

TUESDAY, 05 MARCH 2024

FAO William Kelly
LCC Archaeology- Historical and Natural Environment Team

Dear William,

RE: Land At Burbage Fields Farm Bullfurlong Lane Burbage Leicestershire

Application 24/00083/HYB

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd, part of the RSK Group of companies, has been provided with a copy of LCC archaeological comments in respect of application reference 24/00083/HYB ('Land at Burbage Fields Farm, Bullfurlong Lane, Burbage, Leicestershire').

Headland's archaeology and heritage consultancy team has been involved with this site for a number of years, initially as RSK Environment Ltd prior to our acquisition of Headland. We have been working with the applicant to develop an understanding of the archaeological risk and constraints to development through iterative phases of desk study, walkover survey, geophysical survey and trial trenching since 2019.

I have taken the opportunity to respond to the points raised in your comments and hope that this can form the basis of further discussion on the scope and timing of future archaeological works at the site. I note that you have not received a copy of the full geophysical survey report- a copy will be issued which will also help to give context to the comments below.

Pre-Determination Fieldwalking

At present the application site is a dairy farm which is under pasture and is used for grazing cattle. It has not been ploughed for many years and is needed for continued grazing in this and coming years. Fieldwalking of the current pasture would be unproductive. In order for it to be useful for archaeological purposes the land would need to be ploughed to facilitate the collection of artefacts, which would be highly detrimental to the condition of the land, functioning of the farm and welfare of its livestock. While we acknowledge the potential that this survey technique has for the identification of artefacts in the ploughsoil, we feel it would be inappropriate for this to be undertaken at risk prior to determination of the application.

Pre-Determination Trial Trenching

An earlier iteration of the desk-based assessment and a walkover survey was carried out in 2019. In 2021 an outline application for the 'Phase 2' site (referred to as Field K in the DBA) was brought forward, and as part of that application the full site was the subject of a geophysical magnetometer survey covering Field K and all remaining fields (A-J) across the main site.

The ground conditions at the time of the geophysical survey were reported by the surveyors as good, leading to a high quality of data acquisition. In reviewing the quality of the data specifically with reference to the visibility of anomalies against the geology, it was noted that the mixed superficial deposits of sand and gravel, alluvium and diamicton generally proved adequate for magnetic prospection, despite producing a variable magnetic background containing a large number of discrete high magnitude anomalies. Possible anomalies of interest generally provided a weak magnetic contrast against this natural background. Several magnetically enhanced anomalies were identified and assessed as providing a reliable indication of the extent of any sub-surface features.

The survey did not identify any anomalies of definite or probable archaeological origin anywhere within the site. Three separate clusters of discrete high magnitude anomalies in Fields D and J were interpreted as 'possible archaeological' in origin, based on their grouping and magnitude of response, although geological or modern causes were considered equally plausible.

In October 2021 a programme of pre-determination trial trenching was carried out in Field K, providing an opportunity to test the findings of the geophysical survey. Fifteen trenches were excavated (3% sample by area). The trenching corroborated the results of the geophysical survey, no features of archaeological interest were encountered. Trace evidence for late medieval or early post medieval ridge and furrow was encountered within the north-eastern half of the field, reflecting the transcribed pattern of ridge and furrow in this location. Former field boundaries which had been recorded through historic map regression and detected as anomalies during the geophysical survey were targeted by the trenching and were identified in their expected position. 'Blank' areas within the geophysical survey data were also tested and confirmed to be archaeologically sterile. No further work was recommended in respect of this field.

On the basis of the established validity of the geophysical survey results and the tested area in Field K, it is our conclusion that the geophysical survey data for the main site can be considered a reliable indication of the archaeological conditions. It is agreed that the site borders an area of known archaeological activity to the north east, however the results of the surveys undertaken do not suggest the presence of significant archaeological remains within the site itself.

While we acknowledge that an area of 'possible archaeology' is recorded in Fields D and J, the isolated and amorphous characteristics of the anomalies do not suggest the presence of

substantial remains which could not be adequately investigated and, if warranted, mitigated as part of a conditioned programme of archaeological work.

We believe the archaeological evidence baseline (from DBA and geophysical survey tested by trenching) is sufficiently robust to demonstrate that there are no archaeological remains present at the site which are so important that they would warrant refusal of planning permission to develop the site for housing. Archaeological trial trenching can readily be secured by condition which would inform tailored mitigation as necessary in the form of preservation in situ, and where not feasible, mitigation excavations.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the geophysical survey report we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further, and if there's any additional information I can provide please don't hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Laurence

Laurence Hayes BA MCIfA IHBC

Associate Director, Archaeology and Built Heritage

Scotland (Head Office)

13 Jane Street
Edinburgh EH6 5HE
t: 0131 467 7705

Yorkshire & North

Units 23–25 & 15 | Acorn Business Centre
Balme Road | Cleckheaton BD19 4EZ
t: 01274 9938019

South & East

Building 68C | Wrest Park | Silsoe
Bedfordshire MK45 4HS
t: 01525 861 578

Midlands & West

Unit 1 | Clearview Court | Twyford Rd
Hereford HR2 6JR
t: 01432 364 901

North West

Fourways House | 57 Hilton Street
Manchester M1 2EJ
t: 0161 236 2757

