

Quarrendon Leas Progress Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 24th September 2008

Authors: Report by the County Archaeologist

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:**

NOTE the establishment of the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust, progress towards securing Quarrendon Leas and current issues.

C. RESOURCES

- 3 Indicative costings have been prepared for four management options and were summarised in a report to the September 2007 meeting. Funding earmarked for 2008/9 comprises £100,000 from Growth Area Funds; £20,000 from English Heritage and £20,000 from Buckinghamshire County Council.

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 Taylor-Wimpey as part of the Berryfields Development Consortium.
- 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 allows for the payment of a sum (£188,075.00) to maintain the site or transfer of ownership to AVDC prior to occupation of 675 dwellings on the development site. There is an additional sum to be paid by the developers of Weedon Hill (£53,046.73). After some consideration AVDC decided in May 2006 to take no further action to acquire the site. At the behest of BCC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community and Environment the County Council then established a Working Party under the chairmanship of the Council's Chief Officer. The Working Party met on five 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.
- 7 The Working Party's recommendations were 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.
- 8 In February 2008, the County Council decided to establish a Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust to own and manage land for its conservation and amenity value. The Trust has now been incorporated. The first meeting of trustees is to be held on 1st October. Negotiations are continuing to secure the transfer of the land to the Trust by means of a Section 106 legal agreement between Berryfields Development Consortium and Aylesbury Vale District Council. However, it is likely that land transfer will be delayed as a consequence of the housing market 'crash' as development has not yet commenced. The possibility of undertaking access and conservation works under licence is being explored. As noted above, funding has been identified for 2008/9 – this is to undertake a contaminated land assessment; provide a surfaced route from the Berryfields MDA to the church and moat and also to undertake essential conservation and health and safety works to the moated site. Bids for a consultancy contract to implement these works are being evaluated. The possibility of

constructing a new footbridge across the Thame from the Quarrendon estate was considered but ruled out at this stage for reasons of expense and uncertainty over the need.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Quarrendon Scheduled Ancient Monument. Decision by the Cabinet Members for Resources and Community Services (February, 2008)
<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/ieDecisionDetails.asp?ID=723&J=2>

Quarrendon Statement of Significance (Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society)

Quarrendon Management Options Appraisal (Buckinghamshire County Council)

Quarrendon SAM Progress Report (Bucks Historic Environment Forum, September 2007)

Report to Quarrendon Working Party on Establishing a Charity to Manage Quarrendon (Bevan Brittan for Buckinghamshire County Council)

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SITE PLAN

