West Sussex County Council Planning Services

Response to consultation (planning application): ARCHAEOLOGY

TO: Adur and Worthing Councils (FAO Peter Barnett, Development Management)

Cc.: Development Management, Adur and Worthing Councils

DATE OF RESPONSE: 15th May 2019

REFERENCE: AWDM/0566/19

LOCATION: Old Fort, Forthaven, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex

PROPOSAL: Application for permanent permission of WWII style Nissen hut and food hut to be used as education facility in connection with Scheduled Ancient Monument (previously approved for a 5 year temporary period under AWDM/1560/14).

RECOMMENDATION:

No objection on archaeological grounds.

SUMMARY:

- During construction and in their existing operational use, the two huts have not caused any physical harm to the Monument.
- The visual impact of the two huts upon the setting of the Monument, and the degree to which they affect the visitor's experience of the Monument – discussed in the comments below – is considered to be "minor adverse" in scale, not involving substantial or any marked harm (NPPF para. 194).
- The positive enhancement to the Monument, brought about through the educational use of the huts to raise awareness of its significance, is welcomed (NPPF para. 196).
- Accordingly no objection is raised to the proposal to make permanent the temporary 5-year permission for erection of the huts.
- Policies – National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019, paragraphs 194, 196, 200; Adur Local Plan 2018, Policies 16 and 17 (Historic Environment).

COMMENTS:

Located within the Shoreham Fort Scheduled Ancient Monument, the proposal will require Scheduled Monument Consent (to be applied for through Historic England), as well as

planning permission, because the existing Consent, for the temporary 5-year period permitted by AWDM/1560/14, will expire on 1st October.

The Nissen Hut and Food Hut sit upon the concrete bases of former World War 2 buildings, the Nissen hut's concrete base originally supporting an earlier Nissen Hut (long since demolished and removed) during World War II. In turn the wartime Nissen huts had been built over the foundations of the Victorian Fort's rear wall, of which nothing is now visible above ground.

Because they occupy previously existing hard standings, the erection of the Nissen Hut and Food Hut in 2014 involved no ground excavations, and therefore no ground intrusion affecting buried remains of the Victorian Fort. Their continued existence should have no direct impact upon buried archaeological remains of the Fort.

The effect of the structures upon the setting of the Monument is relevant. From outside and to the rear, the Nissen Hut appears half-sunken below the level of the access track leading past the Lookout Station; it is easy to look over and past it to see into the interior of the Fort. The Food hut is only slightly sunken, but its smallness and low height equally make it a minor obstacle to the view from outside.

From the other side of the Harbour, the only prominent surviving feature of the Victorian landscape contemporary with the Fort is Kingston (now Shoreham) lighthouse. From the lighthouse, the Nissen Hut and Food Hut present no obstacles to the view of the Fort across the Harbour.

From within the Fort, the two huts stand to the rear and landward, outside the key seaward field of view of the fortifications and former gun emplacements. The lighthouse can clearly be seen across the Harbour, the Harbour view itself being only slightly obstructed by the structures.

For the reasons set out above, the proposed continuation of the existing Nissen Hut and Food Hut will not cause any physical harm to the Monument. The huts do not detract markedly from the visitor's experience of the Victorian Fort. While they would continue to have some impact upon the setting of the Monument, as a designated heritage asset of the highest grade, this impact should be classified as "minor adverse", not involving substantial harm to the Monuments' fabric or setting.

Referring to paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the less than substantial harm to the Monument caused by perpetuation of the huts should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals. In terms of enhancement of the Monument, the use of the huts for educational purposes over the last five years of the temporary permission has raised awareness of Shoreham Fort's significance to the history of Sussex.

To conclude, in view of the only minor adverse impact upon the Monument of the proposal to make the temporary permission permanent, and the welcomed enhancement of the Monument caused through the educational use of the huts, no objection on archaeological grounds is raised to the proposals.

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