

APPENDIX 6**KCC Archaeology Comments (Dated 25/10/21)**

21/501740/FULL | Erection of a nurse accommodation building, car park and outdoor event space for Demelza. Erection of 30 private residential dwellings, together with associated access, parking, highway works, drainage and landscaping. | Land At Hill Farm Rook Lane Keycol Hill Bobbing Kent

Thank you for consulting on the above proposed development at Rook Lane, Bobbing and I apologise for the delay in responding to you and any inconvenience caused.

I note that the principle of development has already been established on this site with a former permission granted for nursing accommodation together with enabling development comprising residential dwellings. I have taken that as context for my present advice to you. In my advice to you below I am referring to the general archaeological potential of the area, the specific potential for remains of First World War defences of the Chatham Landfront and the potential impacts of development.

Archaeological potential – Prehistoric to post medieval

The area proposed for development has significant archaeological potential. It lies on the north side of the main London to Kent Coast Roman road that broadly follows the A2 corridor through Swale. Significant roadside activity is known alongside that road dating to the Roman and later periods. In particular there is a known focus of Roman settlement a short distance (c.400m) to the west of the proposed site around the present nursing home on Keycol Hill. Associated with that is an extensive Roman cemetery at Crockfield (named after the pottery from Roman cremation urns found in the soils there) and a recently discovered Roman industrial site, with temple, found to lie adjacent to a branch road to the Medway coast at Newington. Roman cremations have also been discovered during works on the former telephone exchange site to the west of the present site. A general prehistoric and Iron Age background to this area is also well established. A ring ditch, possibly the remains of a ploughed out Bronze Age burial mound has been seen as a cropmark on the high ridge immediately to the east of the present site. The present field has also been the subject of metal detecting in recent years with a number of medieval and post medieval finds having been recovered.

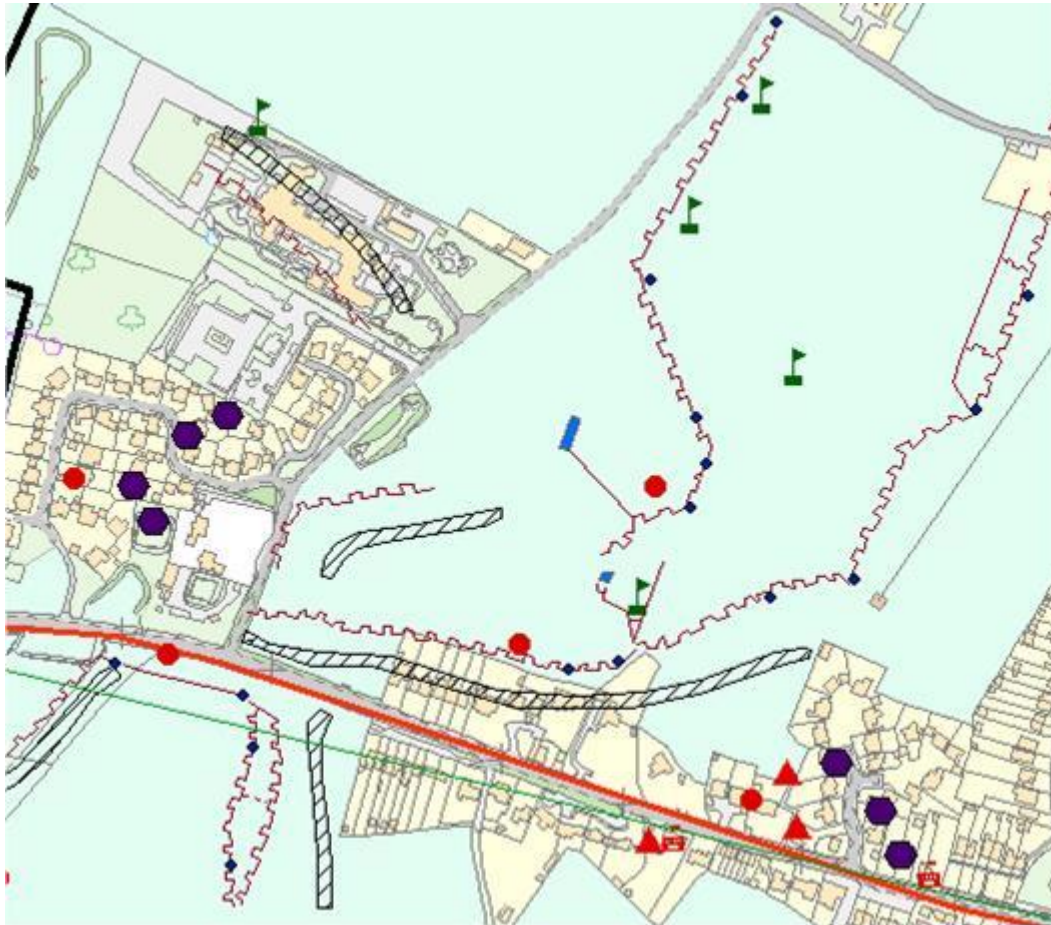
First World War defences – Chatham Landfront

An important set of First World War defences known as the Chatham Land Front extend along the western side of the Stockbury Valley (the A249 corridor) from Detling to Bobbing and Iwade. This defence was designed to prevent an invading force moving westward towards Chatham and the important naval dockyard and garrisons there. It occupied the high ground to the west of the valley with commanding views to the east. The line varied in character along its length but included, in places, three lines of trenches, machine gun emplacements, redoubts and underground features. Particular strong points were established at strategic points alongside the A2 and railway lines and on other key hills along the defensive line.

The extracted map from the Kent HER below illustrates the general layout in the area of the present development and the wider agricultural field in which it is to be sited.

APPENDIX 6

This has been transcribed from mapping held in the National Archive and has some potential inaccuracy but was produced as a working map of the defences at the end of the first World War. Cropmarks and fieldwork elsewhere in Swale have established that it generally survives as a buried heritage asset having been backfilled by German prisoners of War in 1919. It also survives as earthworks in the local woodland and a number of machine gun emplacements survive locally. As well as the mapped evidence there are also collections of photographs in an album of the defences in the Royal Engineers Museum at Chatham. The collection includes features shown on this area of mapping.



The above map extract shows fire trenches as crenelated lines (maroon), barbed wire in black hatched strips, machine gun emplacements as dark blue diamonds on the trench lines and underground shelters in light blue. Flags and red dots refer to other records in the Kent HER. As can be seen on the map extract:

- Within the wider field the main first (front) fire line lies to the east of the high ridge that runs through the central part of the field, it turns back to run parallel with the A2 along the rear boundary of the properties along Keycol Hill. Cropmarks do show this survives in part as a buried feature at the rear of those properties.

APPENDIX 6

- A second fire line extends along the ridge that runs through the field immediately east of the present application site. This turns north westward and runs just to the east of Rook Lane and north of the present site.
- Extending from the first and second line trenches are communication lines to rear underground (or semi sunk) shelters / dug-outs designed to protect the garrison from enemy shelling. One of these falls on the edge of the proposed development site though has not been precisely located.
- Small areas of additional support or third line trenching are known to fall both within the western edge of the proposed development site and also the present development to the west of Rook Lane.

Impact of development on archaeology

The development has been sited to sit to the east of the main hill crest through the field for landscape purposes and therefore will both avoid impacting on the first and second east facing fire lines and also their field of fire. The development will occupy an area that includes the return of the front line trench parallel to the A2 and to the rear of the properties on Keycol Hill. The section between those gardens and Rook Lane falls entirely within the proposed site. The fragment of third line trench that runs along Rook lane also falls within the site or its fringes. The large underground / semi sunk shelter may fall within the eastern fringe of the site.

The application site may also include remains of an earlier date (prehistoric to medieval) given the background potential of this area, its general topography and the location just to the north of the main Roman road. Development groundworks for site preparation, construction, drainage and landscaping could impact on archaeology where present.

Mitigation

Further assessment including survey and evaluation is needed to establish exactly how the development may affect the remains of the First World War defences and mitigation put in place to reduce any impact. An initial first step should be accurately plotting the known maps against development features. The known trenches within the site have already been partially compromised but could potentially be protected in the design of open space areas, which in the present plan they mostly lie. Given that the principle of development has already been established for this site I would advise that in any forthcoming permission provision is made for archaeological evaluation of the development impacts with appropriate mitigation that may include measures to preserve in situ significant remains including those of the Chatham Land Front. For the wider archaeological potential it would again be appropriate to secure archaeological evaluation and mitigation through the permission.

Given the significance and interest of the Chatham land Front it would be appropriate that as part of any mitigation provision for on-site interpretation is included to enable the history of the site and the wider area to be better understood and presented to the local community.

The following conditions would be suitable.

APPENDIX 6

To secure assessment, survey, evaluation and mitigation of the impacts of development on archaeology including remains of the Chatham Land Front:

AR5 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of
i. archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
ii. following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of adverse impacts through preservation in situ or by record.

Where significant remains are found to ensure agreement on appropriate preservation measures:

AR2 No development shall take place until details of foundations designs and any other proposals involving below ground excavation have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason : To ensure that due regard is had to the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains.

To secure an appropriate scheme of interpretation of the site's archaeology and history, and in particular the Chatham Land Front:

No occupation of any building shall take place until a scheme of historical interpretation has been submitted to and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Examples of how to relay and interpret the archaeology and history of the site can include, but are not limited to, the use of materials, landscaping, public art and the provision of historical interpretation boards. The details submitted pursuant to this condition shall include location, design, dimensions and materials of any fixed interpretation. The interpretation scheme shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of any new dwelling and shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory visual appearance and to ensure the development makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework