

Quarrendon SAM Progress Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 19th September 2007

Authors: Report by the County Archaeological Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To update the Forum on proposals for the future management of the scheduled ancient monument at Quarrendon

B. PROPOSED ACTION

- 2 **The Forum is invited to:**

ENDORSE and SUPPORT the recommendations of the Quarrendon Working Party.

C. RESOURCES

- 3 Indicative costings are provided in section 8 below but further work has indicated that these are minimum figures. Whilst set-up costs might be achieved through grant applications longer term revenue costs are more difficult in the absence of a substantial endowment or identified revenue stream.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 The Quarrendon site comprises 83 hectares of land between the Berryfields and Weedon Hill Major Development Areas immediately to the north of Aylesbury its boundaries being defined on the west by the Berryfields MDA, the east by Weedon Hill MDA, south by the River Thames and north by the proposed Western Link Road (WLR). The site is occupied by the Quarrendon scheduled ancient monument, associated meadows and water courses and other agricultural land. It is currently owned by the Diocese of Oxford but ownership is to be passed to the Berryfields Development Consortium as a private agreement linked to construction of the Western Link Road.
- 5 The ancient monument comprises the ruins of St.Peter's Church, a moat and ponds, substantial embankments of a Tudor garden and rabbit warren and more subtle, but nonetheless well defined, remains of other garden features and medieval settlements. The scheduled site is of national importance and protected under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979 (as amended). The remainder of the site has no specific

heritage designation but forms the “setting” of the SAM, including historic watercourses, flood meadows and hedgerows. Ecological interests are more modest but include black poplar, hedgerows, ponds and amphibians, badgers, bats, hares and birds (e.g. heron). At present there is only public access along a right of way to the ruined church where there is a rather dated BCC interpretation board.

- 6 The AVDC Section 106 agreement currently approaching signature allows for the payment of a sum to maintain the site or transfer of ownership to AVDC. In summary, if AVDC elects NOT to take a transfer of the Quarrendon Park Land within 6 months of receiving a notice from the Developer then inter alia the Developer covenants to:
- Appoint and pay for the cost of an Archaeologist and Ecologist prior to commencement of development,
 - To pay the Quarrendon SAM contribution (£188,075.00) to the Council prior to occupation of 675 dwellings, and;
 - To allow the Archaeologist and Ecologist access to those part of the land to enable them to supervise to the measures and works set out in the Quarrendon SAM Management Plan.

If however AVDC elects to take a transfer of the QPL then the Developer covenants as follows:

- to deliver a transfer of the land to the Council prior to occupation of 675 dwellings on the development site.

The sum of £188,075 is to be paid by the developers of Berryfields. There is an additional sum to be paid by the developers of Weedon Hill (£53,046.73) which is 22% of the total cost of the mitigation measures set out in the management plan. Should AVDC decide to accept a transfer of the land, it would still get the £53k from the Weedon Hill development.

- 7 After some consideration AVDC decided in May 2006 to take no further action to acquire the site for “country park” type management. In light of this decision, BCC’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community and Environment on 26th September 2006 recommended to Cabinet: *“That the County Council facilitate a meeting between relevant stakeholders with a view to discussing the protection and management of the Quarrendon Site and the area of land between the site and the River Thame.”* The recommendation was accepted on 16th October 2006 and a Working Party duly established under the chairmanship of the Council’s Chief Officer. The Working Party has met on three occasions agreeing a Statement of Significance for the Site; considering four options for different levels of site management and selecting a preferred option and obtaining legal advice on establishing a charity to manage Quarrendon. The management options considered were:

1. **Do- Minimum:** involves basic care and maintenance essentially maintaining current agricultural use with no additional public access or other enhancements.
2. **Limited Access:** involves basic care and maintenance essentially maintaining current agricultural use but with some enhancements to the natural and historic environment and improved public access and interpretation.
3. **Promoted Access:** involves management principally as public open space (albeit with continued grazing) with an enhanced natural and historic environment and promoted public access serving local communities within walking/cycling distance. This option would also realise the site's educational potential.
4. **Countryside/Heritage Hub:** A visitor facility serving communities across and beyond Aylesbury. Management as option 3 but with the addition of a car park and visitor centre, perhaps reconstructions of historic structures and other attractions.

Indicative costings are available for each option and some possible funding sources have been identified.

8 The conclusions of the Working Party are that:

1. Public (LA or Trust) ownership of the land is desirable for all options and essential to secure the grant aid necessary to implement options 3 or 4.
2. Exploring GAF III for purchase, capital works and endowment should be a high priority.
3. A charitable trust would have greater access to grant aid than a local authority with lower match-funding expectations.
4. Resources currently available from the Berryfields and Weedon Hill Section 106 only permit the "Do-minimum" option 1. This could be achieved if agreement could be reached with a sympathetic private landowner or with a small (est. £1-2k) annual subsidy if the land is acquired through the Section 106.
5. The "Limited Access" option 2 could perhaps be implemented by agreement with a sympathetic private landowner but would be a high risk due to the lack of control over land and restricted grant options available (Environmental Stewardship). The financial model suggests a small (c £2k per annum) shortfall. More plausibly option 2 could be implemented by a public owner through a series of modest funding bids supported by an annual revenue commitment of c £10k.

6. Option 3 “Promoted Access” would provide a high quality green infrastructure resource but without the facilities of a “hub”. This would be consistent with the site’s character and likely appeal, although the addition of a small car park may be desirable. Implementation would require more substantial additional set-up grant funding (c £165k) and revenue commitment (c £50k pa).
7. The appropriateness and financial viability of Option 4 “Countryside/Heritage Hub” is debateable and would need a full feasibility study. To facilitate this option further consideration needs to be given to the site’s linkages to the MDAs, particularly vehicular access off the WLR

8 Arising from these conclusions the Working Party’s recommendations are that:

- a) BCC acquire the Quarrendon Leas site either through the section 106 agreement or with GAF 3 funding with a view to:
- b) managing the site in the short-term on a Do-minimum; or Limited Access basis supported by GAF 3 funding if available then;
- c) transferring the site to a charitable company with a business plan aiming towards a hybrid variant of Options 3/4 “Promoted Access/Hub”
- d) take account of the Statement of Significance in future management arrangements
- e) Section 106 contributions are sought from future development around Aylesbury to build a trust endowment of c £1 million.

- 9 The above recommendations are to be reported to Buckinghamshire County Council’s Leader and Cabinet in October. A bid for Growth Area Funding (GAF) is being prepared in collaboration with Aylesbury Vale District Council and Aylesbury Vale Advantage.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Quarrendon Statement of Significance (Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society)
Quarrendon Management Options Appraisal (Buckinghamshire County Council)
Report to Quarrendon Working Party on Establishing a Charity to Manage Quarrendon (Bevan Brittan for Buckinghamshire County Council)

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