



## The archaeological significance of the proposed Malt Lane development site 18/000170/FUL



A letter written by the Bishop's Waltham Society March 2018

Bishop's Waltham Society



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16<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Mr Avery

**Proposed development at Malt Lane, Bishop's Waltham  
Planning application ref. 18/000170/FUL: Archaeology Report**

As mentioned in our letter of 5<sup>th</sup> March, this second letter about the proposed Malt Lane development focuses on the Archaeology Report prepared by Studio Four Architects Ltd and the significance of the site itself.

I had the very considerable pleasure of having a site visit last week in the company of Elizabeth Lewis whose 1967-8 excavation work in Bishop's Waltham is heavily cited in the Archaeology Report. We were accompanied by Anita Taylor, curator of Bishop's Waltham Museum which has many finds from the area, and Penny Copeland who is a professional archaeologist both freelance and at Southampton University. We all agreed that this is a critically important site with strong connections to Bishop's Waltham's early history.

First I have to say that we are all disappointed by the poor quality (and indeed lack of actual archaeology) in the 12-page report submitted by Studio Four Architects.

We are concerned that the Archaeology Report has not been produced by an independent third party but by the developer's own architects. This compares, for example, with David Wilson Homes who employed L-P Archaeology for their Martin Street development in Bishop's Waltham and Beechcroft who used Cotswold Archaeology to independently assess the nearby Abbey Mill site. Both produced much more complete, professional archaeological reports.

The short Studio Four report states that "it is strongly suspected that any presence of items of high archaeological importance within the site boundary have since been destroyed or compromised". This suggests both a blinkered view of the site's importance and quite possibly a developer-led attitude.

## Mesolithic Finds

Apart from finds dating to the Saxon, Norman and later medieval periods uncovered by Liz Lewis's investigations, it appears that subsequent Saxon occupation may well also have disturbed and redeposited Mesolithic material that was collected throughout the 1967-8 excavation. However, more specifically, three areas (A, B and C) indicated Mesolithic occupation on the site of the excavation itself. These consisted of small hollows containing a loamy clay, and subsequent excavation of them revealed abundant Mesolithic material. It suggests river or lake-side dwellings for people working the valley gravels of the River Hamble. There is every reason to believe that there will be similar Mesolithic remains on the adjacent site of this new development.

## 11<sup>th</sup> century Hall and Associated Buildings

The proposed development lies but a few metres from the site of a timber -framed 11<sup>th</sup> century aisled Hall excavated by Elizabeth Lewis in 1967-8. The foundations (in the form of slots cut into the gravel to receive timber wall-plates) of the aisled hall were overlaid by the foundations of a Norman flint boundary wall (see below) and by the brick-built so-called Palace Stables. The single-aisled Hall found underneath the Palace Stables building was high status, so it would be surprising if it wasn't surrounded by ancillary buildings which may well be spread across the proposed development site.

These buildings in turn may have associated pits that can provide additional information. For example, among the contents of Pit 14 (on site 5 of the 1967-8 excavations) were fragmentary remains of an early glazed pottery *costrel* - described as "a novel form without a parallel in the late Saxon period in England".

## Norman to Medieval Period

An important feature uncovered during excavation was a long wall solidly built of flint nodules which predated the brick barn and formed apparently a boundary wall to an early phase of the palace boundaries. To quote the excavation report:

"The purpose of this substantial boundary wall in relation to both timber buildings and to the Palace under construction by Bishop Henry de Blois throughout the second half of the twelfth century is puzzling. It is not aligned to the Palace buildings, but respects the pond's edge; the wall running east-west at right angles to it appears to disregard the northern moat of the Palace and this indicates that the wall predates the moat. There is thus the likelihood that the twelfth-century Palace curtilage extended much further north, to incorporate this area (as it did in the eighteenth century) previously occupied by late Saxon and early Norman timber buildings. These covered the area as far north as the small stream, and eastwards into *sites 2 and 3* where an early medieval layer was sealed by the upcast bank of the later medieval ditch."

The proposed development site that lies within this suggested curtilage may well contain further clues to this period. Including a possible return to the flint wall (mentioned above) running in a north-south direction across the site.

The Palace Stables, or Mews, which were being demolished as the 1967-8 excavations took place were originally constructed as an aisled building in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century probably as a barn. As such it may well have been associated with other farm or storage buildings which could easily have spread into the area of the proposed development. This was the period when the Palace was surrounded by a moat, whilst the outer parts of the Bishop's land was delineated, it seems, by the River of the Lord. This ran (still runs) along the north part of the site and is then culverted until it reaches the Palace grounds. The question remains as to whether there was just the river or an enclosure wall. Investigation could provide an answer to this.

Perhaps of more significance is the exact site and nature of the gate and gatehouse to the Palace grounds which would have stood somewhere to the eastern extremity of the proposed development site. An impression of the Palace, its grounds and the town - as they may have been in the 15<sup>th</sup> century - has been created by English Heritage. This is shown below.

The red square approximates to the proposed development site and the white oval indicates the site of the Palace Stables and the area excavated in the 1960s. It illustrates that English Heritage also speculates that they may well have been other buildings, part of Bishop Langton's wall and even the gatehouse, all within the site. This is why investigation is so critical to understanding the town's history.



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### **The Risk of Evidence being Destroyed or Compromised**

Having explained some simple reasons why this site and its investigation are so important, we'd like to address the assertion that "any presence of items of high archaeological importance within the site boundary have since been destroyed or compromised."

There are indeed a few areas on the site where items of high archaeological importance may have been damaged or disturbed. For example, the area where underground petrol tanks are sited within Fox's Garden Machinery land and a possible cellar under the 19<sup>th</sup> century house called Wych Elms.

However it must be remembered that the finds made in the 1960s excavations were a metre deep. So suggesting that a gravel driveway may have disturbed them or that temporary wooden huts placed on brick or concrete stands could do serious damage is to hugely exaggerate.

The marked up Google Map in Appendix I shows the open land within the site. The photographs in Appendix II show how much open ground is available for examination and how light the foundations of the Youth Club and the NHS Elms Hut are likely to be.

### Conclusion

This site is one of the last underdeveloped sites that can still help to reveal the town's earliest history.

In view of the archaeological potential outlined above, we don't feel that just a 'watching brief' is enough or does justice to the importance of this site. As Historic England has noted in its objection of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the buried remains could be of "equal (national) significance" to the Palace itself.

Instead we would propose that the developer commissions a full geophysical study of the whole area (as far as it is accessible). This would not be costly (£1-2,000) and would indicate the survival of archaeological deposits on the site, providing the all-important information about the value of conducting any specific archaeological activity. It would also help the developers locate the buried petrol tanks on the forecourt of Fox's.

If any substantial anomalies were found, then we would propose they were ground-truthed with excavation. In view of the contaminated land on the site of Fox's, excavations in close proximity could also assist their clean-up of the site. The watching brief would still be needed to pick up the more ephemeral features such as Mesolithic hollows that may be missed. If, as the architects claim, the deposits are truly disturbed, then no excavations will be necessary, only the watching brief.

We hope that both Winchester City Council and particularly the developer will take this suggestion very seriously.

Yours sincerely



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Chairman  
Bishop's Waltham Society

cc by email to Tracy Matthews, Historic Environment Officer (Archaeology), Winchester City Council; Councillor Rob Humby, Councillor David Mclean, Councillor Steve Miller.

Also cc by email: Elizabeth Lewis, Penny Copeland, Anita Taylor, Bishop's Waltham Parish Council, Alan Inder, Jonathan Simmons, Pauline Mousley.

## Appendix I

### Malt Lane Development Site from Google Maps 14 March 2018



The areas marked red show how much open space is available for initial geophysical investigation.

Investigation could also be carried out on the old garage forecourt where the disused petrol tanks are buried. Depending on internal lay-out, it may well be possible to do at least a strip of geophysics inside Fox's premises (outlined in white) before demolition.

Post demolition and prior to building the land under the Youth Hall and the NHS Elms Hut could also be investigated, creating an even wider picture.

## Appendix II

### Open sites within Malt Lane proposed development



1. Open space south of Elms Hut and Youth Hall



2A. Land to west of Youth Hall



2B. Land on North West side of Youth Hall



3. Land to rear (North) of Youth Hall



4. Car park area North of Youth Hall and Elms Hut



5. Land between Youth Hall and Elms Hut



#### 6. Land to North and East of Elms Hut

As the photographs above illustrate, the Youth Hall and Elms Hut are simply wooden buildings built on concrete pads, preserving the archaeology beneath (close-up details below).



Youth Hall (West)



NHS Elms Hut



Or appear to have little or no foundations at all (Youth Hall East side).