

## Appendix C

### Archaeology and Unlisted Historic Buildings : A Case Study from Buckinghamshire

It is thankfully now rare indeed for listed buildings to be completely demolished but there is still often little protection afforded to unlisted buildings of historic or archaeological interest unless they lie within a conservation area. A recent case from Buckinghamshire illustrates how the significance of such buildings cannot always be appreciated from existing information and that they can all too easily fall through gaps in planning guidance and between the responsibilities of conservation and archaeological officers.

“The Kya” was a small cob-built thatched cottage on the edge of the village of Ludgershall to the west of Aylesbury. It lay outside the rather tightly drawn conservation area and was not listed. Although still inhabited the Kya was in a poor state of repair. A scheme to extend the cottage having been rejected consent was sought for its demolition and replacement by a new dwelling. Although an archaeological assessment had been undertaken in connection with the proposed extension this had been essentially negative and had not considered the building itself for it was not under threat at that time. Historic maps showed that there had been a building on the site since at least the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but the Kya was of such simple character as to be essentially undateable from its architecture, although conventional wisdom suggested a 17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century date for earth-walled structures in Buckinghamshire. The possibility of listing was considered by the local conservation officer and discussed with the listing inspector but rejected due to the cottage’s much altered state (i.e. two modern extensions plus porch and modern windows) and the difficulty in establishing its true age. The Kya was demolished in the summer of 2002 with archaeological building recording being undertaken as a condition of consent. Samples taken from the main roof timbers during demolition have subsequently been dated to 1569 from their tree rings. Tragically, a rare example of an Elizabethan peasant’s cottage of the humblest sort had been lost. This was all the worse because around the village lie the earthwork remains of one of the best preserved medieval open field systems in England recently recognised by English Heritage and surely worked from this very house.

It is to be hoped that the current review and integration of PPG s 15 and 16 to create a new Planning Policy Statement and technical guidance on the whole historic environment will help plug this loophole. Informed assessment (if necessary involving archaeological intervention and scientific analysis) prior to the determination of planning applications ought to allow for the retention of important unlisted historic buildings, and their listing where sufficient information is brought to light. Where assessment indicates that retention cannot be justified it may still be appropriate to require detailed archaeological building recording prior to demolition perhaps complemented by a watching brief. Such a process would involve the systematic use of tried and tested procedures used on applications affecting archaeological sites for more than a decade. These procedures are not restricted to designated (scheduled) ancient monuments and indeed are sometimes already applied by local planning authorities to historic buildings and structures of

archaeological interest. It will be important that the new PPS explicitly endorses requirements for proper assessment of impacts on unlisted historic buildings to prevent further avoidable losses. Proposals for the development of integrated Historic Environment Records covering historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites will also be invaluable in this respect.