

1. Introduction:

- 1.1. Now that work on the Conservation Area Review has been completed HBC will commence work on the strategy and programme for safeguarding and enhancing the heritage assets identified in the heritage consultants report. Comments will be sent separately regarding Bidbury Mead, Bedhampton Road and the Portsmouth Water Company land.
- 1.2. It is also important to take stock regarding the future of those identified heritage assets that were not considered appropriate for inclusion within the new conservation area boundaries on the basis that HBC felt that either they fell below national importance or they were inappropriate for inclusion. Nevertheless, they lie within the setting of the conservation area for which the local planning authority still has a duty to safeguard. Moreover, as heritage assets in themselves, HBC has a duty to safeguard.
- 1.3. The current planning application south of Lower Road (Ref 19/00427), directly and indirectly, affects some of these explored below.
- 1.4. The Bedhampton Heritage Alliance firmly believe that the most appropriate way to safeguard and enhance the setting of the conservation area is to remove the non-native shelterbelt and restore the open rural coastal landscape setting. Nothing below should be interpreted as support for development south of Lower Road.

2. Sunken Lane:

- 2.1. Lower Road was not included but is recognised as having a 'sunken lane' character that forms part of a recognised extended network of such lanes much of which (Kingscroft and Bidbury Lanes) has now been included within the Conservation Area. The considerable extent of this network is unique within the Borough and its presence adds much to the character of the Conservation Area and its setting. This part of the public realm is where the local authorities, HCC and HBC, can have most impact upon the quality of the environment.
- 2.2. Lower Road has a more mixed urban and rural sunken character than the rest of the network. The provision of accesses to development on the north side of the road was felt by HBC to have had a sufficiently detrimental impact on the continuity of the earth bank that, when compared to examples elsewhere outside the Borough, this part of 'the sunken lane' network did not justify its inclusion as an extension to the Conservation Area. So here is an area with a recognised character (albeit not outstanding) where anything that further erodes this environmental feature throughout its length will be detrimental to the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 2.3. In the light of this, should the proposed development south of the road result in road widening or footpath provision affecting the north side, this should be resisted/prevented to safeguard the setting of the Conservation Area. This approach should apply throughout the length of the road and include whatever control might be exercised by HCC

- and HBC over the loss of the bank and increasing the width of driveways.
- 2.4. Lower Road from number 14 westwards has only very limited stretches of footpath at the entrance to Lodge Road. This sharing of the carriageway adds to its character, albeit also increases safety hazards. The raised hedging and narrow verge are part of the 'sunken lane' character on the south side. Given the absence of development here, this also gives the setting of the Conservation Area its rural character. Any loss of hedging and verge will detract from this character.
 - 2.5. The removal of any hedging especially to provide access to any development site, together with sight lines, will erode this amenity. Likewise any footpath introduction along the southern verge outside the site will urbanise the appearance of the road to the detriment of the setting of the Conservation Area.
 - 2.6. The addition of signage and road markings to introduce new traffic management measures will also erode the existing character creating a more urban and cluttered appearance. Road narrowing to provide sightlines for the entrance to the development site will increase safety concerns for pedestrians using the carriageway where no pavements exist and detract from the enjoyment of visitors to the conservation area to and from this direction.

3. Narrow Marsh Lane:

- 3.1. Heritage experts have agreed that Narrow Marsh Lane almost certainly existed in medieval times. One has also strongly suggested (supported by another) that its origins as a significant route to and from Langstone Harbour may have been established in pre-historic times.
- 3.2. One significant contributing factor to its pre-historic origins is a study of the historic landscape where the presence of, and obstacle to, driving routes created by Portsdown Hill dominate communications. This is a relationship that can still be understood today.
- 3.3. Seasonal access between the riches of the harbour and coastal salt marshes and the resources of the Forest of Bere would have been inhibited coming from the west until reaching the eastern end of the ridge and similarly coming from the east this would have presented the last opportunity to move north of the hill.
- 3.2. The meeting point of these east-west and north-south routes would have lain at the northern end of Narrow Marsh Lane and the expert opinion believes that it is likely to have become the very first location where early settlement would have taken place.
- 3.3. Once the flows of the many spring water sources had begun to be controlled by collective actions more permanent development sites could be identified leading to the eventual later foundation of the village core to the east of this meeting point. So this lane could mark one of the earliest places where the origins of the Borough began.
- 3.4. An archaeological study of both the Broadmarsh section in Langstone Harbour and north of the railway bridge may reveal the nature of the construction and maintenance of the lane, the materials used and their likely source, as well as confirm its age and therefore the duration of its

heritage significance. Unlike Mill Lane, which, over time, is likely to have had much reconstruction, Narrow Marsh Lane is unlikely to have had much alteration over time.

4. Post-Medieval existence and status?

- 4.1. Regardless of any pre-historic significance, this route to/from the harbour was severed by the 19th century introduction of the railway.
- 4.2. The relatively flat landform enabled the majority of this construction on the basis of level crossings at the many road intersections. Both Mill Lane and Narrow Marsh Lane were however notably provided with bridge crossings even though they were not in a cutting. This suggests they were considered much more important than other crossings along the route despite that these other places are likely to have had much more surrounding development at that time.

5. Need for research:

- 5.1. More research of historic records and the findings of a detailed archaeological examination of Narrow Marsh Lane may, in combination, reveal more.
- 5.2. The local list can be used to identify significant local archaeological heritage assets. Research could provide the basis for a decision by HBC to safeguard and include both sections of the Lane on the local list.

6. A safeguarding strategy:

- 6.1. In considering the impact of development proposals on archaeological heritage assets best practice suggests, *"In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed."* The current planning application originally totally destroyed the northern section of the lane, approximately half by buildings and the rest by landscape works.
- 6.2. The applicants landscape appraisal and heritage statements did not address this in any way. No account was given of what thought had been given to alternatives? This is a large site capable of many alternative layouts that would needlessly avoid such loss of heritage. The local planning authority should not accept any layout that destroys the Lane.
- 6.3. A recent revised proposed layout plan suggests the retention of a narrow footpath along the line of the Lane at the immediate boundary of the housing. The amended heritage statement by O'Rourke (paragraph 3.4) is both misleading and untrue. Whilst this amendment is at least an acknowledgement of this heritage asset, it fails to properly provide for proper safeguarding.
- 6.4. Examination of the 'Drainage Strategy Layout' (Ref 5992:PO1) provided by MJA Consulting shows the proposal superimposed upon a surveyed base. The proposed narrow footpath is half the width of the Lane. It will provide 60% less public thoroughfare. Approximately

2/3rds of the Lane will be lost/destroyed. 50% of the replacement footpath is outside the parameters of the Lane.

- 6.5. The proposal seeks to rewrite history in an irresponsible and misleading way.

7. How to exercise planning control:

- 7.1. Guidance recognises that archaeological remains can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.
- 7.2. The County Archaeologist has suggested a planning condition to collect what knowledge exists before development commences but, if this condition is linked to consent for any layout that destroys or limits the extent of the Lane immediately the knowledge has been gathered, it provides no protection for this heritage asset even if the findings confirm its considerable significance within the history of the origins of the Borough. The wider cultural benefits identified above will be lost.
- 7.3. This suggests that no planning consent be granted for **any** layout that will result in harm to any part of this heritage until investigations are complete especially in the absence of any appraisal of the type suggested/required in paragraphs 6.1 & 6.2 above.

8. Right of Way:

- 8.1. Although no one registered it as a public right way when RoW provisions were introduced, from the historic records, there can be no doubt that Narrow Marsh Lane was a well-used public thoroughfare throughout the centuries. It was only within its recent history that the landowner blocked it off. Measures are currently being taken to seek to remedy this status.
- 8.2. It may be obvious to state that retention of the Lane will incur no harm to it. So too will designation as a right of way and adding it to the local list.

9. Manor Farm Buildings:

- 9.1. The Manor Farm buildings are being included in the Conservation Area as a 'satellite' location. The relationship between them and the open farmland they are associated with is obliterated by the current development proposals.
- 9.2. They indicate "existing hedge retained" where no such hedge exists. Brambles and nettles alone provide the 'landscape' of the southern edge and open setting of these buildings. Proposed mitigation is limited to a narrow strip of landscape for an undefined purpose that could lead to nuisance and a reduction in the height of nearby proposed dwellings. Revision of the layout and retaining an open setting in some planned and usable form would better safeguard these heritage assets.

10. Trees and screening:

- 10.1. It is now recognised that the shelterbelt, that might have given rise to the local plan proposal to develop land to the west, based upon a poor quality landscape appraisal, is not fit for purpose, is dangerous and needs to be felled as soon as possible. The proposals are to replace it but this will take some time to mature to screen the intrusive development. Dealing with this may fall to the residents as part of the arrangements for ongoing maintenance of common areas. This could severely test such arrangements.
- 10.2. The early removal of the shelterbelt will temporarily enhance the setting of the conservation area by restoring the openness. It will also provide safety for those using the Lane.
- 10.3. The proposals have no landscape screening proposed for the western and southern boundaries of the housing. National Rail may oppose anything on the southern boundary that is likely to create problems on the railway. Thus views of the setting of the conservation area from the south and west from both road and rail will be exposed to the intrusive nature of the development in the foreground. The views will also be subject to the vagaries of permitted development rights being exercised to the rear of the dwellings along these boundaries adding to the intrusive nature of the development.
- 10.4. The many people experiencing such views are likely to vastly outstrip those visiting the conservation area. The reputation of Bedhampton as a place to visit to enjoy its rich heritage will be diminished by these images.

11. Harm versus benefits?

- 11.1. It may be already apparent that the benefits of the proposed development, if any, do not outweigh the harm they do to the heritage assets surrounding this area. The above issues and impacts may simply demonstrate this and add weight in support of and in conjunction with other reasons for refusal, such as highway capacity and safety concerns.
- 11.2. A refusal may clearly demonstrate to the authority how this site is no longer suitable for development of this, or any reduced, scale. It is not too late to remove the site from the draft Local Plan 2036.