

Heritage Proof of Evidence – Summary

Land to the South of Warren Lane, North of Weston Road, Long Ashton

PINS Ref: APP/D0121/W/23/3315584

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- 1.1 My name is Catherine Lodge. I am the Principal Archaeologist for North Somerset Council, a post I have held since October 2016. I hold a BSc Honours degree in Archaeology and Landscape Studies and am an Affiliate member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).
- 1.2 The Heritage Proof of Evidence provides my evidence and assessment with regard to potential impacts on the nationally important Scheduled Monument of ‘Roman small town, part of an associated field system and earlier Iron Age settlement remains at Gatcombe Court’, hereafter referred to as Gatcombe Roman site, within which the appeal site is located.
- 1.4 My evidence specifically relates to the heritage matters set out in Reason for Refusal 2.
- 1.5 My evidence also addresses Historic England’s responses to the original consultation as part of the application process, and their written representation for this appeal.
- 1.6 It is agreed between the parties that the level of harm arising from the appeal scheme would be less than substantial in within the terms of the NPPF, however it is not agreed at which end of the scale this harm would be.
- 1.7 The appellant states harm arising from the proposed development would be at the lower end of less than substantial, however both Historic England and I have concluded this harm would be at the upper end.

Description and significance

- 1.8 The heritage significance of the Scheduled Monument of Gatcombe Roman site is principally derived from it comprising a small Roman urbanised settlement with associated field systems, and evidence of earlier Iron Age occupation.

- 1.9 The archaeological remains within the appeal site, identified through geophysical survey and evaluation undertaken in 2012 and 2013 respectively, form part of the archaeological interest and evidential value of the Scheduled Monument of Gatcombe Roman site, which contributes to its significance.
- 1.10 This significance was acknowledged by English Heritage (now Historic England) and the Secretary of State, under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 when the Scheduling extent was revised to include the appeal site and the adjacent field in 2014.
- 1.11 The appeal site and the other scheduled fields form part of the setting of the walled Roman settlement and contribute to the experience of the monument within its wider rural landscape.
- 1.12 The rural character of the appeal site, except for later Medieval and Post-medieval field boundaries, has changed little from the original character of the monument, thus forming part of its historical and aesthetic significance.
- 1.13 DCMS Policy on Scheduled Monuments states that ‘some development in a Scheduled Monument is possible under certain circumstances. Those circumstances are allowed where a proposed development is shown to cause no harm to the significance of the Scheduled Monument. If there is less than substantial harm caused by the development the public benefits of the proposals will then be weighed against that harm. However, the purpose of scheduling is to preserve monuments in the state they are in the time of scheduling. The Secretary of State therefore will not grant consent for development that is contrary to these policies’.

Impact on significance

- 1.14 The removal of archaeological remains within the appeal site would cause harm to the significance of the Scheduled Monument of Gatcombe Roman site.
- 1.15 The appellant has proposed that excavation of the archaeological remains within the appeal site would contribute to the public benefits of the scheme, however the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.
- 1.16 The proposed development would extend the urban edge of Long Ashton which would negatively impact on the setting of the Scheduled Monument through change to its rural character. This would result in loss of significance to the monument’s setting and impact the way in which it is experienced.

Historic England's position

1.17 In both Historic England's original consultation response to the application and consultation response to this appeal they have stated that the 'proposals will harm the significance of this scheduled monument, a heritage asset of the highest importance, [...] and object to the application on heritage grounds'. They continue, 'given the importance of this asset the harm entailed should only be accepted if you are satisfied that there is clear and convincing justification that the public benefits decisively outweigh the harm'.

Conclusion

1.18 The proposed development would result in less than substantial harm, at the upper end, within the terms of the NPPF to the Scheduled Monument of Gatcombe Roman site.

1.19 The harm would arise from loss of archaeological remains which form part of the significance of the Scheduled Monument and through inappropriate change to the setting of the Scheduled Monument.

1.20 The appellant has not provided clear and convincing justification for the loss of these nationally important archaeological remains.

1.21 Great weight should be given to the conservation of this highly designated heritage asset within the terms of NPPF and DCMS Policy on Scheduled Monuments.

1.22 I therefore respectfully invite the Inspector to dismiss the appeal.