

Application WSCC/031/14/LU

Cornfield School, Cornfield Close, Wick, Littlehampton

Proposal

**New, single storey, two classroom extension
with addition parking provision**

West Sussex County Council ARCHAEOLOGY response

Summary:

No objection to the proposals, no archaeological response required.

Comment:

In response to a consultation from Sarah Crocker of WSCC Property in November 2013 relating to new build proposals in connection with special schools in West Sussex (and which included Cornfield School) my colleague John Mills wrote:

"I suggest that:

- if there would only be smaller new build, tacked on to the existing school buildings, there would be likely to have been some previous archaeological impact from landscaping: new archaeological impact would be low and dispersed, and no watching brief, or any other archaeological mitigation, would be merited; but –
- if there is new build involved, in each case of more than 5000 square metres in plan area (developable footprint), in single locations, and in previously un-built parts of the sites, then there should either be an archaeological watching brief, during development; or archaeological investigation, before development."

An archaeological desk based assessment (DBA) report was commissioned from CgMs consulting on the implications of the proposals. It is not clear (in the light of John Mills' comments above) whether this was through Kier Construction or WSCC (and if the latter why John Mills or myself had not been asked to advice first).

The DBA concluded that the site can be considered to have potential for below ground archaeological deposits associated with Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation (with a moderate potential for Roman remains 4.4.6). It considered that the construction of the school building and the creation of playing fields is likely to have had a widespread negative impact on any below ground features and deposits. In conclusion it recommended that no further archaeological work was necessary.

However, the archaeological DBA fails to mention that a ground investigation (and subsequent report) was undertaken in February 2014 by Geo-Environmental Services Ltd (GESL), on behalf of Kier Construction, which would have been useful for the purpose of comparison and analysis of borehole and test pit results which should have been discussed in the archaeological DBA. The archaeological DBA is also shown to be less thorough than the GESL report in the matter of map regression, where GESL note that the land immediately to the east of the school had been used as a brick field with clay extraction progressively moving right up to the present school boundary. Further west there is also evidence for clay extraction associated with brick making but there is no evidence, based on maps and historic air photographs, that extraction had ever taken place on the site later used by the school. The possibility of brick making and clay extraction is an important consideration to discuss in a DBA as the extraction process would have effectively completely removed archaeological features and any deposited material, whereas, even when development has taken place providing it was formerly 'green field', there may be a high degree of survival if remains are present.

Recommendation:

No further archaeological action necessary.

M Taylor 13/05/14