



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archaeology Survey Project

Please reply to Secretary of the Organising Committee:

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vale24th April 2008

Towcester Vale

Having now had an opportunity to consider the Application and associated Environmental Statement for these proposals and also consult with others CLASP would wish to make the following comments. CLASP does not see its role to object or not to the site once correct archaeological investigation and conservation has been carried out.

Towcester is an ancient centre that initially came to prominence in the Romano-British era with the building of a significant town on Watling Street at its junction with at least one other Roman road, that leading from Alchester to the southwest. It does appear that the work undertaken to complete the Archaeological aspect of the Environmental Statement accompanying the Application has perhaps not been as comprehensive as would have been expected for a scheme of this size and impact. It is noted that the application tends to look at each area of archaeological interest in isolation, thereby concluding that perhaps the greatest significance of each site is of only regional importance at best. CLASP takes the view that there is a necessity to look at the cumulative effect of a series of sites of interest graded as being of regional or unknown interest coupled with what is already known about the area and its surrounds. It could well be that the possible cumulative effect is to enhance the grading for the overall area to a higher significance.

The publication, *East Midlands Archaeological Research Framework: A Resource Assessment and Research Agenda for the Roman Period:*

An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda for the Roman Period in the East Midlands by Jeremy Taylor, pp 4 and 5, mentions the lack of full scale stripping and excavation on Romano-British rural sites within the East Midlands. The view is therefore taken that if this development is allowed to proceed then greater consideration should be given to subjecting fields that the

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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ES Statement illustrates as having considerable archaeological potential being subjected to wide area stripping and full excavation where appropriate. On information currently available at least Fields 1, 2, 9 and 10 fit into this category, this is not to exclude others that may well be considered worth investigating by way of trial trenching.

The unsuitability of a significant part of the area covered by this application for fieldwalking means that this will have been not fully investigated to inform the Environmental Statement. Consideration regarding additional investigation of these areas needs to be given before any permission is granted. Whilst the proposed level of developmental stage investigation may be appropriate for some parts of the site we would urge that this is closely examined by yourselves, hopefully together with further consultation with all those submitting comments on the archaeological aspects of the development.

It is additionally important that the opportunity afforded to archaeological research from this site, based on the periphery of a Romano-British town on Watling Street, considers similar work that is being undertaken on the site of the Romano-British town of Bannaventa situated some twelve miles to the north of Towcester. This area adjacent to this latter site is again subject to a substantial development proposal currently being considered by WNDC and to which CLASP has submitted its concerns. It is to our view important that the two sites are not considered in isolation. Any work undertaken at Towcester Vale will also help inform the wider project currently being undertaken by CLASP to define and interpret the wider Romano-British rural landscape and its interaction with the contemporary towns in the area.

We foresee that a considerable amount of archaeological investigation needs to be carried out in the area prior to development and that this should be led by professional archaeologists. Hopefully though this would be phased to enable a role for CLASP with its members, both individual and organisational to become involved with the full investigation of a specific site within the development. This would then enable members of the local community to participate in the investigation and protection of their own archaeological heritage. We would also hope that at least one archaeological feature within the development could be preserved with open access, possibly within a wider recreation area.

We would support the comments regarding the archaeological and heritage aspects of this application previously passed to you by the CBA (South Midlands) and Towcester District History Society.

D. F. Hayward MBE

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