

# Calverton Preservation & History Society

## Hearing Position Statement

Week 3 Matter 15: Historic Environment

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1. Calverton Preservation & History Society's original comments principally consisted of a statement of support for the position adopted by Calverton Parish Council, which has been well-represented at other hearing sessions.
2. This statement is submitted in response to new GBC material (EX/43) published in the Examination Library at the beginning of February - an assessment of the impact of LPD development sites on scheduled ancient monuments. It is felt that it would be fair for the examination to consider written submissions regarding EX/43, as this is the first opportunity that has arisen to respond to this late evidence.
3. GBC's LPD process failed to take any reasonable account of the potential impact of the proposed development on the scheduled ancient monuments around Calverton. This was noted in comments submitted by Calverton Parish Council, which were supported by Calverton Preservation & History Society.
4. Study (EX/43) was submitted 'out of time' at the tail end of the LPD process. It is the position of the Calverton Preservation & History Society that this document is too little, too late. The commissioning of this study as an 'afterthought' provides confirmation that earlier decisions were taken in the absence of an appropriate evidence-base. Verbal confirmation of this fact was given at the Sustainability Appraisal hearing session in week 1; a GBC planning officer stated that there had been a necessity for the original assessment of the impact of development proposals on scheduled ancient monuments to be taken at LPA officer-level, due to the lack of response by archaeological experts at a County level. It is a significant concern that there is no contemporaneous written record of this decision-taking within the published plan material. The lack of transparency is reflected by an omission from the Sustainability Appraisal of any consistent analysis of, or justification for, the original conclusions reached by officers on this matter.
5. Calverton Preservation & History Society is extremely concerned and disappointed by the manner in which the scheduled ancient monuments in the vicinity of Calverton have been assessed - both at officer level (with no written evidence that any assessment occurred) and within the late EX/43 evidence. The EX/43 assessment of Calverton's key ridgeline heritage assets is flawed in its conclusions and gives the impression of serving to conveniently confirm allocation decisions that had already been taken.

6. The sites of the Iron Age hillforts are located at visually prominent points of the Calverton ridgeline. A substantial element of the significance of a hillfort as a heritage asset is derived from its hill-top setting. When originally in use, the visual prominence of a hillfort was important on both a practical and symbolic level. Visual prominence, therefore, provides a key aspect of the significance of these ridgeline- scheduled ancient monuments as heritage assets.

7. Both ridgeline monuments are located in distinctive wooded areas. The woodland serves to demarcate the positions of the ridgeline hillforts and provides a useful visual echo of the original wooden structures that would have stood far higher in the landscape than the current earthwork remains.

8. The assessment of the impact of development proposals on designated heritage assets should have formed an integral part of the sustainability appraisal and site-selection process from the earliest stages of the LPD process.

9. GBC's heritage assessment (EX/43) states that the ridgeline scheduled ancient monuments have **'no visual or spatial association with any of the LPD development sites'**. This assessment is erroneous in its conclusions - contradicting the position of the Calverton Preservation & History Society, Calverton Parish Council and Historic England. The degree of inaccuracy is such that this assessment should not be permitted to inform any decision-taking within this plan process with respect to Calverton' allocations.

10. Calverton Parish Council's submission neighbourhood plan includes a copy of comprehensive comments submitted by English Heritage (Historic England) in response to the proposed development of Dark Lane - site H14 (Appendix E of Calverton NDP Southern Ridge Evidence Document - EX/38).

11. The English Heritage advice gave particular consideration to the Fox Wood Iron Age hillfort. The fact that the Cockpit Hill scheduled monument is a similar heritage asset to Fox Wood, occupying the same ridgeline, makes the advice useful in assessing the extent of its setting too.

12. The advice makes it clear that the setting of the hillfort extends down the hillslope and that the ridgeline heritage asset is important to the settlement of Calverton, both in terms of its aesthetic and communal value:

***"The aesthetic is derived from the contrast and experience of the rural landscape against the urban historic form. This includes the enjoyment of views towards the rural landscape and beyond to the earthworks, and the understanding gained from looking back towards the historic urban settlement...."***

13. GBC's Heritage Assessment (EX/43) states that the local topography of a ridge line to the south west prevents the Main Street Site H15 from being visible from the scheduled monument on Cockpit Hill. The position of the hillfort is demarcated visually by the fact that it is located at a high point on the ridgeline. The wooded area around it emphasises its location. A hilltop public footpath runs around part of the periphery of the Cockpit Hill monument - there are direct visual links between the other SAM at Fox Wood, the settlement below and Site H15.

14. The Historic England advice also states that a relationship exists between the heritage asset and its wider setting regardless of direct visual links:

***"As policy advises, setting is not confined to visual factors such as sight lines and views, though these are very important, but also determined by historical and spatial associations between its features, even when they are not intervisible."***

15. Calverton's submission neighbourhood plan deals with Calverton's heritage and setting in detail, both in the main document (EX/36) and the Southern Ridge Area Evidence (EX/38) - GBC should have used this resource to help inform their site allocation process. GBC's Heritage Assessment EX/43 does not adequately assess Calverton's historic landscape as an integrated whole - there is no consideration of the interrelationship between the individual heritage assets, their shared settings and the setting of the built environment of Calverton. This connectivity was recognised in Calverton's Submission Neighbourhood Plan:

***"...views should be valued not only looking out from the village, but also looking into the village from the ridgeline. It establishes that a sense of place can be derived from the presence of such historic elements and that these need to be understood as part of the wider landscape, rather than in purely evidential site-specific terms. The interconnectivity between the heritage assets of the ridgeline, operates on both a cultural level and a more objective physical level (with a degree of intervisibility and the shared, easily accessed landscape setting)." (EX/38: Calverton NDP Southern Ridge Evidence Document, Section 3.4.3)***

16. Calverton Preservation & History Society requests both a modification to the LPD to delete Site H15 and a recognition within the SA of the importance that the Calverton community places on its historic environment. However, for the LPD plan to be sound, the sustainability appraisal process needed to have been properly embedded within the site-selection process. The approach adopted during the LPD process appears fundamentally flawed in this respect. Whilst this statement has had a necessarily narrow focus, it should be noted that it has been made apparent during this public examination that this fundamentally flawed approach is systemic and is raising similar concerns from other parties. The Sustainability Appraisal should not be used as a tool for retrospectively confirming decisions.