



Historic England

SOUTH WEST OFFICE

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22 July 2016

Dear Mr Massey

Pre-application Advice

DEVELOPMENT OF BRIDGEMAN'S FIELD, LONG ASHTON

Following on from our meeting of the 10th June and having now reviewed the documentation provided I am writing to provide a response to your development proposals.

Bridgeman's Field was added to the scheduled monument of *Roman Settlement, part of an associated field system and earlier Iron Age settlement remains at Gatcombe Farm* (National List Entry Number 1011978) in 2014. The results of archaeological investigations in this area indicated that there was archaeology surviving which has the potential to tell us more about the development of Gatcombe and how the land was managed.

I will not revisit the debate about the significance of the archaeology and how and why



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it was scheduled. The field is now part of the scheduled monument and its archaeology has been recognised as nationally significant. This is partly for the survival of industrial activity and partly for its association with the walled Roman town and its landscape. The group value of the archaeology is significant.

Within the field there are areas of greater archaeological activity and significance and areas of less activity and significance. The western half of the field contains a large area demarcated by a ditch which continues into the adjoining fields and features within the pre-2014 scheduled area. The ditch that defines this area has a strong response in the geophysical surveys and seems to consist of two areas, a smaller area to the north and a larger area to the south. Associated with these ditches is evidence of ironworking and smelting. Although no furnaces/kilns were identified during the evaluation these would have been in close proximity to the evidence found. Some of the geophysical responses were also potentially from iron working activities. The majority of the material culture evidence comes from this half of the field.

The eastern half of the field had fewer features most of which are undated and were shallower. Only one ditch contained some Roman pottery.

The location of this occupation evidence in this valley appears to relate to the topography. At this location there is a high point in the valley floor and the watercourses flow away from this high point creating a dry crossing across the valley. The landscape context of the site is still evident being on the lower south facing slope of the valley edge, close to a water source. The land is fertile and there are resources close by of timber and iron ore.

The settlement sits within an agricultural landscape of mixed farming practices, as was the case in the Roman Period. The field boundaries and roadways have been altered, but the rural character of the landscape has not. Although the railway cuts through this landscape it is mainly hidden from view, as it sits within a deep cutting.

Long Ashton has now expanded westwards ending at Warren Lane, which is marked on the early mapping (e.g. 1842 Tithe Map). The fields between Gatcombe and Warren Lane did have surviving earthworks of field systems, some of which appear to be Roman. They were added to the schedule in 1995 after a survey in 1993 identified them as a rare survival associated with a known settlement. Unfortunately many of these earthworks have now been levelled through ploughing. Due to Class Consent 1 (The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994) if land was ploughed at the time of scheduling then ploughing could continue.

The proposal is for a small housing development within Bridgman's Field. Any development of this kind will remove the archaeology from these fields causing



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substantial harm to that area of the monument. However in the context of the whole monument it would be harm, but not substantial harm.

As I indicated at the meeting the small block of housing within the western half of the site is not acceptable. This is because it intrudes into the space defined by the large ditch, breaking the connection between the different elements.

The wider setting of the monument is the rural landscape it sits within, currently ending at Warren Lane. The removal of these fields from the rural landscape and extension of the modern village westwards would reduce the rural context of the settlement. This would cause harm by removing some of the rural character of the monument and bringing the urban edge closer to the settlement. By only developing the eastern half of the site this reduces this harm and would be a continuation of the linear settlement of Long Ashton.

The proposal within the eastern half of the field from the evidence, so far gathered, will not have a major impact on the significance of the monument. If the site is developed then this will require the excavation of the area to record the archaeology prior to its removal. The detail of this would be discussed as part of a planning and scheduled monument consent application.

Works on scheduled monuments are controlled through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and will need to be agreed with the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). The DCMS's Policy Statement on Scheduled Monuments clearly states that for '..works proposed for development related purposes, the Secretary of State has particular regard to the following principles:

- Only in wholly exceptional cases will consent be granted for works that could result in substantial harm to, or loss of, the significance of a Scheduled Monument
- In cases that would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a Scheduled Monument the harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

(Paragraph 20, page 8)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scheduled-monuments-policy-statement>

This follows the same policy guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework: paragraph 132 states that in considering the impact of proposed development on significance great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. Paragraph 134 goes on to state that if the proposals will lead to less than substantial harm this harm should be



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weighed against public benefits.

If we were to receive a planning application for this site we would state that the development would cause harm, which wasn't substantial but was still harm, and that the harm needed to be weighed against the public benefits. Any planning application would also require an assessment of impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings. This is to fulfil the requirement of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in Section 66(1) for the local authority to "have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses"

You would have to show the Local Planning Authority that your development delivers suitable public benefits which outweigh any harm to the Heritage Assets.

If planning is granted then we would expect the entire development site to be excavated and all archaeology to be removed with specific research questions in mind referred back to the South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF). This would include environmental sampling of all suitable deposits and scientific dating on undated features. Any archaeology exposed that was deemed significant and associated with the walled settlement would need to be preserved in situ (e.g. kilns/ furnaces, structures).

Please do contact me again if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Barge
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
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