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Mark Cupit
Development Control Manager
Wokingham Borough Council
PO Box 157
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1WR

22nd May 2007

Dear Mark,

Re: Previous incomplete archaeological works at The Bull Inn, Sonning

As I am sure Harold Sanders has advised you, there has been an issue with regard to the above site over the last few years. In February 2000, an application for the enlargement of the rear terrace to the Bull Inn, High Street, Sonning was submitted to WDC by John Gale Ltd under the reference F/2000/0469. The then Archaeological Advisors to the District were Babtie Environmental whose archaeology Officer advised WDC Planning that a condition should be attached to any consent to allow for archaeological investigations in advance of the landscaping scheme. Unfortunately WDC omitted the recommended condition on the granting of permission for the terracing works.

The issue of the site and application was due to the high level of archaeological potential for this location. The site lies within the historic core of Sonning. The development of the village is poorly understood but would have been influenced by the Bishop's Palace, a site of national significance located some 50 m to the southwest, which dates from the late Saxon period. The layout of the village hints at the outline of the ecclesiastical holding which would place the Bull in a very interesting position in the village. The Bull and the adjacent buildings are all 16th-17th century.

The scheme went ahead, only to expose an archaeologically important sequence of Saxon and early medieval burials associated with the ecclesiastical centre. Due to the absence of the recommended archaeological condition, and the discovery of significant human remains, the onus was then passed to WDC to deal with the remains in an appropriate fashion. Babtie managed to get WDC to agree to pay an amount to cover the archaeological excavation of the impacted area, but did not get funding for the report. Therefore, the results of this work are still unpublished and inaccessible to the wider public and archaeological community alike.

A total of 28 Saxon Burials were encountered and examined during excavation reduction works of the rear terrace to the south east of the Bull Inn. Foundations Archaeology carried out the work but were never paid by WDC for the completion of the work and as such, no report exists. I have had several conversations with Roy King, Director of Foundations Archaeology regarding this site as it is of great local and regional importance, particularly when brought into the context of the Bishop's Palace site. Mr King has suggested that the remains showed some deformity and were indicative of Pilgrim burials associated with the shrine of St Andrew located in the vicinity. This site and the associated sites of the Church and the Bishops Palace are of great importance and the archaeological resource should have been given far greater consideration.

Much of the information we have at the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for this site has been gathered by myself through conversations with Mr King and particular background research during my tenure at Berkshire Archaeology. I have taken a keen interest in trying to move this piece of work to a satisfactory conclusion, particularly as there are ongoing issues, both to do with planning and management of the Bishop's Palace site to which the excavated remains were associated.

In addition, recent minimal works at the site were approved with a suitable condition attached and human remains were again encountered during archaeological investigation, albeit incomplete burials (as charnel remains).

In keeping with WDC Policy and general planning guidance archaeological work should have been a requirement here from the outset. Due to an error, this was not the case, but although work was carried out it was only partly funded and not to a satisfactory end. As the advisor and curatorial service to WDC, Berkshire Archaeology only considers work to be complete upon the correct dissemination of the results in the form of appropriate reporting. We do this to ensure that development processes adhere to the established policy and guidance of the District, County and Nation. It would therefore seem inappropriate for the Unitary authorities we advise to be subject to different rules than those in the private sector who are required by these established policies and guidance notes to carry out archaeological work in as part of planning conditions or pre-determination works.

I have received a revised cost from Foundations Archaeology for the post-excavation, archiving and report for the excavations at the Bull Inn (Saxon burials). The cost is £3,000, which should be about right for the level of work that remains outstanding. However, this does not include publication costs for entering a summary in an appropriate journal which is normally a standard required element to any significant

piece of archaeological field work. I have discussed this with Roy King at Foundations and in order to keep potential cost to a minimum, I have suggested that the details be made available on the Foundations website (obviously the *grey literature* report would be held at the SMR for public research etc) and that only a summary section be added into a published journal. This would be approximately another £500. Therefore, the total estimated cost for bringing the outstanding works at the Bull Inn to completion would be £3,500. Bearing in mind the level of expertise put into the project, the rapid response and flexibility that Foundations implemented to the work and the basic aspect of the archaeological requirement and best practice for dissemination of information, I think this is more than reasonable.

I would think it is in all parties' interests to complete this work by providing the necessary funding. It is unfortunate that the original recommended condition was not attached in the first instant, but the responsibility of the sequence of events really has to fall with WDC.

I trust the above is both informative and satisfactory and will aid you in hopefully making a decision on the correct way forward with this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or one of my colleagues, Mike Hall and Teresa Hocking, regarding the above.

Kind regards and many thanks,

David Thomason
Archaeology Officer

Sandra Bayden

From: Mark Cupit
Sent: 23 May 2007 09:11
To: Harold Sanders
Subject: RE: Archaeological Issues - The Bull Inn, Sonning

Quite - but this is thanks to you for raising it in the 1st place.
Thank you Harold.
M

-----Original Message-----
From: Harold Sanders
Sent: 23 May 2007 08:55
To: Mark Cupit
Subject: RE: Archaeological Issues - The Bull Inn, Sonning

Mark
Many thanks for the prompt and positive response. I believe it will be an interesting read and very significant part of Sonning's history. Harold

-----Original Message-----
From: Mark Cupit
Sent: 22 May 2007 14:29
To: 'Thomason, David'
Cc: Harold Sanders; Heather Thwaites; Clare Lawrence
Subject: RE: Archaeological Issues - The Bull Inn, Sonning

David
Thank you for your email and letter.
I agree WBC should pay the £3500; could you arrange for the work to be done and ask them to invoice me personally.
Thanks for your effort in drawing this to my attention.
Mark

Mark R Cupit

Development Control Manager

Wokingham Borough Council,

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Useful Links

Did you know you can submit your planning application On-Line? Go to http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/ for 8 simple steps (you do not have to submit your plans online, just the forms will be sufficient to reap the benefits).

-----Original Message-----
From: Thomason, David [mailto:David.Thomason@reading.gov.uk]
Sent: 22 May 2007 13:46
To: Mark Cupit
Cc: Harold Sanders
Subject: Archaeological Issues - The Bull Inn, Sonning

Dear Mark,

Harold has mentioned to me that you would like a bit more background to the above site and the archaeological issues that are of concern to Berkshire Archaeology as your advisory service. Please find attached a letter that describes the sequence of events and the situation as I have come to understand it. A hard copy is also in the post.

As you know I'll be leaving post in 3 weeks time, but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any additional comments or queries.

Kind regards,
Dave

David Thomason
Archaeology Officer
Berkshire Archaeology
Tel: 0118 901 5976
Fax: 0118 901 5975

Berkshire Archaeology is a curatorial and advisory service for Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham <<Letter re. the Bull to Mark Cupit WDC 22.05.07.doc>>

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