

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – PLANNING SERVICES

Environment & Heritage Team – Response to consultation by County Planning

ARCHAEOLOGY comments

To: - planning.applications@westsussex.gov.uk

FAO: - Chris Bartlett, County Planning

DATE: 11th March 2021

REF.: WSCC/055/20

LOCATION: Woodlands Meeds College, Birchwood Grove Road, Burgess Hill RH15 ODP

PROPOSAL: Construction of new two storey Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) College building with associated soft and hard landscaping, a floodlit all-weather pitch, car parking and drop off/pick up facilities and alterations to existing access arrangements

RECOMMENDATIONS: No objection on archaeological grounds to the proposals. Archaeological mitigation is not required.

SUMMARY:

- Within the application site, previous groundworks, and levelling for construction of Newick House School, and an expected degree of ground levelling for original playing field landscaping, are likely to have reduced or removed any archaeological features, once present.
- If any archaeological features do survive in the application area, it is anticipated that they would be poorly preserved and – on the basis of previous archaeological investigation adjacent - of low quality.
- Accordingly, archaeological mitigation is not required.

COMMENTS:

Pre-application archaeological advice in respect of proposals for new school buildings (variant schemes to those currently submitted) has been provided to County Planning (my e-mails of 16/7/2019 and to Faithfull+Gould of 1/8/2019, the latter submitted as an "Archaeology Position Statement" with this planning application).

When the new Birchwood Grove Primary School was built in 2008, ground excavations were monitored by an archaeologist. A small amount (four pieces) of worked flint of Mesolithic date (8500 – 4500 BC) was found in a disturbed top layer of the natural clay on the site, along with some fragments of animal bone.

The excavations there were not deep enough to find out whether any other archaeological features were present. Although it is important that material of this date existed, the amount and character of the flints were insignificant, without, on their own, any potential for telling us any more about the local archaeology.

At the end of 2010, several trial archaeological trenches were dug across what was then part of Folders Meadow, and is now Ryeland Road and Shearing Drive, to the west of the proposal site.

There were some archaeological features – ditches and a shallow pit with evidence of burning. Some of the ditches had defined 19th-century field boundaries, and the others produced no dating evidence, while the shallow pit – which might have been an ancient fire pit (if it was not the left-over of a burnt-out tree stump “contaminated” by intrusive modern material) produced nothing that could be scientifically dated.

The present proposals would involve demolition of the Newick House School buildings, where previous construction-related landscaping works would have destroyed any archaeological features, once present.

In view of the contours of the site, within the playing field within which the new building would be erected, some previous ground levelling and reduction is not unlikely to have taken place for the playing field original landscaping.

It is anticipated that any archaeological features, if present, would survive poorly, and would be of low significance and quality for the purposes of advancing archaeological knowledge.

On these grounds, archaeological mitigation is not required. No objection on archaeological grounds is raised to the proposals.

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