

2018: Proposal to Develop UK Thurleigh Airfield into Planned Community Unveiled

It has come to our attention that a development is being planned for the Thurleigh Airfield, which may impact the future of the 306th Bombardment Group Museum in Thurleigh, England. In June 2016, St. Modwen, the UK 's leading regeneration specialist and MSV Group, joint landowners of the airfield, submitted the Thurleigh Airfield Vision to the Bedford Borough Council a proposal for a new settlement of 5,250 homes, which could deliver a minimum of 2,500 homes within the emerging Local Plan period 2019 to 2035.

The 306th Bombardment Group Museum in Thurleigh, was opened on July 27, 2002, by proprietor/curator Ralph Franklin. Dr. Jonathan Palmer of Bedford Autodrome, generously donated use of the building that houses the museum. In what was once a small arms ammunition storage building, and one of the few remaining original airfield buildings built during World War II, the museum is situated on the airfield, and displays a large collection of artifacts assembled to re-create the activities and atmosphere of the airfield and surrounding area during the war years. Many of those artifacts were donated by our own 306th vets.

While this development proposal moves forward, the 306th BGHA Board of Directors will continue to liaison with our contacts and interests in the UK while monitoring the progress of the proposal. We endeavor to represent the rich history, connection, and interest our veterans, families, and friends of the 306th BG have with the museum and the surrounding Thurleigh community. Unfortunately, due to ill health of museum proprietor Ralph Franklin, the museum will remain closed until further notice.

We will continue to provide relevant updates on our website, Facebook page, in the Echoes newsletter, and via the membership e-mail. Please feel free to contact Bill Feeser, 306th BGHA President if you have any questions or concerns. Bill's contact information is on our Link to Leadership Page. To see a summary of the Thurleigh Airfield Vision, as well as a copy of the New Settlement Proposal Summary Document and supporting documents, go to the following link:

<http://www.thurleighairfieldbusinesspark.co.uk/downloads/thurleigh-airfield-summary.pdf>

The Local Plan process is anticipated to take several years to complete; it is estimated the plan will not be finalized until sometime in 2019. Following that process, a planning application for the development would be submitted. Further details are available at the following website:

<http://www.thurleighairfieldbusinesspark.co.uk/new-settlement.htm>

Readers please note: Our US Association (i.e., 306th BGHA) does not own or control any aspect of the UK museum. We hope our voice, on behalf of our veteran heroes, is heard. It is our goal to be able to facilitate the long-term preservation of the museum's collection and the monument to the 306th that stands outside the building.