

Devizes Castle, Devizes, Wiltshire

Heritage Impact Statement Supporting Scheduled Monument Consent for Drainage Works

Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by BSA Heritage Limited on behalf of Mr K. Akao to support an application for Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for further work within the scheduled area of Devizes Castle required for repair and updating of the internal and external drainage system.
- 1.2 The application follows separate Scheduled Monument Consent secured for initial evaluation of the site to inform proposals, to facilitate enabling works and to allow excavation as part of underpinning of inadequately founded walls and removal of existing floor surfaces. Further work which will require SMC will include repairs to existing outer walls, upgrading of the access to the late 19th century Grade I listed Devizes Castle residential building and landscaping within its curtilage. However, the current SMC application is limited to proposals for construction of a new drainage system within and adjacent to the main building.
- 1.3 As the proposed works have the potential to impact the significance of scheduled parts of Devizes Castle, BSA Heritage has liaised with Mel Barge of Historic England as to the viability and requirements for its implementation. During discussion, it was agreed that existing SMCs were not suitable in themselves, but that low archaeological potential suggested SMC could be secured for further work. With SMC in place, further impacts, including those which are refined at a later stage, can be mitigated through suitable levels of investigation.

Results of Past Investigations

- 1.4 Past desk based assessment has indicated that the area to be affected has potential for medieval or later remains associated with the development of the scheduled castle, albeit that any remains are likely to have been affected by later development, including that of the Grade II* listed main building (BSA report ref. BSA2245_1a_270623).
- 1.5 More recently, archaeological investigations have been completed in three phases as part of wider evaluation informing an understanding of the castle's potential. Test pits were originally investigated in October 2023 by TVAS to inform proposals for wall and related repairs (Dawson 2023). The nature of the foundations of the current, likely Victorian inner castle curtain wall was clarified, but the fourteen limited extent test pits did not indicate any significant remains surviving below ground. A single sherd of redeposited Saxo-Norman pottery was recovered.
- 1.6 A second phase of 28 test pits in 2024 was designed to inform an understanding of the nature of archaeological deposits which might be impacted by repair and upgrading of the main building's access drive and its associated drainage as well as repairs to a bridge crossing the moat south of the main building and the potential within the interior of the main building where new floor surfaces and services, including drainage, were likely to be required (Dawson 2024). An area adjacent to the moat where temporary parking was proposed was also tested.

- 1.7 Again, the test pits did not indicate that any significant deposits survived at depths which might be affected by the proposals and only a small amount of redeposited medieval pottery was recovered. The access drive to the castle's main building appeared to be modern, whilst only later post-medieval deposits, probably associated with construction of the main building, were identified internally. No indication of significant remains was found adjacent to the castle moat.
- 1.8 In early 2025, further test pits were excavated to inform an understanding of the Fernery wall's foundations as this requires underpinning. Internal deposit depths were also clarified (Dawson 2025). A watching brief was also maintained during floor reduction in the north west of the main building. This work did reveal a stone surface which was fully recorded and appeared to be relatively modern and laid to support an overlying floor. Internally, a brick built cistern was also partially exposed by the lowering of the floor level and layers of cinder were also encountered. However, there were no indications that any of these features pre-dated construction of the listed main building in the late 19th century.

Forthcoming Drainage Elements

- 1.9 The finalised Aland Baxter Associates (ABA) proposals for repair and replacement of the Castle's drainage system have now been considered. The works will include the repair of a number of existing gulleys and man-hole access points and externally mounted new cast iron pipes which will not affect the ground surface. Pipes will normally be 100mm in diameter, but may be up to 150mm diameter. Terracotta pipes may be used externally.
- 1.10 Externally, works will be limited, with a dozen new short surface gulleys and rainwater pipes enhancing stormwater drainage along the drive and adjacent to the house to its east (ABA Figure 1969-020-300). Most of these will lead to existing man-holes which will be refurbished. Three new man-holes and an inspection chamber (MHs 17, 20 & 21 and ICO1) will be constructed north and west of Devizes Castle and in areas which are presently hard surfaced, with MH17 constructed into the drive. The new man-holes will be approximately a metre square and the inspection chamber has a total diameter of approximately 800mm. Where defined, MH17 will be 840mm deep and MH20 500mm deep (ABA Figure 1969-020-310). Depths for MH21 and ICO1 can not yet be confirmed, but would be less than 1.2 metres.
- 1.11 Within the Castle building, remaining modern floor slab in the plant room will be broken out. The average depth of the existing flooring to date has been circa 400mm. A total of nine 100mm diameter metal pipes will be installed below the main structure ranging in length from circa 15 metres in the south to little more than a metre (ABB Figure 1969-020-300). The longer of these are located under timber floors and can be suspended within the voids, so do not require excavation. Only those north of MH18 would require excavation of narrow trenches for insertion.
- 1.12 Two further man-hole access points will be constructed within the building, to include MH18 and MH19 and will have similar dimensions to those outside. MH18 will only need to be 400mm in depth, but MH19 will need to be circa 1260 mm. The majority of drainage structures which are made redundant by the proposals will be left and capped off. Two man-hole access points will be removed and their voids filled with inert material (MH12 & MH50).
- 1.13 New pipes will vary in depth below the ground surface, with a range of circa 400mm to 1200mm below finished ground level (ABA Fig. 1969-020-351). A minimum width of trench of 500mm will be required for pipe installation.

Justification, Impact Assessment and Mitigation

- 1.14 Consideration of the final proposals for new drainage indicates limited discrete impacts both internally and externally. A total of six new man-holes and inspection chamber are proposed and all would affect an area of approximately a square metre. Such an impact is similar in scale to a single archaeological test pit. Only MH19 is likely to extend more than a metre below current ground surface. Related trenches for new pipes are likely to be circa 600mm wide and to a similar or lesser depth.
- 1.15 Although not in exactly the same locations, test pits nearby, including in particular Test pit 42, have reached a maximum depth of more than a metre and not indicated any deposits earlier than later post-medieval. The overall level of finds in all areas investigated is low, whilst likely redeposited made ground has been identified throughout. Past assessment has inferred considerable disturbance across areas affected by the drainage proposals from construction of the 19th century Devizes Castle listed building and this is supported by the results of past investigations.
- 1.16 East of the house, only shallow gulleys and debris traps are proposed in the main, with the existing pipework and man-holes re-used. The one new man-hole, MH17 will be excavated to a depth of 840mm, which is likely to remain within the modern made ground of the access drive, given the results of several test pits in the second phase of evaluation. The gulleys and man-hole are likely to be constructed as part of a wider rebuilding of the access drive which will be subject to a separate SMC application.
- 1.17 Closer to the house, a small number of new drains and three man-holes/inspection chamber are proposed. Although not directly tested, test pitting in this area indicates a considerable depth of made-ground, with Test pit 45 reaching a depth of a metre adjacent to the Fernery.
- 1.18 Within the house itself, intrusive new pipework and man-holes are proposed in the rooms in the north west, north of the kitchen, which has a suspended wooden floor and where new excavation is not required. The likely nature of sub-surface deposits has been characterised by a total of nine test pits and monitoring of floor removal. Test pit 42 reached a depth of 1100mm and Test pit 33 a depth of circa 700mm. These lie close to the proposed MH19, which will be 1260mm deep. Neither of the test pits, nor any close by indicated any significant remains in the area affected by internal pipe trenches and the two man-holes.
- 1.19 Overall, low to moderate archaeological potential is assessed for the areas affected by the drainage proposals, with a minor level of impact. Given this, it is recommended that all excavation for new inspection points and trenching for pipes is subject to an archaeological watching brief. Replacement of gulleys within the existing drive and refurbishment of existing drainage elements will not require monitoring.

Conclusions

- 1.20 A total of more than forty test pits have now been dug across parts of Devizes Castle Scheduled Monument as proposals for its repair and refurbishment have evolved. The results of this work have been complemented by archaeological monitoring of the removal of internal floors within the castle's main building, which is Grade II* listed.
- 1.21 The results of fieldwork have complemented earlier desk based assessment in indicating that the limited impacts of the drainage works required for long-term future use of the site as a residence are unlikely to affect significant archaeological deposits. No indication of significant deposits has been found to date, with only a limited amount of redeposited medieval pottery recovered. Potentially affected deposits appear to be related to construction of the 19th century Devizes Castle main building and are certainly no earlier than post-medieval.
- 1.22 It is also the case that anticipated further development activity is likely to have a limited impact on the sub-surface, with deeper disturbance limited to a small number of inspection chambers and trenches to facilitate the installation of narrow metal pipes. The likely maximum depth of these intrusions below the historic floor level is circa 850mm.
- 1.23 Given the low archaeological potential and limited impacts assessed, discussion with Mel Barge of Historic England indicates that Scheduled Monument Consent for drainage proposals could be acceptable. SMC will require that, where appropriate, impacts be monitored in accordance with the existing methodology for a watching brief at the site, contained in TVAS's January 2024 Project Specification for Archaeological Monitoring and Test Pitting (TVAS ref. TW24/01).
- 1.24 In the unlikely event that significant remains relating to the earlier castle are exposed, an approach to dealing with these would be discussed with Historic England and the project team. If it is not possible to secure preservation *in situ*, more detailed investigation may be required ahead of the loss of the fabric. Where preservation *in situ* is feasible, the retained archaeological deposits would be protected and defined as agreed between Historic England and the project team. More detailed investigation would be undertaken in accordance with a separate methodology agreed with Historic England.