defences of the Western Heights fall within at least one of two local nature conservation designations Local Wildlife Sites or Local Nature Reserves. These are local designations that do not impose any legal restrictions on activity although landowners are encouraged to take proper account of the needs of biodiversity when managing the land and to obtain advice on nature conservation from appropriately qualified experts. Where the landowner is a public body this is regarded as a public duty.

In places within the Western Heights protected bat species have also been recorded. This limits how often the Drop Redoubt can be opened to the public, in particular during the hibernation period.

#### **Sheerness Defences**

Sheerness is located in the Thames Estuary which is one of the most sensitive areas in the UK for birds. The area also contains rare saline lagoons, in the form of the defensive canal at Queenborough Lines and the boating lake at Barton's Point Country Park.

Sheerness is also home to the UK's largest and most well-known colony of yellow-tailed scorpions that live in and around the docks as well as a rare type of fly that lives in the saline lagoon.



#### **4.4 Landscape**

As mentioned previously, the fortifications considered in this report are of such a scale that they form very imposing elements in the local landscape. Any changes and alterations that are planned must therefore be considered in terms of their impact on the wider landscape.

##### **Fort Amherst**

The defences of the Royal Dockyard at Chatham, including Fort Amherst, dominate the eastern side of the town. The field of fire of the defences has largely been kept clear as an area of open landscape. This limits development to the east of the complex which may have an impact on the ability of owners and planners to develop sustainable re-use projects.

##### **Dover Western Heights**

The Western Heights complex is very visually imposing, dominating the western side of the port of Dover. It is so imposing that the best views are in fact from Dover Castle which sits on the eastern side of Dover. Inappropriate redevelopment of the site could damage views from the Castle area and thus be to the detriment of the whole town.

The Western Heights complex also lies immediately adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – a national landscape designation. Although the fortifications themselves are not within the AONB (although some important Second World War sites are) developers have to take account of the proximity of the AONB when framing their proposals to ensure that the quality of the AONB is not impacted upon.

#### **4.5 Major Infrastructure**

##### **Sheerness Defences**

Sheerness is one of the poorest areas of the south-east of England and proposals for regeneration are normally to be welcomed. This creates a tension between the needs of the heritage and the economic needs of the area. This has led to a large amount of unsuitable and unsympathetic development in the past and the threat remains.

The north coast of Kent has also been identified as a possible site for a new hub airport. Although this would not impact on Sheerness directly any airport within a few kilometres would inevitably impact considerably on the setting of the historic fortifications.

#### **4.6 Local factors**

##### **Sheerness Defences**

An unusual problem for redevelopment projects at Sheerness is presented by the wreck of the SS Montgomery. This was a cargo ship that ran aground north of Sheerness in 1944. It contains more than 1,400 tonnes of explosive which is still likely to be highly unstable. The wreck thus limits activities in the area, particularly those associated with land reclamation, and its location must be accounted for by all plans associated with the port.

## 5 Redevelopment models for multifunctional use of sites

### 5.1 Outline of description of redevelopment models: Fort Amherst

Although there are a number of different owners of the land surrounding Fort Amherst (including some fortified sites), the main fort itself is owned by the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust, who (under a slightly different name) purchased the Fort from the Ministry of Defence in 1980. The Trust is a charitable organisation dedicated to the conservation of the Fort and making it accessible to the public. Today, although a range of different activities are carried out at the fort, these are all carried out by or through the Trust.

General access to the grounds of the fort is free of charge and available 7 days per week. Access to the inside of the fort i.e. its tunnel complex is, however, restricted to 2 tours per day although on busy days and for special events tours can be arranged specially. A charge is made for the tours.

There is also a café and visitor centre that provides refreshments and site interpretation for visitors.

The Fort receives c. 20,000 visitors per year. However, this is only a small fraction of the number of visitors who visit the naval dockyard at Chatham which is located only a few hundred metres away. The dockyard, and the fort built to defend it, are integral to one another and yet it has proved very difficult for the fort to take advantage of co-location with one of Kent's most visited attractions (c. 150,000 visitors per year). Tapping into this potential visitor resource is a particular goal for the Trust.

The activities that the Trust provides include a range of promotion and interpretation activities, such as guided tours and open days, but also a range of activities designed to generate income for the Fort. These include:

- Use as a venue for weddings and other hospitality
- Use of the site as a film location
- Hire of the venue for events (music events, children's parties, theatre etc)
- Hire of the fort for paranormal investigations and events (the fort is said to be haunted)

Only a certain proportion of the site is currently available for such activities although much more of the fort can be accessed for guided tours and by appointment for military specialists. The proportion that can be accessed by the public is gradually increasing, as the Trust carry out considerable restoration work and site clearance. Maintenance of the conserved parts, including grounds maintenance such as grass cutting and vegetation control remains a challenge.

The day to day conservation of the fort is almost entirely carried out by the Trust and its volunteers. The Trust has low financial resources and so most of the work is limited to site clearance and maintenance. When a particular feature within the fort needs conservation e.g. a casemate or guardhouse, the Trust attempts to find external funding.

## **5.2 Outline of description of redevelopment models: Dover Western Heights**

The Dover Western Heights is the largest complex of fortifications in the UK which would present a challenge in any situation. Unfortunately, the complex is also in mixed ownership and includes:

- an immigration removal centre (formerly a prison) in the Citadel
- private housing in part originally created for the prison officers
- a number of private businesses
- commercial landowners holding land with an aspiration for its development
- English Heritage land held in order to conserve and promote heritage
- Dover Town Council-owned land
- Dover District Council-owned land

A number of parts of the site are at least occasionally open to the public:

- The Drop Redoubt is open to the public several times a year. Interpretation and promotion of the site is provided by the Western Heights Preservation Society, a volunteer group established in 2000. The group's aims are "promoting and publicising the Western Heights. Clearing, tidying and protecting the built heritage. Collecting and spreading information about the Heights. Working towards improving public access to parts of the site that are currently inaccessible."
- The Grand Shaft, a triple helix staircase that connects the Heights to the port, is open to visitors several times per year
- There is open public access to parts of the site including to the ditches of Drop Redoubt and the Citadel Battery, St Martin's Battery, the Drop Battery and the eastern end of the Battery on the North Lines

The result of this mixed ownership is that a wide range of activities are currently carried out in the Western Heights but these have not evolved according to any overall plan or with the conservation of the fortifications in mind. Some of the activities are inappropriate to a major historic monument and have been developed with little specific regard to the conservation needs (although the fact that the complex is now a scheduled monument means that all works require scheduled monument consent from English Heritage before they can take place). In addition, the mixed ownership has made it very difficult to develop a coherent overall vision for the site or prepare the conservation or management plans that are needed to shape the conservation, management and development of the site in the future.

Without the investment that some appropriate commercial re-development of parts of the site or its setting might bring it is difficult to see how the conservation needs of the complex can be met. The estimated costs for initial conservation are very large and certainly beyond the means of any of the current landowners. Alternative sources of funding such as the lottery will need to be explored and made use of. Unfortunately, redevelopment proposals put forward for permission have been inappropriate. One current proposal, though highly controversial, illustrates the dilemma. Nominally it would help to conserve key elements of the historic fortifications but it would also require housing construction within the Western Heights (and adjacent to an important Second World War landscape to the west). Such development may not be compatible with protection of the significance of the historic fortifications and as such may be contrary to Government advice for scheduled monuments and local planning policies by Dover District Council..

The general approach over the last few years has been to try to map the surviving historic elements at the Western Heights and assess their significance. This then allows a coherent vision and a conservation framework to be developed. To support this a Conservation Document was developed in 2010. The report was intended to give an overview of the Dover Western Heights, and specifically to set a clear, conservation-based agenda for its future management - one which was not simply about responding to urgent issues, but rather about establishing a sense of purpose and identity for the Western Heights as part of a regenerated Dover. Subsequent to this report a Built Heritage Conservation Framework was also funded by English Heritage for the Western Heights that developed and significantly refined the first document. It is hoped that these two documents will now input into an overall Masterplan for the Western Heights that will establish a structure for decision-making on how best to conserve the fortifications including any role for future development proposals.

### ***5.3 Outline of description of redevelopment models: Sheerness Defences***

The defences of Sheerness are distributed widely across the town of Sheerness and as a result they are in mixed ownership and subject to mixed use.

The outermost defences are the Queenborough Lines that run north-east to south-west across the north west corner of the Isle of Sheppey. The lines consist of a 25m-wide water-filled ditch and a 3m-high bank that stretch c. 3.8km. The lines are owned by Swale Borough Council and are managed as a public amenity space. A footpath runs along the top of the bank and this is managed by Kent County Council as part of KCC's Public Rights of Way network. The northern point of the lines is the site of a former fort, Barton's Point Fort, which is now a commercial leisure park containing caravans and a boating lake.

Behind the Queenborough Lines lie the Sheerness Outer Lines. These are owned by a number of different owners including a large supermarket that is located on the Ravelin Wall. Sheppey College owns a site within the Outer Lines which has impacted significantly on the Ravelin Battery site. Other parts of the lines are owned by other commercial businesses. A particular issue could be the future of a steel works in which buried parts of the fortifications still survive.

The majority of the defensive line that faces the sea (the 'Indented Lines') are owned by Peel Ports and Swale Borough Council control the adjacent sea wall. There is limited public access to the historic fortifications.

The core of the defences at Sheerness is the fort that dominated the former Royal Dockyard, Garrison Point Fort. This is owned by Peel Ports, the main operator of Sheerness Port. Within the area, however, several sub-contractors operate. Some of these are commercial organisations but at least one is a community project dedicated to boat restoration. One of the key naval structures is at present completely unused. The Boat Store is a Listed Building and the oldest multi-storey iron framed building in the world. It has proved difficult to find a sustainable re-use for the building and so at present it is unused.

Due in part to the mixed ownership in Sheerness public access to the fortifications is patchy. Much of the Queenborough Lines are publicly accessible as are parts of the Indented Lines. The Ravelin Wall at Tesco's is on private land but is generally publicly accessible and parts of the Outer Lines are at least publicly visible. Both Garrison



Point Fort and Barton's Point Fort are private, however, and are only opened on special occasions. Elsewhere in the dockyard access is rare and generally for specialist purposes.

It could not be said that the use of the Sheerness defences has reached a level of stability. A recent planning application to demolish the Working Mast House (a grade II\* listed building) was approved in principle in order to allow a major development (although the development was subsequently abandoned). In addition, Peel Ports might eventually wish to reclaim land from the sea north of the port. This might actually help to move the centre of port operations away from the historic site but it would still be a dramatic change to the port. These and other proposals at the fort strongly suggest that there is still some way to go if the defences of Sheerness are to be secured for future generations. There is as yet no overall master plan or conservation plan for the defences although there has been some past survey of the historic remains by English Heritage.

## **6 Governance models**

### ***6.1 Fort Amherst governance model***

Fort Amherst is owned and managed by the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust (FAHT). The FAHT is a charitable, non-profit making organisation and as such it has to act in accordance with the rules of the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Relationships between the Trust and other organisations are managed according to need. Issues relating to the conservation needs of the fort are discussed with the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments covering the Medway area. Due to the status of Fort Amherst as a Scheduled Monument English Heritage must give written permission in the form of Scheduled Monument Consent for any works at the fort.

Fort Amherst is located within the town of Chatham which is administered by Medway Council. When the FAHT need to discuss issues with Medway Council they do so by bilateral meetings although the Chair of the FAHT also meets regularly with the Assistant Director of Development at Medway Council.

There is another aspect of governance that the AT FORT partners should be aware of. Chatham Dockyard and its surrounding defences, including Fort Amherst, have already been added to the UK government's tentative list for World Heritage Site (WHS) status and within 10 years could be recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. This is an aspiration that is supported by all the Kent stakeholders but it does have some consequences of note. We do not know what impact a successful WHS application may have on the potential re-use of the component fortifications. It is to be hoped that a successful application will make it easier to find the resources needed to develop sustainable solutions but there is also the risk that private developers may be scared away by the WHS status. Similarly, we do not know what impact a failed WHS application would have. Would the stakeholders become less likely to protect the historic significance of the site perhaps looking instead to explore the regeneration benefits of development.?

The WHS application has drawn attention to the potential conflict between the need for economic growth in Chatham and the conservation needs of the defences. Some of the developments around the fortifications have not been particularly sympathetic

to the conservation of the fortifications and their setting and this issue risks undermining the WHS aspiration.

To co-ordinate the World Heritage Site application process, a Steering Group has been developed that carries out strategic consideration of the historic defences at Chatham whilst leaving day to day decision taking as the responsibility of the site owners. It is possible that in future this Group might take on a role that could help integrate actions at Fort Amherst into the defence, tourism and economic landscape of Medway.

The Royal Dockyard has recently submitted a large application for Heritage Lottery Fund money. If the application is successful it could make the dockyard a hub for tourism in Medway as it relates to its military heritage and the WHS aspiration. This would certainly need a working group to be formed that would include representatives of the fort and might help to integrate the tourism activities of the Dockyard and the fort more effectively.

### **6.2 Dover Western Heights governance model**

There is no governance model for the Western Heights as such. There are a large number of landowners who generally pursue different objectives with little co-ordination. It is this that has prevented the development of an agreed Conservation Management Plan for the site as this would need all of the owners to agree on an action plan.

One possible development that might help this situation would be for the Prince of Wales Foundation to act as a mediator. This is a foundation which examines regeneration and architecture and has a track record of planning by design to build public consensus for change.

### **6.3 Sheerness Defences governance model**

There is no real governance model at Sheerness due to the large number of landowners and operators. The main operator, Peel Ports, discusses issues with relevant local authorities and English Heritage when the need arises.

## **7 Report on the regional stakeholder group meeting**

The Kent stakeholders met on the 6<sup>th</sup> July in Chatham to discuss the draft self-analysis report. The meeting included representatives of Medway Council, Kent County Council and English Heritage, the main organisations managing Kent's fortifications heritage in the county and the three organisations collaborating on the AT FORT project on behalf of the UK.

The group discussed the draft self-analysis report and reviewed the situation at the three main complexes of fortifications that the project is considering in Kent, Fort Amherst, the Dover Western Heights and the defences of Sheerness. The discussion was mostly focused on governance matters as all three complexes face great challenges in these areas. The group clarified those matters that the AT FORT project can teach the UK partners and discussed the areas where the UK may be able to contribute. It is believed that these will be primarily in the areas of community engagement and volunteering.

The group also discussed some consultancy work that we hope to carry out, probably at the Dover Western Heights, which will address some of the governance weaknesses in the arrangements at the complex. This work will be carried out in 2013.

## 8 References

Key references for the three complexes of fortifications are:

### ***Fort Amherst***

For a good introduction to Fort Amherst and the work of the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust please see the Trust's website <http://www.fortamherst.com/>

There has never been a fully-detailed archaeological survey of Fort Amherst. The best general history of the site and the defences of Chatham Dockyard is an unpublished report by Peter Kendall of English Heritage "Defending the Dockyard: the story of the Chatham Lines" (2005). This can be made available with the permission of the author and publication of an English Heritage book is anticipated in late 2012.

A Great Lines Heritage Park Master Plan has been prepared for the wider area. This consists of a Design Preparation Report, Landscape Design Statement, Historical Landscape Assessment, Ecological Enhancements Report and an Archaeological Assessment. These documents can all be found online at:

<http://www.chathamworldheritage.org.uk/visiting/great-lines-heritage-park>

Bailey Partnership (2008) 'Fort Amherst Condition and Topographical Survey Report'

### ***Dover Western Heights***

Dover Western Heights: Conservation Management Report Prepared for Kent County Council, Dover District Council, English Heritage & Dover Pride  
May 2010

Built Heritage Conservation Framework for Dover Western Heights :  
A Report to Dover District Council, English Heritage and Kent County Council  
Liv Gibbs February 2012

A series of detailed survey reports for the Western Heights was prepared by English Heritage between 2000 and 2006. This can be made available on request

### ***Sheerness Defences***

Pattison P. and Probert S. (2001) 'The Queenborough Lines, Sheerness, Medway, Kent: a later 19<sup>th</sup> century defence line'. English Heritage.

Pattison P. (2001) 'Barton's Point, Sheerness: a 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century coast artillery battery and Second World War Training School of Naval Anti-Aircraft Gunnery'. English Heritage.

RCHME (1995) 'Sheerness, the Dockyard, Defences and Blue Town'