



Historic England

NORTH EAST OFFICE

Ms Rebecca Adams
Northumberland National Park Authority
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Direct Dial: 0191 2691212

Our ref: P00524346

12 September 2016

Dear Ms Adams

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**

**LOWTOWN, WALLTOWN, GREENHEAD, NORTHUMBERLAND, CA8 7JD
Application No 16NP0083**

Thank you for your letter of 23 August 2016 notifying Historic England of the above application.

Historic England Advice

As you know from our recent letter, with reference to the parallel application for listed building consent, Historic England is content to defer to your own specialist advisors on the impact of this development on the listed structure at Lowtown. Our advice will focus on its potential impact on the surrounding archaeology of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

The site at Lowtown lies on a site with very high archaeological sensitivity because of its position right on the northern edge of the major Roman ditch system known today as the Vallum. The Vallum itself remains poorly understood, but seems to have had a role both in demarcating the southern edge of the Roman military zone with Hadrian's Wall to the north, and also serving as a further line of defence in depth to protect the frontier from incursion from the north. Hadrian's Wall as a whole, a system which takes in not only the Wall and Vallum, but also forts, camps, roads and civilian settlement, represents the most complete of the frontiers of the Roman Empire, and its archaeological and historical significance means that most of its surviving remains have been protected as Scheduled Monuments, and form a part of the UNESCO Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

As mentioned above, the site of Lowtown lies on the northern edge of the Vallum itself. However, having visited the site and talked through the development with the applicant The presence of the existing house here, together with the landscape changes that this created on the land surrounding it, mean that in principle it should be possible to



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create the kind of development planned here without harm to the Vallum and wider World Heritage Site. However, there are areas of the application where the detail of what is proposed requires clarification or the imposition of conditions before such a view could be confirmed.

Access and Hard Surfacing

We note the main access route, detailed in the indicative landscape plan and sections. This follows the line of the existing track and hollow-way to Lowtown, which clearly had some kind of surfacing, parts of which have become encroached on by the surrounding grass pasture. The applicant's intention to reuse this line seems a good one, and we have no issues with the stated approach of refurbishing rather than replacing the surfacing wherever possible. This approach would in our view avoid harm to the archaeology or setting of the Vallum and Roman military zone.

This plan also shows parking and some limited paving immediately outside the building, including details of the depth that excavation for these elements will penetrate to. Once more, we do not have an issue with the principle of these works, and given the likely disturbance caused by the current building (something which means that the earthworks of the Vallum are not present as a visible feature in the immediate surroundings of the house) excavation at the depth indicated seems unlikely to be harmful to archaeological remains here.

With reference to both areas, we would recommend that the excavation work should be the subject of an archaeological watching brief to ensure that any archaeological remains revealed here are recorded. In addition, given that the plans concerns are at this stage indicative, it would be preferable if they could be confirmed as final and binding before any permission is issued. If the Authority feels this is not possible, then a further condition will be necessary, so that the final landscape plan (including these access details and materials which blend with the landscape and building) will need to be approved by the Authority in advance of works commencing.

Garden Space

At the current time the area marked for the garden space consists of rough sheep grazing, such that although the current building is a very visible presence in this part of the World Heritage Site, the openness and lack of clutter in this landscape allows a very good understanding of the Roman military landscape. As such, whilst we are content that the access, parking and paving proposed will not harm this openness and thus this understanding, what would concern us much more would be a proliferation of domestic development (sheds, washing lines etcetera) associated with the reoccupation of the dwelling, something which could end up harming the setting of the World Heritage Site.



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In addition, given that the garden space here takes in the earthworks of the Vallum, we would have a clear concern about the direct archaeological impact of any piecemeal garden development.

Although clearly any development within the Scheduled Monument would require Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), having discussed this issue on site with the Agent for this scheme we understand that they and Owner are well aware of this issue, and propose to tackle it by simply maintaining the garden as open grass space, without any additional planting, flower or vegetable beds. In principle this would be acceptable to Historic England, although we would like to see this confirmed as part of the planning application (perhaps through a landscape management statement), through the removal of permitted development rights on any permission issued, and through an advisory note attached to remind the Owner of the need to seek SMC for any works within the monument.

Rebuilt/New Extension

We note the plans to remove the current shed at the western end of the house and build a slightly larger domestic extension in its place. Whilst we defer to the Authority's own specialist conservation advisors on the impact of this extension and its design on the listed building, given the likely disturbance of the area around the current building we would be happy for the residual risk of this element of work having an impact on archaeological remains to be dealt with through an archaeological watching brief secured by condition.

Services

We note from the provisional plans a proposal for a foul drainage system to be located north west of the current building, but that the application does not contain details of any of the other potential services which the owner will require to reoccupy the site. Whilst it would be preferable if full and final details of these services, their location and depths, could be provided, I understand that the current plan is that they will all approach the building from the north, and not across or into the Vallum itself. As such, if full details cannot be submitted at this stage, we would be content for a plan to be submitted which describes the amount of excavation required for the services and then indicates the area in which they will be located once their detailed design has taken place. Provided this area keeps the excavation to the north of the line of the Vallum we would be happy for approval of fuller details on this issue to be the subject of a further condition.

Recommendation

We recommend that further details on the service connections and management of the garden space are provided as discussed above, to ensure that the archaeological and setting impact of these is within acceptable limits. Following this, and assuming that



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these issues are satisfactorily resolved, we recommend the imposition of a series of conditions to require approval of the final landscape plan for the site and to ensure that the excavations required for the development are the subject of an archaeological watching brief during development.

We would welcome the opportunity of advising further. Please consult us again if any additional information or amendments are submitted. If, notwithstanding our advice, you propose to approve the scheme in its present form, please advise us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

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CC. Chris Jones - NNPA



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