

REDROW Archaeological Survey Work on Leckhampton/Farm Lane White Cross – 14-00838-FUL

We have kindly received some answers from Nick Shepherd on the archaeological work being carried out on the REDROW site, copied below for information. Mr Shepherd has reassured us they are only removing the topsoil, 20 to 40cm maximum, a LEGLAG member Oli Lawrence has seen much deeper excavation on site and the photo links on the map from Mary Nelson provide the evidence.

Hope to see some of you this evening at the School, REDROW have given us **NO** playspace for the kids in their new White Cross plans.

Best Regards

Ian Bickerton (250473) Margaret (523668)

Hugh Lufton our Planning Consultant has found the man in charge at the County Council, he is responsible making sure this work is sound archaeology and not jumping the gun on development, all the original contacts for this REDROW application are at the bottom of this document.

Charles Parry

Senior Archaeologist

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Dear Cllr Bickerton

Thank you for contacting me, I do indeed represent Redrow as regards the archaeological excavations at Farm Lane, Shurdington and I welcome the opportunity to provide answers to your questions. As I note below, the scale and scope of these works are based on previous surveys which have identified significant archaeological remains on the site, and on a methodology agreed with the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Officer, who advises both Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Councils. The works have been monitored by the planning enforcement officers at Tewkesbury Council and the Archaeology Officer and have been found to be compliant with agreed methodologies and all other requirements. The scale of the work is appropriate in view of the extent and significance of the archaeological remains. Works are temporary with plans in place to reinstate the land should this be required. The public right of way through the site has been maintained with fencing erected to ensure the safety of the public while the path is kept open. Please see below for my detailed answers to your questions.

- ***Has full consideration been given to non-intrusive survey methods which are sympathetic to the area being adjacent to the AONB/greenbelt with a national trail, the main Leckhampton footpath, traversing the site.***

As noted below, non-intrusive survey has already been carried out. The current phase of work is designed to investigate and record the below ground remains indicated by these earlier surveys and is necessarily invasive. The works on the site, although visible from the AONB, form only a very small part of its views and setting, are against the backdrop of existing housing development on the western side of Cheltenham, and as noted above, are temporary. As a result, the impact on the AONB is in our opinion negligible. The trail/footpath remains open through the site, and has been fenced, appropriately, for safety reasons. The major part of the trail beyond the site boundaries remains unaffected.

- ***Is this work informed by previous archaeological finds on this site or a geophysical survey, it would greatly help to reassure residents if this information can be provided.***

The site has previously been investigated by geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation, as required by the local authority, and this work has been reported on. The reports can be viewed (and downloaded) on the local authorities planning website by any interested party and are also publically available through the Gloucestershire County Heritage Environment Record. These reports make clear that archaeological remains of late Prehistoric and Roman date survive across much of the site and the local authority has required that detailed excavation take place. The excavation areas have been located over the main areas of archaeological survival and these are being recorded and

investigated in detail by a leading professional archaeological practice. No more is being excavated than is required to understand the nature and character of past human activity on the site, and the work is being carried out as rapidly as possible while ensuring that every care is taken to record the remains appropriately. All work is being undertaken to the standards required by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and is being monitored by the Archaeology Officer of Gloucestershire County Council.

- ***More recently the noise level has increased, more percussion in nature, very loud thumps to the ground, could you please explain the necessity of this to the needs of the archaeological work being undertaken. Could the 'archaeological' team be reminded that they are working in close proximity to a residential area, and to be aware of the noise disturbance and the times they can operate.***

The noise is due to the earth-moving machines having to occasionally clear their buckets of sticky clay subsoil. This can cause a banging sound. However, unless this is done the soil builds up in the bucket, much as it does on a shovel in the garden, and begins to make work extremely difficult. Occasional cleaning ensures that work can progress efficiently. Nevertheless, I will see what can be done to try and minimise any disturbance. As regards working times, machines do not operate before 8am or after 4.30pm, in part to address potential issues of noise in the mornings and evenings.

- ***How deep are you going with the mechanical excavation prior to the detailed archaeological work, some of the large areas are now over 1 metre in depth, do you have concern that archaeological evidence and artefacts are being removed into the soil mounds, what level/time are you investigating, what is the methodology ?***

We are only removing topsoil and a very small amount of subsoil and over most of the site the depths are in the region of 200mm to 400mm. All machine excavation is being undertaken under professional archaeological supervision to a standard that has been checked and commended by the County Archaeology Officer. No archaeological remains are being lost. In no areas have we excavated to 1m depth, except where hand excavation is being undertaken by archaeologists, or where very limited machine dug slots have been excavated to explore large deep features. We are using a methodology that is accepted on all archaeological sites across the UK and has been signed off as appropriate by the County Archaeology Officer. I would emphasise that Redrow have been extremely careful in their appointment of a specialist archaeological contractor; Oxford Archaeology, are an educational charity, and one of the leading archaeological research organisations in the UK having undertaken hundreds of similar projects, many in Gloucestershire, over 40 plus years.

- ***Have Tewkesbury Borough Council been informed of the scope of this work, has either REDROW or Archaeological Services obtained the correct planning permission to cover the scope of this mammoth project?***

Both Tewkesbury and Gloucestershire Councils have been informed, both have monitored our works and both have found that we are in compliance with all requirements.

- ***Is the netting and metal fencing over one of the eastern hedgerows part of the archaeological survey?***

Netting was placed over the hedges by the ecologists to prevent nesting birds taking up residence adjacent to areas where we would be running earthmoving plant. The netting encourages the birds to nest elsewhere and avoids disturbance to them. Unfortunately the fences have had to be erected because the netting has been vandalised.

- ***Can we have some assurance that the area will be reinstated as soon as the surveys are complete.***

The works have been designed to allow for re-instatement in the event that planning consent for the site is not forthcoming. Topsoil and sub-soil are being stored separately to allow the excavation areas to backfilled appropriately should this be required. We are already planning to backfill some areas as we complete excavation within them.

- ***The area of White Cross has a Local Green Space application, published here, can you please view this application and consider mitigation of the environmental damage being caused by your archaeological survey. Main LGS page for reference.***

Although not a formal requirement on us at this stage, works are being carried out with reference to the full Environmental Impact Assessment carried out as part of the Redrow application. As an example, ecology consultants have been retained by Redrow and our works take place with reference to their findings and recommendations. I am not aware of any significant environmental damage being caused by the archaeological works, and furthermore our works have been inspected by enforcement officers from Tewkesbury Council and have been found to be compliant with all requirements.

You will be aware the residents concern on the scale of this work has been reported in the media, our local press, the radio and on TV it's time we started to work together, this is not good for the reputation of REDROW, could we please have a site meeting to discuss the plans and do something about the increasing levels of noise.

I am aware of the resident's concerns and have been in regular correspondence with a number of them, in an attempt to reassure them that the work we are undertaking is required, appropriate, professionally undertaken, and is not development or construction. I know that Tonic, the team supplying plant and facilities, have also fielded a large number of inquiries. Tewkesbury Council have also been in touch with residents and other stakeholders. I certainly agree that continued dialogue is useful and important and have forwarded your request for a meeting to the Redrow team.

The Farm Lane site is already revealing significant archaeological evidence, parts of a late prehistoric/early Roman rural landscape, with the remains of small farming settlements set within their fields, and linked by trackways. These remains are located across large areas of the site and the team are committed to undertake a thorough and professional job of archaeological research. At the end of this the land will either be returned to agriculture, or will be developed for housing. The archaeology team occupy the site temporarily, for archaeological research purposes only, and have no stake in the future use of the site which will be determined through the normal planning process. While the team are on site they do have a responsibility to ensure their works are safe, comply with environmental constraints, and to undertake all reasonable actions to avoid any negative impacts on the local community. I hope that my answers to your questions help to reassure you and the residents you represent that we are delivering on these objectives.

Should you have any further questions I will be pleased to try and answer them.

Kind regards

Nick Shepherd, BA PGDip MCIfA

Director, Archaeology

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Dear Mr Shepherd,

I was given your name as the Project Manager for the intrusive archaeological survey work being carried out on behalf of REDROW at Leckhampton, Cheltenham. Residents are raising many concerns and questions over the environmental destruction being caused to this much loved part of the countryside. The scale of this study has shocked the Leckhampton residents as shown by our aerial survey photograph, please see attached.

Questions & Concerns

- Has full consideration been given to non-intrusive survey methods which are sympathetic to the area being adjacent to the AONB/greenbelt with a national trail, the main Leckhampton footpath, traversing the site.

- Is this work informed by previous archaeological finds on this site or a geophysical survey, it would greatly help to reassure residents if this information can be provided.
- More recently the noise level has increased, more percussion in nature, very loud thumps to the ground, could you please explain the necessity of this to the needs of the archaeological work being undertaken. Could the 'archaeological' team be reminded that they are working in close proximity to a residential area, and to be aware of the noise disturbance and the times they can operate.
- How deep are you going with the mechanical excavation prior to the detailed archaeological work, some of the large areas are now over 1 metre in depth, do you have concern that archaeological evidence and artefacts are being removed into the soil mounds, what level/time are you investigating, what is the methodology ?
- Have Tewkesbury Borough Council been informed of the scope of this work, has either REDROW or Archaeological Services obtained the correct planning permission to cover the scope of this mammoth project ?
- Is the netting and metal fencing over one of the eastern hedgerows part of the archaeological survey ?
- Can we have some assurance that the area will be reinstated as soon as the surveys are complete.

The area of White Cross has a [Local Green Space application, published here](#), can you please view this application and consider mitigation of the environmental damage being caused by your archaeological survey. [Main LGS page for reference](#).

You will be aware the residents concern on the scale of this work has been reported in the media, our local press, the radio and on TV it's time we started to work together, this is not good for the reputation of REDROW, could we please have a site meeting to discuss the plans and do something about the increasing levels of noise.

Best Regards
 Cllr Ian Bickerton
 Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council
 01242 250473

**Dear Nick,
 Thanks for this information, a meeting would be useful.**

One follow-up question, is all the topsoil being kept on site ? Please bear in mind the most sensitive part of this site is the hedgerows and the amenity green space requested along the line of the footpath, please take care on these areas. Skylark nesting sites have already been destroyed.

Hopefully the digging is now complete, but please be aware the start time for any activity that is causing a potential noise disturbance is 9am, maybe there is a special bucket for clay soils.

**Best Regards
 Ian Bickerton**

On 27/04/2015 22:26, LEGLAG wrote:

We are getting many questions from anxious residents as to what is happening on the White Cross area, Leckhampton/Farm Lane with the three large diggers, all the metal fencing and the large amounts of earth moving, they even have a car park with hardcore being put down, see attached aerial photograph (courtesy of Graham Watson). REDROW do **NOT** have planning permission but seem to have started development of the site under the guise of some sort of archaeological study.

From our point of view it's large scale destruction of the White Cross habitat, environmental vandalism at it's worst. REDROW have already broken the law with removal of ancient hedgerows and trees without permission from

Tewkesbury Borough Council. Speaking to Sergeant Simon Clemett (Rural Environmental Crime Liaison Officer) on Friday, he came to look at the other hedgerow under threat on Farm lane, this had netting put back last week with additional large metal fencing on both sides, in his expert opinion he thought that much of the hedgerow will not survive. These ancient hedgerows date back to the 1778 Act of Inclosure for Leckhampton, yet they are destroyed by council officer indecision and developer employees seemingly totally driven by profit and bonuses.

REDROW are taking turf offsite, and workmen say they will not be putting it back so no reinstatement after this archaeological work has been completed, this is illegal without planning permission. What does this say about their true intentions, where is this turf and topsoil going, maybe another REDROW site, what impact will this have on the ecology of the farmland on White Cross ? In answer to a question on the Local Green Space application and the play space requested on White Cross, REDROW have given a point blank refusal stating it would conflict with the 'secure by design', PC Mark Murphy (Crime Prevention Design Advisor Community Engagement, Police Headquarters, Gloucester) refutes this statement and even redrew the REDROW plans on his CAD system to add the green/play space to the REDROW design.

Oli Laurence believes this to be psychological warfare from REDROW, trying to wear us down. Tony Meredith our bird expert believes there is something more sinister, their mission is to remove the hedgerow as soon as possible, the hedgerow is in conflict with their housing plans, in our view it's both of the above.

Some residents believe that if this REDROW application goes through in it's present form with the current high density then it will help save the remainder of the Leckhampton Fields. **This could not be further from the truth**, no infrastructure is being provided by REDROW, a new school will be needed and other road improvements this can only be paid for by a comprehensive development in Leckhampton paid for by Bovis and Miller Homes, please read the objections made by Cheltenham Borough Council and the previous Inspectors Reports, the White Cross site at 370 cannot be sustainable in isolation.

If you want to get involved please get emails out to our local press and other contacts below, ask questions, maybe a polite request to the REDROW Chairman to consider a shared play space and to protect the Cheltenham Circular Walk. Let them know your views, what's happening on White Cross is a complete failure of the planning law. If anyone has any TBC officer/councillor contacts use them now, please copy this email on to others, we need more of the younger generation to get involved, they know the value of protecting the environment, we need to pick up our game and take this to REDROW.

Any ideas on what could be done, please get in touch !

Best Regards Ian (250473) & Margaret (523668)

Steve Morgan - REDROW Chairman (Probably the man who could really help and ensure fairness)

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Steve Morgan founded Redrow in 1974 and led the business from a small civil engineering contractor to become one of the UK's leading home builders. He floated the Company in 1994 and eventually stepped down as Chairman in November 2000, returning to the helm in March 2009.

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