

APP/17/00633: The Orchard House, Western Avenue, Emsworth: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 25no. retirement living apartments with communal facilities, car parking and landscaping to include the removal of some onsite protected trees (subject to an Area Tree Protection Order 2068/2017) and provision of replacement tree planting

Thank you for your consultation. I would draw your attention to the *ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT* (DBA) that is included among the documentation attached to the above application on your website. This DBA concludes that:

'6.4 Based on current evidence, this assessment has identified that the study site has a moderate potential to contain previously undiscovered Prehistoric and Roman evidence. This evidence could comprise unstratified finds and former boundary ditches. Given that the study site is removed from the Saxon and Medieval settlement foci at Emsworth and Warblington, any later evidence is likely to be limited to unstratified finds, cultivation furrows and the remains of 20th century features shown on historic mapping. Such evidence is considered to be of local significance at most.

6.5 Groundworks for the proposed development would damage or remove any archaeological evidence present. However, taking into account the agricultural usage of the study site from at least the Medieval period onwards, and the past development impacts in the northern part of the study site, it is considered that should any archaeological evidence survive, it will already have been heavily truncated.

6.6 Given the above, it is unlikely that archaeology would present a constraint to the proposed development. However, the local authority's archaeological advisor may require a programme of archaeological investigation to address the modest archaeological potential of the study site identified by this assessment. Such works could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.'

While I would broadly concur with these conclusions I think that the potential impact of agricultural activity across the site has been somewhat overplayed by the report. My experience of archaeology in southern England is that while plough damage can be a factor in the state of preservation of some archaeological features, it is very rarely as severe as is made out in the DBA and I very much doubt that any surviving archaeological features will have been 'heavily truncated'. I also note in the main body of the report the nearby Roman villa site at Warblington is referred to as having been 'severely truncated by plough action'. Having visited these excavations myself last year I saw little evidence for this and indeed the surviving remains of the villa buildings that had been uncovered were in fact relatively well-preserved.

However, these matters apart, while there is no indication that archaeology presents an overriding concern in this case, I would advise that the assessment, recording and reporting of any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the new housing units and access roads be secured through the attachment of a suitable condition to any planning consent that might be granted. For instance:

'That no development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological assessment in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority in order to recognise, characterise and record any archaeological features and deposits that may exist here. This assessment should initially take the form of trial trenching within the footprints of the proposed houses, amenity areas and access roads. If the results of the evaluation are deemed significant enough by Havant Borough Council, then a programme of archaeological mitigation of impact based on the results of the trial trenching should be carried out in accordance with a further Written Scheme of Investigation that has been submitted to, and approved by, the Planning Authority. Following the completion of all archaeological fieldwork, a report will be produced in accordance with an approved programme including, where appropriate, a post-excavation assessment consisting of specialist analysis and reports together with a programme of publication and public engagement.'

If you have any further queries regarding this application, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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