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**BY EMAIL & POST**

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2006

Dear Richard,

**RE: Regional Spatial Strategy – Odd Down & Whitchurch**

Thank you for consulting English Heritage on this matter. You are correct to flag up the significant heritage constraints prevailing within the search areas. I will give a broad assessment of the search areas in the absence of detailed plans, but please note that this advice only relates to known, designated heritage assets, not sites of local or regional significance for which your Historic Environment Record is best placed to offer advice. In addition, there will be archaeological potential at each of the search areas which will only be realised by detailed assessment and evaluation. The results of such work may identify further heritage constraints.

- **Odd Down (Area 1a)** – this area is centred upon the Fosse Way, a former Roman road and a historic route/portal into the city. In terms of potential impacts on designated sites and areas B&NES should carefully consider the setting of the World Heritage Site, including the effect of potential development upon views into and out of the WHS. In addition an unscheduled section of the West Wansdyke forms part of the northern site boundary and a scheduled section (SAM No. BA95) lies nearby to the northwest of this. The setting of the Wansdyke is a material consideration. B&NES should consider the constraints upon potential development in Area 1a which could arise when the WHS & SAM setting issues are taken into account.
- **Odd Down (Area 1b)** – This area contains a number of significant constraints centred upon the well-preserved, easternmost section of the West Wansdyke, which is a Scheduled Monument (No. BA93). The Wansdyke is a major linear earthwork thought to be of sub-Roman or early Saxon origin. Archaeology of this period is generally rare, so to have such a major earthwork of this date on the edge of the city is a significant heritage asset for Bath.

As a Scheduled Monument its setting is a material consideration, but at Area 1b the issue of setting is enhanced by other factors. Ever since its construction, the Wansdyke has been recognised as a major boundary marker. It is the parish boundary, it marks the southern edge of the World Heritage Site and is part of the northern boundary of the Cotswolds AONB along the southern edge of Bath.

The Wansdyke was designed as monument that should be seen, a clear marker of territory in the landscape. As such it requires a clear viewfield to be properly understood and appreciated. The land on the north side of the monument has infilled with development over time and now forms an abrupt edge to the urban area.

Until relatively recently, this abrupt edge to the city extended from the A367 Radstock road in the west across to the B3110 Frome road in the east. The 1990s development known as Sulis Meadows, immediately west of Area 1b, now means that the length of Wansdyke forming the north edge of Area 1b is the last part of the monument where it can be viewed clearly across open land and where its function as a boundary is plain to see.

On Scheduled Monument setting grounds alone it could be argued that the fields forming Area 1b should be kept free from development. However, if in addition one considers the historic boundary function of the Wansdyke for at least 1400 years, the fact that it forms the edge to the WHS (with all associated setting issues), that it marks the edge of the AONB, and that it so abruptly marks the edge of the modern city, then in my view there is a strong overall case against development at this location.

One more factor that should be considered is the impact of development upon the Wansdyke itself. At Sulis Meadows, and to the west again adjacent to the school playing fields, development or enclosure has lead to the monument being isolated within a linear strip of varying width. The resultant pressure upon the monument from increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic, flytipping and vandalism has resulted in intractable problems with erosion and damage. Development in Area 1b would only add pressure upon a fragile resource of clear national importance.

- **Hicks Gate (Area 4a)** – This area has no Scheduled Monuments either within it or within its vicinity. It is also remote from the World Heritage Site and there are no G1 or G2\* listed buildings within the area, based upon the information I have available. However the Foxes Wood Registered Park/Garden lies to the northwest of the search area, and its setting would be impacted upon by any development in adjacent land parcels. B&NES should consider the impact upon that setting of any potential development in this area.

- **Whitchurch (Area 4b)** – This area lies to the northeast of Maes Knoll Iron Age hillfort, a major Scheduled Monument (No. BA25), which is understood to be the western terminal of the West Wansdyke. A well-preserved section of the Wansdyke adjoins the hillfort and is also a Scheduled Monument (No. BA99). Maes Knoll commands wide views over the surrounding countryside and much of Area 4b lies within its setting zone. B&NES should carefully consider the impact that development within Area 4b would have upon the setting of Maes Knoll and the Wansdyke. English Heritage will seek to preserve the integrity of that setting and B&NES should take into account the constraints upon large-scale development that may entail.

In addition, the search area contains a G2\* listed building (Lyons Court Farmhouse) and the G2\* listed St Nicholas Church sits on the boundary of the area. The need to preserve the farmhouse and the need to preserve the setting of both G2\* buildings must be a further consideration here. B&NES should also consider the impact of potential large-scale development upon the setting of the Queen Charlton Conservation Area, and the fact that Whitchurch itself is being considered in the current round of Conservation Area reviews.

The above comments represent a rapid assessment of potential constraints due to the presence of designated heritage assets. However, they should not be seen as definitive in the absence of detailed plans. They are no substitute for the detailed desk-based studies that will be necessary to properly assess the potential impact of large-scale development upon the overall cultural heritage of the search areas.

You may be aware that English Heritage has also been consulted on this matter by B&NES' Consultant Planner Keith Goodred, albeit with a different search envelope which stretches from the River Avon west of Newbridge, across to the A367 Radstock Road. This search area is much larger in size & scope and although we intend to offer advice we do not have the capacity to make detailed comment, which should properly be the subject of a B&NES commissioned assessment of the cultural heritage resource and the impact that development would have upon it.

I understand there are other search areas being considered on the outskirts of Bath as part of the RSS assessment, but that English Heritage has not been consulted upon those areas due to the absence of designated heritage sites.

Please contact me at the first opportunity if you require further advice.

Yours sincerely,

**PHIL MCMAHON**

Inspector of Ancient Monuments

Copied to: Ross Simmonds, EH SW Planner

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