

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – STRATEGIC PLANNING

Environment & Heritage Archaeological Response to: -

County Planning (FAO Jane Moseley)

DATE:	19 th September 2013
APPLICATION No.:	WSCC/083/13/KD
LOCATION:	Land south of Boxal Bridge, Northup Field, Wisborough Green, West Sussex, RH14 0DD
PROPOSAL:	The installation of a well and associated infrastructure, including access road and soil bunds, for the drilling of a vertical borehole and contingent horizontal borehole from the same well for the exploration, testing and evaluation of hydrocarbons for a temporary period of three years

RECOMMENDATIONS: Further information is required, in order to obtain sufficient reliable information on the archaeological impacts of development, as follows:

- (i) desk-based specialist geoarchaeological assessment;
- (ii) non-intrusive geophysical survey of the site, for archaeological purposes;
- (iii) as informed by the findings of geophysical survey and of geoarchaeological assessment, excavation by an archaeologist and geoarchaeologist of exploratory trenches and test pits;
- (iv) production of written reports of the above surveys and investigations;
- (v) production of a revised archaeological assessment on the basis of these further surveys;
- (vi) proposed measures to mitigate the archaeological impact of development, informed by the above surveys and revised assessment.

SUMMARY: The site has a moderate potential to contain archaeological remains of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval date, and may have a greater potential to contain buried archaeological deposits of early prehistoric date and of 16th-century date, relating to the former glass working industry of this part of the Sussex Weald.

Further information is required, arising from and in order to supplement the findings of the submitted Desk-based archaeological assessment, as explained below and recommended above.

COMMENTS: The potential archaeological impacts of the proposals have been explored in the Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, submitted in support of this application (Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd, March 2013).

This is a well-presented document, which includes the findings of a non-intrusive site inspection that has located a previously unknown probable hollow way (sunken lane) within the copse on the west side of the site, dating probably to the medieval period or earlier.

The probability that archaeological remains may be present is assessed, by chronological period, in Table 1 of this Assessment Report, using as a dataset information on previously reported archaeological sites and finds (from West Sussex County Council's Historic Environment Record database (HER), historical mapping, and observations made during the site inspection.

The stated probabilities that archaeological remains of prehistoric or Roman date are not very likely to be present (low potential), but that those of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval or Post-Medieval date are more likely to be present (moderate potential), are fair assessments, with, in West Sussex County Council's opinion, two exceptions.

The first of these exceptions concerns the possible presence, as mapped by the British Geological Survey, of River Arun 3rd terrace sands and gravels, within part of the compound and bund footprint. These deposits are likely to date to a period not long before the beginning of the last Ice Age.

The possibility that these deposits, referred to in the text, may contain worked flint tools, as many early river gravel terraces in the United Kingdom do, should be taken into account: the absence of previous finds of this type from the vicinity of the site (4.1.3) is not necessarily conclusive, because there has been little previous archaeological fieldwork in this area, and because the local wealden river terrace deposits were little worked for gravel or sand extraction, presenting few opportunities for previous fieldworkers to investigate these deposits.

Further information is required, regarding the potential of these deposits to contain archaeological remains. Initially this requirement should be addressed by an assessment of the deposits' potential by a geoarchaeologist familiar with the river terrace gravels of the Sussex Weald, making use of any previous site investigation records available to the applicant.

The second exception concerns the location of the site within the core area, within the Weald, of the local glass working industry of the 16th century. While the presence within 1 km of the site of two glass working sites, at Idehurst Copse and Sparr Farm, is referred to in the text (4.9.1 – 4.9.2), further consideration should be given to the possibility that remains of previous glass working may also be present here.

Any archaeological remains present are likely to be wholly removed on the uphill part of the compound footprint, during landscaping works for creation of the compound; and may be exposed and partly removed during topsoil stripping and other landscaping, for the remainder of the site.

In the Conclusion of the Desk-based Assessment Report, it is suggested that a non-intrusive geophysical survey of the site, followed by "evaluation excavation", excavation of trial trenches, targeted on possible archaeological features identified through the geophysical survey, would be appropriate (6.3). Magnetometer survey, for example, would very probably detect any buried former kilns related to former glass working, or dumps of glass working debris.

Although, at 1.63 ha in area, the application site is not large, the proposals have potential to be very destructive of any buried archaeological remains present. Glass working and early prehistoric archaeological sites, in particular, are significant, in regional terms.

It is strongly recommended that further information be sought, regarding the potential archaeological impact of these proposals, as follows:

- Desk-based assessment by a geoarchaeologist, familiar with the Sussex Weald river terrace sequences, of the potential of the site to contain deposits of early prehistoric significance;
- Non-intrusive geophysical survey of the site, in order to identify any indications of buried archaeological remains;
- Excavation of exploratory archaeological trenches; aimed principally at investigation of possible archaeological/ geoarchaeological features, identified through geophysical survey
- Subject to the findings of the desk-based geoarchaeological assessment, excavation of test pits by a geoarchaeologist, to investigate local terrace gravel deposits within the site, where surviving, contemporary with early human occupation in north-west Europe.

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