



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archaeology Survey Project

Please reply to Secretary of the Organising Committee:

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Monksmoor Proposed Development Archaeological Implications

1. Introduction

CLASP has been invited by WNDC to make comment from the Community based perspective on the archaeological implications of the subject Development. We have been provided with a copy of the Planning Application, including the Environmental Statement, by WNDC. Our comments will be passed to and discussed with Messrs EntecUK, the independent archaeological consultants employed by WNDC.

2. The Proposal

The Application made on behalf of Capel House Property Trust entails the construction of a 1000 dwellings and associated roads and social infrastructure on land to the east of the Welton Road and north of the Daventry reservoir. The Archaeological Contractors employed by the applicant, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd, have, within the constraints of their remit, made a thorough examination and analysis of the archaeological status of the site. Geophysical and fieldwalking surveys have been carried out together with some trial trenching in two areas of interest located by the geophysics. There appears to be no mention of aerial photographic analysis. The Archaeology report makes several recommendations as to mitigating action prior to and during the construction process. These will be discussed in depth later in this paper.

CLASP, The Secretary, 21 Stacey Avenue, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, MK12 5DN

Executive Committee: Alan Watson (Chair), Ruth Downie (Secretary), Angela Evans (Treasurer), Stephen Young (Archaeology Director), Nick Adams, David Banner, Jeremy Calderwood, Alan Priestley

Organising Committee: Jeremy Cooper (Acting Chair), Dave Hayward (Secretary), Julia Johns (Membership Secretary)

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3. Archaeological Background Discussion

Messrs Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd have provided a relatively comprehensive summary of the known archaeological status for the area. We do however consider that there are a number of other elements that require consideration when validating their recommendations. CLASP is currently involved in a major project defining the Romano-British landscape for an area primarily between the Roman-British townships of Bannaventa and Lactodorum (Towcester) although we are obviously considering the socio-economic status of a wider area to help interpret our archaeological findings.

It does appear that the Daventry area was of some significance in the Bronze and Iron Ages from the level of known remains and artefacts located in the area to date. The major location being the Borough Hill hillfort. However it does appear that Bannaventa itself was in its early stages a substantial Iron Age, if not earlier settlement. Recent work has also defined another centre of activity from this era to the north between Kilsby and Crick. There are numerous other smaller sites spread across the area. There is evidence that the major part of the economy in this area was agriculture related although there were two unstratified pieces of iron slag located during the fieldwalking exercise.

Within the immediate area of Monksmoor, as mentioned in their report, Archaeological Services Consultancy identifies a Romano-British agricultural site to the west at Middlemoor. This was excavated during a similar developmental process there. This work, undertaken at different times by Northamptonshire Archaeology and Archaeological Services themselves confirmed an early field structure with evidence of an associated dwelling, probably under the buildings of the modern Middlemoor farm which has been included in that development and was therefore unexcavated. The evidence is that whilst there were several phases at that site it probably went out of total use in that format in the late 3rd C with an early retraction in the 2nd C. This appears to be identical with the limited evidence from the work already undertaken by Archaeological Services in respect of Monksmoor. Interestingly the demise of agriculture of this nature seems to have occurred on a similar time scale across a much wider area locally. A recent excavation at West Haddon, some miles to the north-east, reveals similar features both in settlement structure and time of demise, albeit that at this location there was a much smaller settlement surviving into the 4th C. There is evidence of similar changes as far south as Deanshanger and Bancroft.

Work undertaken by CLASP also tends to reinforce the view that something was ongoing in the economy of the area at that time. Whilst much work still needs to be done there is evidence that Bannaventa itself went about a substantial contraction and restyling about this time. The revised town appears to have moved from an undefended to a defended format.

In the Northamptonshire Archaeology Report on their excavations at Middlemoor they reach the conclusion from finds of building material that any dwelling at this location connected with the Romano British agricultural activity would have been underneath the modern day Middlemoor Farm buildings. This therefore suggests continued occupation at one site for two millennia. Similarly there is evidence of continued occupation at Thrupp farm some two kilometres to the east of Monksmoor. The question must therefore be asked, was there similar continued occupation at Monksmoor farm? Archaeology Consultancy Services in the report on their test pitting on the Romano-British activity in the south-west corner of the proposed development area suggest possible further settlement in three directions including north and north-west. The two pieces of slag, previously mentioned, were located immediately to the north of Monksmoor Farm buildings. Interestingly the early, 1881 based on earlier surveys, 1" OS map of the area describes Monksmoor Farm as The Lodge and having two separate driveways from the Welton Road indicating a building of some stature. This name and building together with the driveways seems to have gone later in the 19th C. Admittedly Eayres map makes no indication of any farm at this location.

3. Archaeological Mitigation

CLASP would welcome the majority of the further archaeological work advised by Archaeological Consultancy Services if the development is permitted to progress. We are totally supportive of the proposal to strip and fully excavate the area referred to as Block 3. Connecting with the other similar aged activity locally this could be of important interpretative value for a larger area. The probable totality of the site with the possibility of cremation activity increases its significance. With regard to the recommendation relating to the area shown as Block 14; whilst acknowledging that the recommended course of action is probably appropriate if this was an isolated site and not relevant to other archaeological investigation currently underway locally we would urge that this recommendation is revisited. CLASP would suggest that every opportunity should be taken to investigate possible cause for the change in the socio-economic situation in the mid Romano-British period. We therefore consider

that a full excavation should be carried on this block to gain detailed evidence as to its usage and hopefully reasons for its subsequent demise.

We support the recommendation that a watching brief with excavation where required is maintained for the remainder of the site. Turning to the existing farm buildings and their surroundings. Block 3 referred to above is immediately adjacent to the farm buildings, in fact the complex of apparent ring ditches is virtually co-terminus with them. The result of the geophysical survey for Block 6, an area south of Block 3, is probably best described as inconclusive. We would suggest an archaeological presence should be maintained as ground level work proceeds in the area of the buildings and their immediate environs. If it does materialise the current buildings are only the latest in a prolonged occupation of the site then it would be important that they are subject to an in depth archaeological examination.

4. Conservation

Unfortunately the areas of Blocks 3, 6 and 14 together with the immediate area of the farm buildings are, according to the Master Plan, scheduled to be included in the development area. If excavation reveals a significant settlement in Block 3 then we would urge that consideration be given to the display of the immediate part of the site, perhaps as a low maintenance open area with information boards. A complete Bronze/ Iron Age series of hut circles would be of value to the Community not only as an area to visit but also for educational research. Conservation for any other arts of the site will depend upon the archaeological value of anything found.