

Rescue

The British Archaeological Trust

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answerphone.

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Mr B Klemperer
Inspector of Ancient Monuments

21st January 2014

Dear Mr Klemperer

Old Oswestry Hill Fort

I am writing to you on behalf of RESCUE - The British Archaeological Trust to ask for clarification of English Heritage's position regarding the proposed housing allocations around Old Oswestry Hillfort. In August you responded to the SAMDev consultation, objecting to all three sites (OSW002, OSW003 and OSW004) on the grounds of the impact on the setting of the hill fort. Now as we understand the situation, English Heritage has agreed to drop objections to sites OSW003 and 004?

RESCUE maintains its opposition to all three sites, development of which we are certain will have an unacceptably negative impact on the Old Oswestry hillfort, a statutorily protected Scheduled Ancient Monument. English Heritage itself describes it as 'the most hugely impressive Iron Age hillfort on the Welsh Borders' and note that the significance of the setting is the open rural views to and from it, and the views to the Welsh borders. Development of the areas around Old Oswestry Hillfort, would affect the setting of not just that monument but also that of the Scheduled Wat's Dyke, which joins the hillfort at the north and south ends. Other sites likely to suffer from this negative impact on the setting are the designed landscape at Brogyntyn Park (Grade II) to the west of this, with views from the Grade II* listed Hall over the grounds towards the hillfort and the gap between this and The Giant (a hill to the south) through which you see Oldport Farm and thus part of the development.

RESCUE is very concerned that the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted is not NPPF- (National Planning Policy Framework) compliant, as there is no HER information included. Whilst it does adequately address the immediately visible above ground aesthetic matters that are important in setting, the below-ground potential and contextual data that is essential is absent and therefore the Heritage Impact Assessment is inadequate, and further consideration - by a properly qualified archaeological organisation or individual is required. RESCUE is concerned that English Heritage should have apparently offered a revised opinion, in the continued absence of robust evidence or an assessment that comes up to the national standard conforming with the NPPF.

The response from English Heritage to the original consultation in August strongly defended the hillfort on a number of grounds and we sincerely hope that you maintain this position. RESCUE believes that the current proposals conflict with the protection afforded to the monument by the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Monuments Act, and contravene the UK's commitments to the protection of the historic environment set out within the Valletta Convention (1992). As the curator of our heritage it is critical that English Heritage remains supportive in the defence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments against inappropriate or ill-considered development. Please could you provide some information regarding English Heritage's current advice relating to this site and these proposals, and if indeed the position has changed from your initial responses, and explanation as to why this might be?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Diana Friendship-Taylor
Chair,
RESCUE: The British Archaeological Trust

Copies to: Simon Thurley, Chief Executive, English Heritage
Carol Pyrah, Director of Planning and Conservation, English Heritage
Chris Schofield, Mayor, Oswestry Town Council
Keith Barrow, Leader, Shropshire County Council

RESCUE - The British Archaeological Trust is a non-political organisation dedicated to supporting archaeology and archaeologists in Britain and abroad. We do not receive any state support and are entirely dependent on the contributions of our members to support our work. Copies of our letters will be posted on our website.