









# **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AROUND OLDPORT FARM, WHITTINGTON ROAD, OSWESTRY**

## **HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**Produced by the Old Oswestry Hillfort Campaign Group  
December 2013**

**CONTROLLED DOCUMENT**

Document No:1			
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## ABBREVIATIONS

BGS: British Geological Survey

HER: Historic Environment Record

NPPF: National Policy Framework

PPS(5): Planning Policy Statement

SM: Scheduled Monument

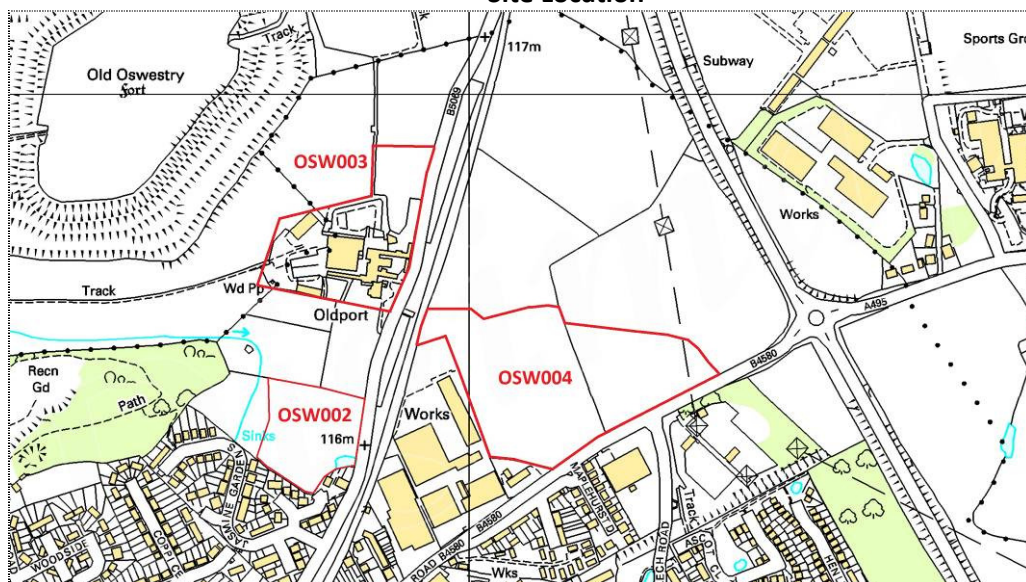
## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dr George Nash was commissioned by the Hands Off Old Oswestry Hillfort Campaign Group (HOOOH) to prepare a Heritage Statement on land that surrounds the eastern and southern hinterlands of Old Oswestry Hillfort (hill enclosure<sup>1</sup>) – referred to in this report as the ‘Study Area’. The Study Area incorporates the sites of Old Port Farm, Whittington, a section of Wat’s Dyke and evidence of ancient ridge and furrow fields between the hillfort and the A5 bypass.

Three parcels of land have been allocated for mixed development (referred to as OSW002, OSW003 & OSW004) and each lie within the probable hinterlands of Old Oswestry Hillfort (**Figure 1**).

The planning history of this site is extensive, extending as far back 1939-40 when W.J. Varley undertook an excavation programme inside the hillfort. Since this time, a further twenty pieces of work (referred to as ‘events’) have been undertaken, the most recent being two desk-based studies: Reid & Marriott (2010) and Dorling & Wigley (2012).

**Figure 1.**  
**Site Location**



This heritage statement has been prepared in accordance with statutory policy within National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) (Chapter 12), and with technical guidance within IfA document *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments* (2008).

Within Chapter 12 of NPPF, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should: [128] *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.*

<sup>1</sup> For this report, the author uses the term 'hillfort'.

Based on this statement, the author of this report has undertaken a trawl of available archaeological and historical data, along with a site visit (see **Plates 3 to 12**). Identified from the site visit were a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets including two Scheduled Monuments: sections of Wat's Dyke and Old Oswestry Hillfort (see **Table 1**). In addition, were historic buildings that stand within the curtilage of Old Port Farm and a further 19 sites that are included within Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

The author of this report is a member of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), at MIFA Level and affiliate member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

## 2.0 STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

Identified within the Study Area, and based on Shropshire's Historic Environment Record are up to 22 designated and non-designated heritage assets (see **Table 1**), along with 21 archaeological events (see **Table 2**).

The three application sites - OSW002, OSW003 & OSW004 - stand within an area that is considered part of the Old Oswestry Iron Age hillfort catchment (also referred to as the 'hinterlands') where settlement and farming would have probably taken place. Based on English Heritage's Scheduling description, Old Oswestry Hillfort is a large multivallate hillfort and is considered:

*....rare with around 50 examples recorded nationally. These occur mostly in two concentrations, in Wessex and the Welsh Marches, although scattered examples occur elsewhere. In view of the rarity of large multivallate hillforts and their importance in understanding the nature of social organisation within the Iron Age period, all examples with surviving archaeological potential are believed to be of **national importance**.*

*Old Oswestry hillfort is a fine example of this class of monument, which has two complex entrances and illustrates several phases of development and occupation (see Appendix 1).*

In addition to this dominant later prehistoric monument, an earlier medieval (Anglo-Saxon) earthworks known as Wat's Dyke abuts the northern and southern outer ramparts of the hillfort. This earthworks extends some 80km and is one two major linear defensive works that occupy the Welsh Marches. To the east of the hillfort is Old Port Farm which probably has its origins dating to the medieval period. Surrounding this farmstead are the faint earthworks of a complex field system which probably dates from the Iron Age. To the east of the north-south line of the B 5069 is the World War I/II military camp of Park Hall. Based on archaeological and documentary evidence, the centre of the hillfort was heavily utilised by the British Army during World War I.

The three development areas stand within the south and south-eastern part of the landscape catchment (or hinterland) that is arguably associated with Old Oswestry Hillfort. The three areas identified for development include:

- OSW002<sup>2</sup> (land west of Gobowen Road), supporting 36 houses;
- OSW003 (Old Port Farm and land north of the farmstead), supporting up to 25 houses<sup>3</sup> and visitor car park immediately to the north; and
- OSW004 (land off Whittington Road), supporting c. 117 houses.

### 3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

#### 3.1 Geology

Based on the British Geological Survey (BGS), the Study Area comprises extensive Devensian till (TILLD), a remnant deposit of the proglacial and periglacial activity between c. 10,000 and 40,000 BP. Underlying this sedimentary deposit is an Etruria Formation (ETM), comprising mudstones, sandstone and conglomerates. An exposure of this rock formation forms a small but distinctive ovate hillock on which Old Oswestry Hillfort is constructed. A more irregular-shaped tree-lined knoll stands to the south.

#### 3.2 Brief History and development of the site

Much of the detailed archaeology and historic development in and around the hillfort has been adequately reported (e.g. Oxford Archaeology North 2009; Reid & Marriott (2010); Dorling & Wigley (2012)). Included within this reporting is the archaeology and development of the site during recent historic times (see **Table 1** and **Figure 2**). Based on the event history, there has been intense investigation within the curtilage of the hillfort, commencing with the excavations by W.J. Varley between 1939 and 1940.

**Table 1:**  
**List of archaeological sites from Shropshire's HER (see Figure 2)**

ID No.	Site Name	Grid Ref.	Description
00338	St Edith's Chapel	SJ 2977 3031	Site of a Probable medieval chapel, Destroyed in 1844, Site measures C. 10 X 10m. Documentary evidence supports limited archaeological evidence.
00351	Old Oswestry Hillfort	SJ 2956 3108	Large multivallate hillfort with probable main entrance to the west; considered by English Heritage as a rare example. Site was used as a military training area during World War I (see full SM description in Appendix 1).
01001	Wat's Dyke	SJ 2950 3100	Major earthwork that extends along the northern part of the Marches, between Maesbury and the Dee Estuary and forming a early medieval boundary. Earthwork dates to the 8 <sup>th</sup> century and abuts the hillfort. Northern section now forms an historic field boundary. The 'site' is of international importance.
02749	Findspot, Neolithic Axe	SJ 296 311	Section of a Neolithic polished stone axe found in 1964, found with one of the huts inside the hillfort. Find suggests that the hillfort site (and its immediate landscape) extends back a further 2000 years (or more).
02750	Findspot, Neolithic Axe	SJ 296 311	Neolithic axe found within a crater in 1974; axe made from a volcanic ash rock.

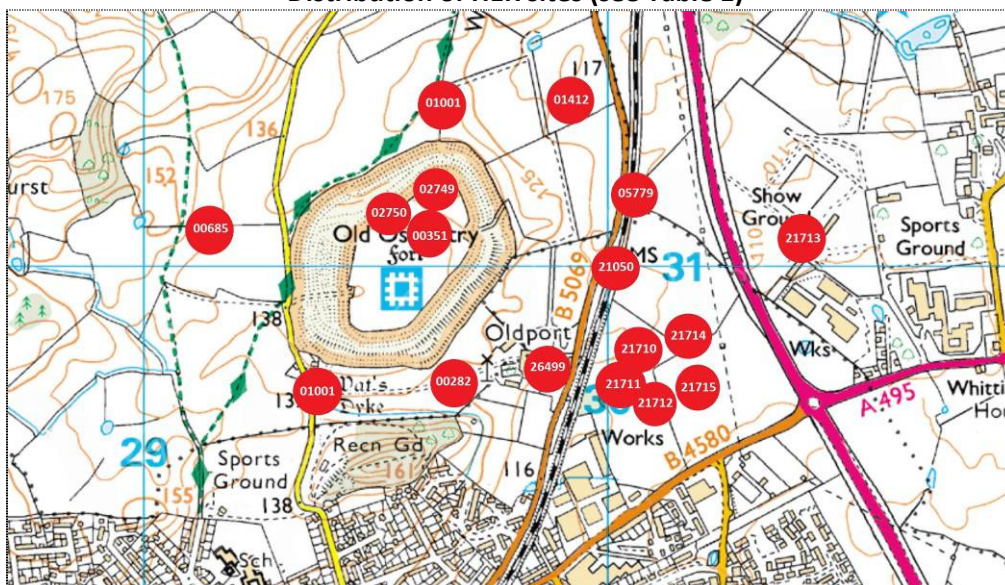
<sup>2</sup> The Conservation Plan (Reid & Marriott 2010, *fig. 28*) notes that the southern area of the proposed development area is identified as an area of high ecological interest/potential, along with land immediately west.

<sup>3</sup> The developer's brochure now states 25, although SAMDev revised preferred document of July 2013 states 35 (which makes total quoted in press of 188).

05704	Railway Yard	SJ 2944 2987	Railway yard belonging to the Shrewsbury, Oswestry & Chester railway (later GWR). Yard contains a number of buildings that date from 1848 including signal box, the Cambrian works and goods shed.
05706	Findspot Arrowhead	Unknown	Bard & tanged flint arrowhead found in 1940 at No. 11 Cambrian Drive.
05779	Railway Junction	SJ 3007 3154	Railway junction belonging to the Shrewsbury, Oswestry & Chester Railway (later GWR [1854]), constructed in 1848.
05785	Medieval Street Plan	SJ 2894 2970	Medieval street form documented in 1393, to include Bader Street (Beatrice Street), Ballium (Bailey Street), Lege Strette (Leg Street), Wyllya Strete (Willow Street), Midel Street (Northern Section of Church Street) and Chirton (Church Street).
05844	Post-medieval Street Plan	SJ 2894 2970	New road – Salop Street constructed in 1770, along with alterations to the former medieval street plan.
00282	Findspot – Spindle Whorl	SJ 2964 3062	Later prehistoric spindle whorl found south of the hillfort in 1932.
00685	Rectangular Enclosure	SJ 2923 3117	Rectangular single-ditched enclosure west of the hillfort, visible as a cropmark, measuring 107 x 106 m. Date range: Iron Age to Roman.
01412	Possible Iron Age/Roman Camp	SJ 2992 3141	Rectangular enclosure measuring 203 x 261 m, located NE of the hillfort. Date range: Iron Age to Roman. Possible temporary encampment; linear features inside.
21050	Milestone	SJ 2999 3101	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century metal-plated milestone, located north of Old Port Farm on the B 5069.
21491	Vyrnwy Aqueduct	SJ 3171 3441	Extensive aqueduct opened in 1891, taking water from Lake Vyrnwy to Liverpool.
21710	Post-Medieval Pit	SJ 3029 3083	Sub-ovate pit located in trial trenching near Old Port Farm, probably post-medieval in date.
21711	Post-Medieval Pit	SJ 3033 3070	Sub-ovate pit located in trail trenching near Old Port Farm, probably 18 <sup>th</sup> century date.
21712	Post-Medieval Ditch	SJ 3019 3074	Linear ditch feature near Old Port Farm, discovered within archaeological trenching. Pottery sherds dating to the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century found within it.
21713	Park Hall Military Training Camp	SJ 3046 3107	Military camp at Park Hall, constructed in the spring of 1915. The site measures 795 by 656 m, and was used to train troops; part of the hillfort was utilised for practice trenching. After 1915, the site expanded to include Old Port Farm. Land between the farm and the eastern section of the hillfort was utilised as an explosives area. The camp was also active in World War II.
21714	Mortar Crater	SJ 3033 3070	Mortar crater associated with World War II activity; ballistics fragments recovered.
21715	Mortar Crater	SJ 3018 3074	Mortar crater associated with World War II activity; ballistics fragments recovered including shell casing.
26499	Old Port Farm	SJ 2987 3077	Farmstead, constructed of brick and stone, includes an extensive outbuildings complex including the recent construction of sheds to the rear (west). Shropshire's HER suggests a 19 <sup>th</sup> century date; however, a number of buildings are on a 1770 plan. Site visit suggests possible medieval/early post-medieval origins.



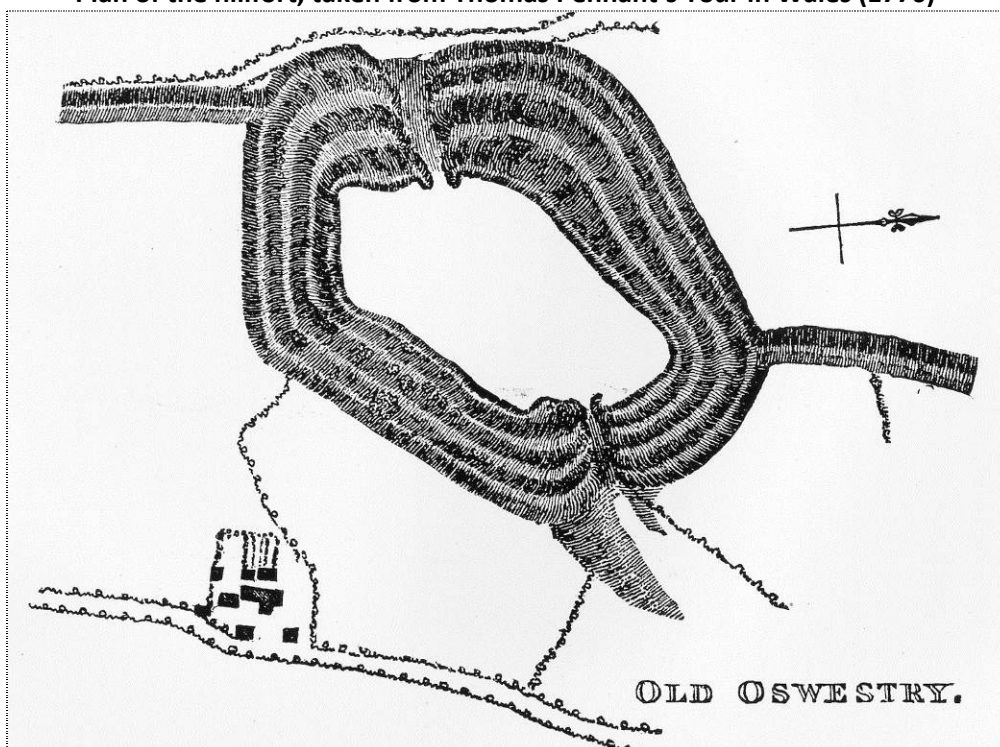
**Figure 2:**  
**Distribution of HER sites (see Table 1)**



### HISTORIC MAP REGRESSION

For this section of the report, six maps and plans were consulted, the earliest dating to 1770 and incorporated into Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* (3 volumes). The plan (with north unorthodoxly pointing towards the right of the page) shows the ramparts and ditches of the hillfort, along with the north-south earthworks of Wat's Dyke (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:**  
**Plan of the hillfort, taken from Thomas Pennant's Tour in Wales (1770)**





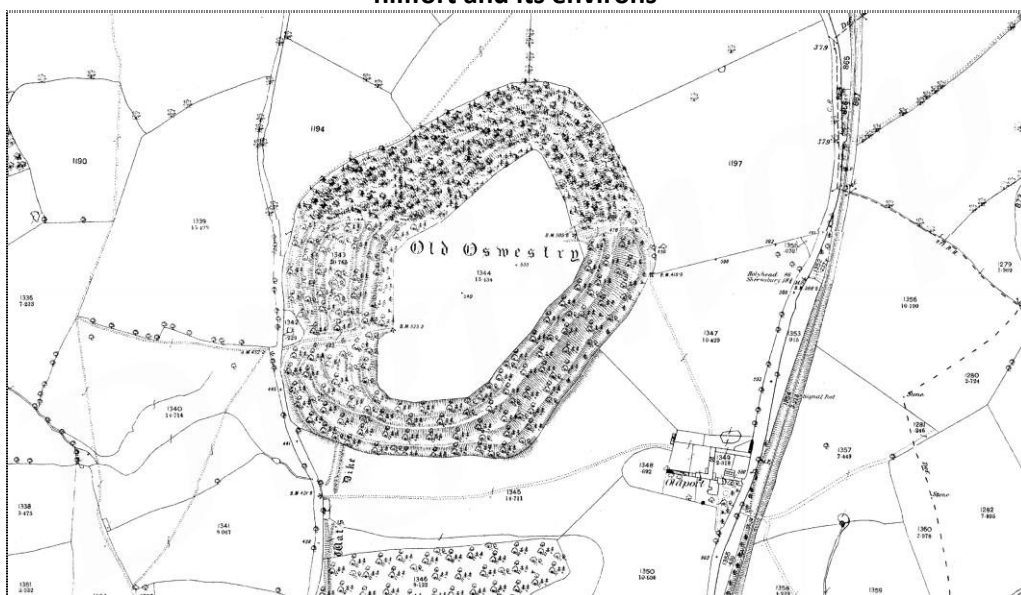
A clear and simple causewayed entrance into the hillfort extends from the west; the western end tapering onto a north-south track. A further constricted entrance is cut through the north-eastern rampart section; on this plan both entrances have probable earthen/rubble lips on each of the sides of the internal sections, suggesting some form of elaborate entrance. Also present are four or more field boundaries that radiate from the outer rampart; a further two are probably represented by the two sections of Wat's Dyke.

To the south-east of the hillfort, is a plan of Old Port Farm (ID 26499) and a section of a track (now relabelled as B 5069). Since the publication of this plan much of the layout of the buildings has changed, except for the central building complex where probable medieval elements such as timber-faming are visible (see **Plate 9** and later maps). The curtilage size and shape of the farm complex has largely remained unchanged since the publication of this plan.

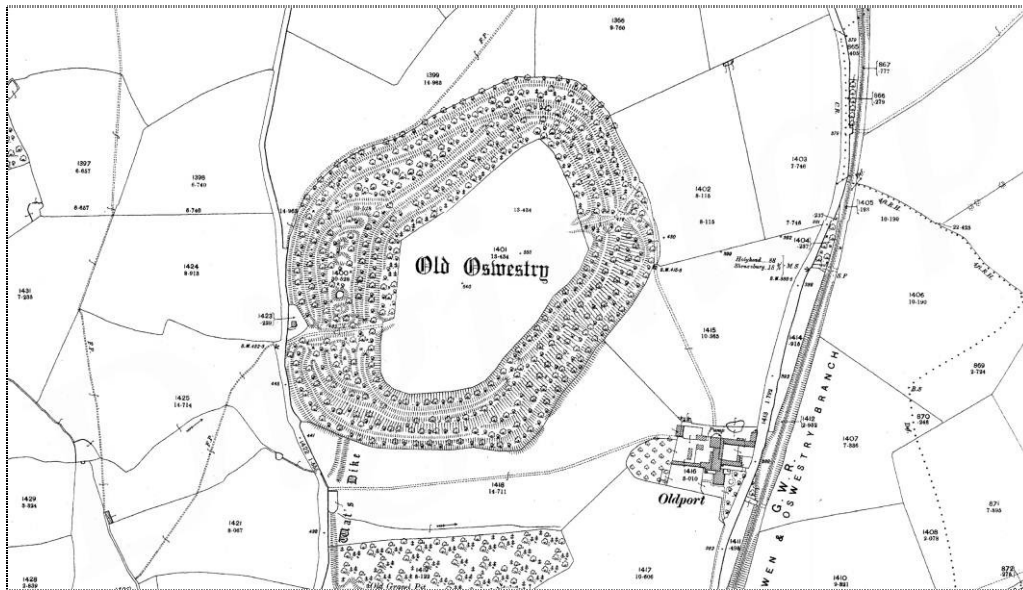
The publication of the 25" (scale 1:2500) Ordnance Survey plan of 1875 shows similar detail of the hillfort, Wat's Dyke and Old Port Farm (**Figure 4**). Also present on this map is the north-south track that extends along the western boundary of the outer rampart section and the (ancient) field system. Additional detail on this map includes the surveyed outlines of all buildings that lie within the curtilage of Old Port Farm and mature trees that were incorporated into the field boundaries and the route of the Shrewsbury, Oswestry & Chester Railway branch-line (running parallel with the B 5069).

Prior to publication of this map, a series of buildings were erected within the curtilage of Old Port Farm including a single-storey stone and brick range that ran parallel with the B 5069 (**Plate 5**) and extend westwards from the road to the northern section of a former farm building complex (**Plate 8**). Inspection of this building range may discover building sections that are present on the 1770 plan.

**Figure 4:**  
**Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (scale 1:2500) showing the**  
**hillfort and its environs**

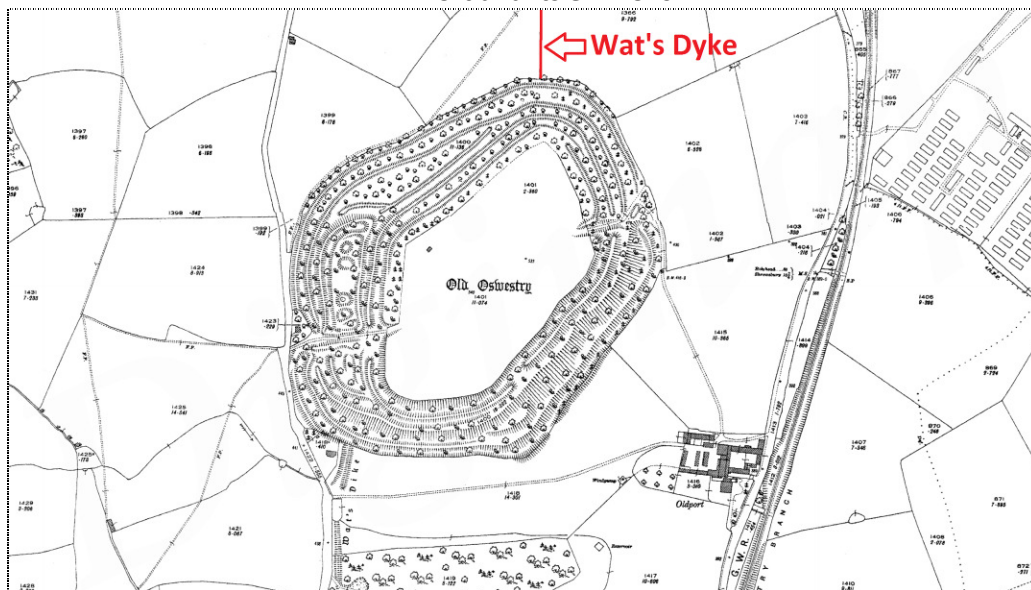


**Figure 5:**  
**Ordnance Survey map of 1901 (scale 1:2500) showing the hillfort and its environs**



The Ordnance Survey maps of 1901 (**Figure 5**) and 1926 (**Figure 6**) detail little change to the hillfort, the field system surrounding it and Old Port Farm. The map of 1926, however, does show the intricate plan of the western entrance of the hillfort. Also present on this map is the army training camp at Park Hall which dates from World War I (established in 1915) (ID 21713). The camp continued to be used during World War II. The various billets are clearly marked on the National Grid map of 1960 (**Figure 7**). Based on archaeological fieldwork to the west of the camp, it is clear that field operations during both World Wars covered a large area of the landscape around the hillfort. Despite the military activity in and around the hillfort, visible damage appears to be limited to the internal area of the hillfort; this activity is now considered a significant archaeological resource (see **Table 1** and **Appendix 1**).

**Figure 6:**  
**Ordnance Survey map of 1926 (scale 1:2500) showing the hillfort and its environs**



Omitted from this and the majority of maps of this area is the northern section of Wat's Dyke which had by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century become incorporated into a relatively modern field boundary that extended from the northern outer rampart section of the hillfort (see **Figure 6**).

**Figure 7:**  
**National Grid map of 1960 (scale 1:10000) showing the hillfort and its environs**



#### 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The planning history of the site is relatively extensive. The Historic Environment Record lists 22 designated and non-designated heritage assets, along with a further 21 cultural heritage events (**Table 2**) ranging from field observations and survey to excavation and geophysical survey; the earliest event dating to W.J. Varley's excavation within the curtilage of the hillfort between 1939 and 1940 (ID ESA359).

The early planning history, between 1939 and 1990 comprises largely field observations and field survey; these projects were administered and run by LPA archaeologists or English Heritage. The introduction of Planning Policy Guidance 16 in November 1990 witnessed a number of developer-led projects that required an archaeological input (e.g. ESA4850, ESA6097 & ESA6425). Between 2009 and 2012, much of the archaeological and cultural heritage activity in and around the hillfort has been directly linked to conservation management (i.e. Reid & Marriott 2010) and context (i.e. Malim & Hayes 2008; Dorling & Wigley 2012).

**Table 2: Archaeological Events Record**

Event ID	EVENT NAME	DATE	RESULTS
ESA361	Field survey/field observation	undated	Field survey/geophysical survey within the curtilage of the hillfort.
ESA359	Excavation	1939-40	Excavations by W.J. Varley within the curtilage of Old Oswestry Hillfort. In 1989 BUFAU was commissioned by English Heritage to design six visitor display boards.
ESA362	Field	1967	Field observation within the curtilage of the hillfort.

	observation		
ESA360	Geophysical Survey	1974	Field survey/geophysical survey within the curtilage of the hillfort.
ESA1941	Field survey/field observation	1979	The discovery of a possible Roman Camp, NE of Oswestry Hillfort (ID 01412) at NGR SJ 2995 3143.
ESA363	Field survey/field observation	1979	Field observation within the curtilage of the hillfort.
ESA364	Field observation	1981	Field observation undertaken by Shropshire County Council within the curtilage of the hillfort.
ESA365	Field observation	1986	Field observation undertaken by English Heritage within the curtilage of the hillfort.
ESA346	Field observation	1991	Survey of the St Edith's Chapel site (ID 00338).
ESA6464	Field survey	1992	Field survey and excavation in advance of a pipeline around Wat's Dyke by Gifford & Partners. A number of features associated with the Dyke were uncovered.
ESA6465	Watching Brief	1992	Watching brief by Gifford & Partners on a pipeline between Oswestry and Whittington. The pipeline passed through Wat's Dyke and the remains of a ridge and furrow medieval field system (ID: PRN 04409).
ESA6904	Desk-based Assessment	2011-12	DBA and walkover survey of hillforts in Shropshire. Assessment includes Old Oswestry Hillfort, undertaken by P. Dorling & A. Wigley (2012)
ESA6162	Walkover survey	2000	Archaeological walkover survey over the Coppice, undertaken by Archenfield Archaeology. Detailed landscape around Wat's Dyke.
ESA4850	Watching Brief	2002	Watching brief on flood relief works near Wat's Dyke at Llwyn Road; undertaken by SCCAS. Earthwork found dating to 5 <sup>th</sup> century AD, forming part of Wat's Dyke.
ESA5930	Desk-based Assessment	2002	DBA as part of feasibility study to regenerate former railway property. Conclusions included the possible 16 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century sub-surface remains and a possible section of Wat's Dyke.
ESA6097	Desk-based Assessment	2006	DBA and walkover survey on land at Old Port Farm, undertaken by Castlering Archaeology. Many sites identified from this piece of work were previously unrecorded, including many railway structures.
ESA6122	Geophysical Survey	2007	Geophysical survey undertaken by GSB on land north of Oswestry. Survey identified World War I features including practice trenching and a section of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct.
ESA6136	Watching Brief	2007	WB within the curtilage of the hillfort, watching trenching for the placing of seven stiles. No significant archaeological deposits, features and structures recorded.
ESA6425	Evaluation trenching	2009	Trial trenching around Old Port Farm, undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North. Trenching was within land for proposed light industrial use; 23 trenches planned (Trenches 1 to 8 and No. 23 were not excavated). A series of pits (ID 21710 & 21711) and a ditch (ID 21712) were recorded; all dated to the post-medieval period. Residual Romano-British and medieval pottery also recovered.
ESA6486	Management	2010	Conservation Management Plan undertaken for

	Survey on Old Oswestry Hillfort		English Heritage by M. Reid & J. Marriott. Report provides important text concerning setting and heritage ethics.
ESA6742	Desk-based Assessment	2010	DBA and walkover survey along the proposed Vyrnwy pipeline (Oswestry to Penley), undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North. Sixty-eight sites were identified including several within the Study Area.
-	Desk-based Assessment	2012	Combined Herefordshire & Shropshire Report for an Assessment of the Archaeological and Conservation Status of Major Later Prehistoric Enclosures in Herefordshire and Shropshire. Report No. EH PNUM 5831 (by Dorling & Wigley)

In 2010 English Heritage commissioned a Conservation [Management] Plan which took a long-term and holistic view of the site, given its status as a popular destination for casual visitors and walkers (Reid & Marriott 2010). Within this extensive and thorough report, the authors are concerned with ways to enhance visitor experience, in particular, the setting of the hillfort in relation to the surrounding landscape. A further study on this and other Shropshire hillforts has been undertaken by Dorling and Wigley (2012) and complemented the *Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme* which was administered by Denbighshire Countryside Service. The two reports largely supported the English Heritage listing description; each providing identical technical data and each promoting the significance of the hillfort and its unique setting (see Appendix 2).

In 2012, National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) replaced Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5) and within it are a set of generic guidance notes concerning non-direct impacts of heritage assets, including those dealing with the setting of heritage assets.

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE COMPLEXITY

Based on data within the Shropshire's HER and various grey literature reports (see Table 3), the heritage character and distinctiveness of the landscape within the Study Area can be considered multifaceted and multi-layered. Despite the visible evidence of Iron Age, medieval and post-medieval archaeology, the human presence within this landscape extends a further 2000 years, to the Neolithic period - if not earlier (**Plate 1**).

The historic mapping, along with supporting documentary evidence, further indicates the landscape complexity of the area, especially the land south and west of Old Port Farm. Aerial imagery taken in December 1999 reveals a number of linear anomalies that probably represent field boundaries (**Plate 2**).

Results from a geophysical survey undertaken by GSB Prospection Ltd. in 2007 assisted in informing Oxford North Archaeology (OAN) of their trench locations in 2009. Despite the negative results from the OAN evaluation programme, the geophysical results within Area A and B2 (south and north of Old Port Farm) did reveal a potentially complex landscape with a variety of linear and sub-linear anomalies. Area A is within proposed development area OWS002; however, the southern section of the proposed development area was not geoprosected. Furthermore, no evaluation trenching was undertaken.

Area B2, along with Area B1 stands north of Old Port Farm and the proposed development area OSW003. According to the OAN report the area immediately north of the farm complex was not surveyed.<sup>4</sup> The two survey areas – Areas B1 and B2 - revealed a series of interconnecting linear anomalies and evidence of ridge and furrow marks. Despite the presence of such anomalies, five evaluation trenches planned were temporarily suspended.

Development area OSW004 includes land north of Whittington Road and is the largest of the three proposed development area (supporting c. 117 houses). The geophysical survey included two rectangular areas – Areas D and E. Recorded in both were a large number of anomalies including probable medieval ridge and furrow, and a series of sub-circular and linear features. As a result six trenches were located with the two areas (Trenches 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 24). Of these, no archaeological finds were identified in Trenches 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20).

## 6.0 STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

To summarise the findings of the assessment and to broadly assess the potential for survival or presence of archaeological remains of the various chronological periods discussed above, the table below outlines the known archaeological and historic evidence surrounding the site (Table 3).

**Table 3: Broad Assessment of Archaeological Potential**

PERIOD	EVIDENCE	POTENTIAL
Palaeolithic-Neolithic	Neolithic polished stone axe findspot.	LOW TO MODERATE
Bronze Age- Iron Age	Multivallate Iron Age Hill formed from a low hillfort; field systems; Barded & Tanged arrowhead findspot; later prehistoric spindle whorl findspot	HIGH
Romano-British	Possible Roman camp; single-ditched Roman enclosure	MODERATE TO HIGH
Early Medieval	Wat's Dyke; field systems	MODERATE
Medieval	Destroyed chapel of St Edith's; Northern section of Oswestry's medieval street system	LOW TO MODERATE
Post-Medieval	Old Port Farm (may have medieval origins); Railway yard; Shrewsbury, Oswestry & Chester Railway Branch; Oswestry's post-medieval street system; Milestone; The Vyrnwy Aqueduct, several pits; WW1/WW2 Military Training Camp – Park Hall; mortar craters; practice trenches (inside the curtilage of the hillfort)	HIGH
Conservation Areas	The development areas do not stand within the Conservation Area	N/A
Listed Buildings	There are no Listed Buildings within the Study Area	N/A

<sup>4</sup> A single evaluation trench – Trench 5 - was planned for this area but was not excavated.



Locally Listed Buildings	There are no Locally-Listed Buildings within the Study Area	N/A
Scheduled Monuments	Within the study area are two SMs: Old Oswestry Hillfort and two sections of Wat's Dyke	HIGH
Registered Parks and Gardens	N/A	NONE
Registered Battlefields	N/A	NONE
World Heritage Sites	N/A	NONE

Despite clear evidence of significant archaeological sub-surface remains within the study area, a previous report by Dr Peter di Figueiredo (2013) has discussed in detail the visibility of the hillfort in relation to various points within the immediate landscape (what can and cannot be seen). From the fieldwork undertaken, the report summary states:

*On balance this assessment finds that the consequences of development of land at Oldport as proposed would have a neutral impact on the significance of the Old Oswestry Hill Fort, providing that suitable mitigation measures are taken. This would accord with Policy 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework that states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.*

However, it should be noted that the findings of this report have been criticised with elements concerning mitigation largely dismissed by RESCUE: The British Archaeological Trust (see Appendix 2).

## 7.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Direct impacts

It is the view of Dr George Nash that the current plans to develop three areas south-east and south will **not** directly impact Old Oswestry hillfort or Wat's Dyke (and the majority of sites identified on Shropshire's HER. However, direct impacts to standing structures are likely to occur to buildings that stand within the curtilage of Old Port Farm; several of these buildings are, according to Pennant's plan, pre-1770.

The heritage value of the buildings that stand within the curtilage of Old Port Farm is not fully understood. The HER states that the buildings are 19<sup>th</sup> century; however, a recent site visit suggests that the fabric of several buildings, in particular a centrally-placed range, may be much earlier (see **Plate 9**). Should any buildings of quality be identified, the various heritage agencies would have to consider some form of statutory protection. All buildings within the curtilage of the farm therefore require a thorough assessment using the appropriate English Heritage guidance.<sup>5</sup> This action is imperative should any future acceptable development of Old Port Farm take place.

<sup>5</sup> English Heritage, 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*.

Potential subsurface remains exist within the three development areas and, as such, a thorough investigation of the south and south-eastern section of the Study Area is required. The archaeological evaluation undertaken by OAN in 2009 is woefully inadequate with only 15 of the 24 trenches evaluated. The nine trenches omitted from the archaeological evaluation programme were originally sited over potentially archaeologically sensitive areas north and south of Old Port Farm (within the geophysics Areas A and B2).<sup>6</sup>

### Indirect impacts

Indirect impacts to designated and non-designated heritage assets include infringement on setting. Based on selected criterion within NPPF, the unique setting of the hillfort and other recognised heritage assets will be significantly harmed.

English Heritage interprets *setting* as:

*....the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*<sup>7</sup>

Based on this definition, any potential development within the Study Area should consider:

*....the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification (NPPF Chapter 12, paragraph 132).*

Based on the large body of evidence including comments made by English Heritage, there is mounting concern with the indirect impact a development such as this will have on the hillfort, its hinterland and the historic elements of Old Port Farm. Since the publication of the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Old Oswestry Hillfort has possessed a green (field) buffer around it, affording the hillfort and Wat's Dyke protection from direct and indirect impact of development. The legacy of this green buffer zone has greatly assisted in the setting of the hillfort and Wat's Dyke (and other heritage assets), this is despite the slow encroachment of the northern section of Oswestry during the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Conservation Plan clearly states that the visitor experience is partially due to the landscape in which the hillfort stands; creating an evocative and iconic statement of a past landscape. If planning permission is granted, this experience will be lost. In support of this view, English Heritage has stated that the hillfort is 'a site of great national importance, one that helps to define our national story and identity'.

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<sup>6</sup> The author of this report seeks justification from Shropshire's LPA for the rationale of the evaluation trenching regime. Trenches that were excavated appear to have been located over limited or non-archaeological anomalies.

<sup>7</sup> See also English Heritage 2011a, 2011b & 2011c.

The proposed development of Old Port Farm includes the construction of a large car park immediately north of the farm (no intrusive archaeological investigations of this area have been undertaken). Although sensitive development of the farm should be considered, the proposed car park immediately north will severely impinge on the setting of the hillfort.<sup>8</sup>

## 8.0 SUMMARY

It is the view of Dr George Nash that the three proposed development areas – OSW002, OSW003 and OSW004 - will directly and indirectly impact upon the archaeology and cultural heritage that lies within the hinterlands of Old Oswestry Hillfort (i.e. land between the eastern outer rampart of the hillfort, the north-south line of Wat's Dyke and the western pavement line of the A5 trunk road). Identified within the HER search were twenty-two heritage assets including two Scheduled Monuments (SMs). The multi-faceted and layered landscape identified within the Study Area can be considered of regional and national importance with Old Oswestry Hillfort and Wat's Dyke being the landscape foci.

Based on the event record, there appears to have been no clear long-term strategy to mitigate the archaeology in a phased staged-approach, in particular the evaluation programme which is, in my view woefully inadequate, let alone complete.

In summary, and quoting NPPF, paragraph 133, the proposed development opens a number of fundamental issues, in particular:

*Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.....*

Given the national importance and rarity of the hillfort and Wat's Dyke, and their unique and iconic setting, no development should be undertaken within Areas OSW002 and OSW004.

Within area OSW003, sensitive development could be considered as long as the historic elements of the farmstead are given the utmost priority, including a full assessment of their heritage potential; as yet there is no clear chronology or understanding of this potentially significant site. What I term as sensitive development is sustainable design which should be incorporated into the existing historic fabric of those buildings/structures that are deemed heritage assets (following a detailed assessment of the farmstead); this sustainable development excludes the construction of a car park immediately north of the farm.

It should be noted that the western extent of the current perimeter of Old Port Farm stands only c. 87 m from the outer rampart of the hillfort.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Adequate car parking is located south of the hillfort which does not interfere with the setting of the southern section of the hillfort.

<sup>9</sup> The distance between the outer rampart and the northern line of the OSW002 development area is c. 214 m.

## 9.0 REFERENCES CONSULTED

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### Cartography

Thomas Pennant's plan of Old Oswestry Hillfort, dated 1770

1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25" (scale 1: 2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1875

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 25" (scale 1: 2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1901

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 25" (scale 1: 2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1926

National Grid Plan (scale 1: 10000) Ordnance Survey map of 1960

## **10.0 CLOSURE**

This report has been prepared with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

## PLATES

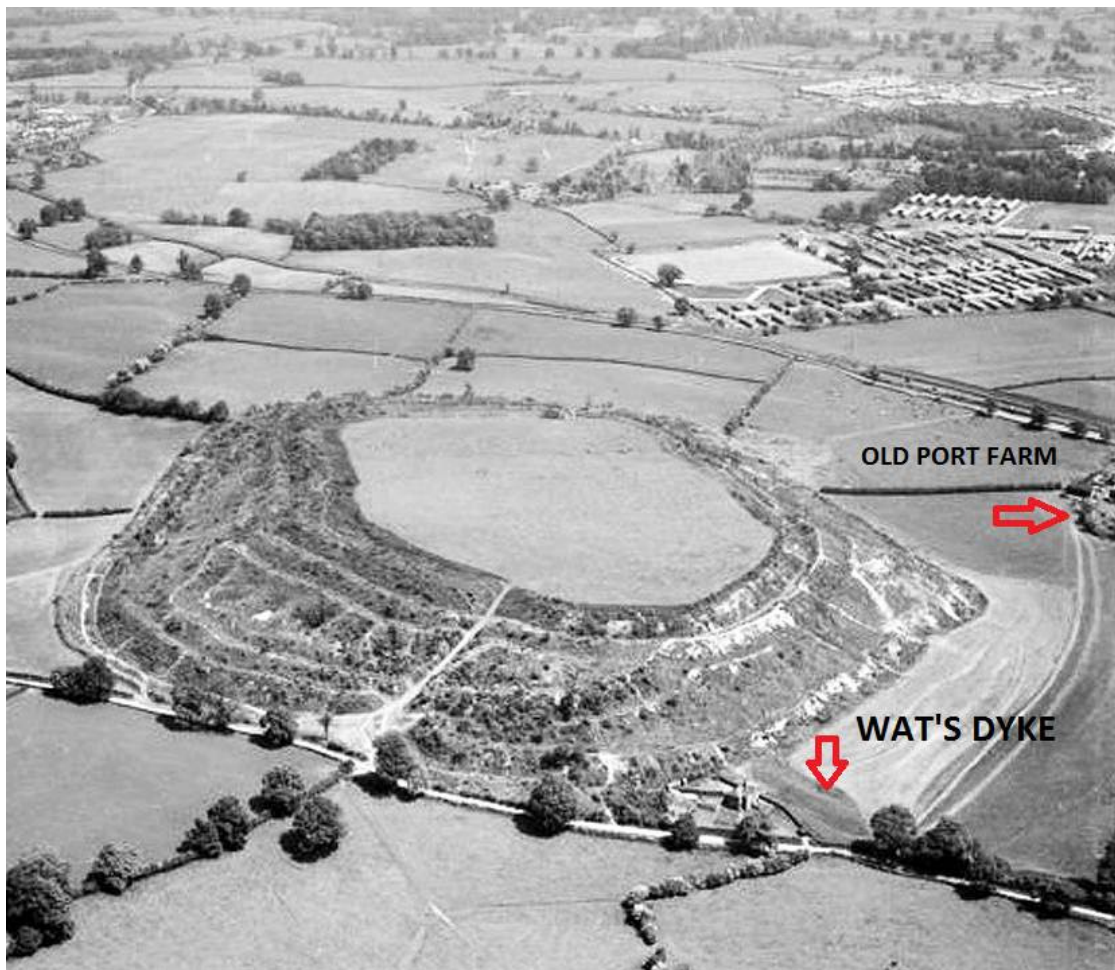


Plate 1. Oblique aerial image dated to 1947 showing the location of Wat's Dyke and Old Port Farm. Image looking NE (Courtesy of 'Britain from Above' website)



Plate 2. Aerial imagery showing Old Port Farm and potential archaeological anomalies representing probable medieval field system (image courtesy of Google Earth)





Plate 3. View of the field system, south-east of the Iron Age hillfort



Plate 4. View of the field system, south of the Iron Age hillfort





Plate 5. View of a stone barn, running parallel with the B 5069, looking south



Plate 6. Main entrance into the farmhouse ground from the B 5069, looking SW





Plate 7, Entrance to the farmyard, looking west



Plate 8. Early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farm outbuildings, located within the eastern section of the farm, looking NW



Plate 9. Rear section of the outbuildings belonging to Old Port Farm; note the probably early timber-framing, image looking east



## Appendix 1: SM Description

*Large multivallate hillforts are defined as fortified enclosures of between 5ha and 85ha in area, located on hills and defined by two or more lines of concentric earthworks set at intervals of up to 15m. They date to the Iron Age period, most having been constructed and used between the sixth century BC and the mid-first century AD. They are generally regarded as centres of permanent occupation, defended in response to increasing warfare, a reflection of the power struggle between competing elites. Earthworks usually consist of a rampart and ditch, although some only have ramparts. Access to the interior is generally provided by two entrances although examples with one and more than two have been noted. These may comprise a single gap in the rampart, inturned or offset ramparts, oblique approaches, guardrooms or outworks. Internal features generally include evidence for intensive occupation, often in the form of oval or circular houses. These display variations in size and are often clustered, for example, along streets. Four- and six-post structures, interpreted as raised granaries, also occur widely while a few sites appear to contain evidence for temples. Other features associated with settlement include platforms, paved areas, pits, gullies, fencelines, hearths and ovens. Additional evidence, in the form of artefacts, suggests that industrial activity such as bronze- and iron-working as well as pottery manufacture occurred on many sites.*

*Large multivallate hillforts are rare with around 50 examples recorded nationally. These occur mostly in two concentrations, in Wessex and the Welsh Marches, although scattered examples occur elsewhere. In view of the rarity of large multivallate hillforts and their importance in understanding the nature of social organisation within the Iron Age period, all examples with surviving archaeological potential are believed to be of national importance.*

*Old Oswestry hillfort is a fine example of this class of monument, which has two complex entrances and illustrates several phases of development and occupation. The interior of the hillfort will retain evidence for occupation including post holes, foundation trenches, and storage and refuse pits, as well as environmental and artefactual evidence for the domestic and industrial activities which took place there. The surrounding banks will retain details of their method of construction and subsequent modifications, and will have sealed beneath them environmental evidence for land use immediately prior to each phase of construction. The enigmatic sunken features on the west side of the hillfort will also preserve evidence for their construction and function, and their stratigraphic relationship with other elements of the site. The entrances will retain evidence for the sequence of their development, and for the revetments and palisades with which they will have been strengthened. The adjacent stretches of Wat's Dyke will similarly preserve evidence for their date and method of construction and the stretches of earthen bank will protect evidence for medieval land use prior to the dyke's construction. The reuse of the hillfort within the Wat's Dyke system illustrates the continuity of defensive structures in the vicinity from the prehistoric through to the medieval period.*

*Old Oswestry is a prominent local landmark, is open all year to the public and is in the care of the Secretary of State. A public footpath follows the northern stretch of Wat's Dyke, allowing the relationship of the two earthworks to be appreciated.*

### **Details**

*The monument includes the earthwork and buried remains of the hillfort of Old Oswestry, which is situated on a glacial mound north of the town of Oswestry, with sweeping views to west, north and east. The site has been known by a variety of names, including Caer Ogyrfan, after the father of Guinevere, and Yr hen Ddinas, meaning the old fort or city. Finds of flints and a stone axe suggest there has been activity at the site since the Neolithic period, and excavation has revealed occupation from the Late Bronze Age through to the end of the Iron Age. In the eighth century AD the hillfort was incorporated into the line of Wat's Dyke, which extends to the north and south, and the two sections of dyke adjacent to the hillfort are included in the scheduling. Old Oswestry saw military use during the First World War, when it was used for training exercises by troops based at nearby Park Hall camp. Old Oswestry has a roughly diamond-shaped plan, with maximum dimensions of 570m north east to south west by 420m transversely. It is a multivallate hillfort, having ramparts of five earthen banks and ditches, interrupted by two complex entrances, one on the east side and one on the west. The inner two banks and ditches are the earliest of the earthworks visible today, probably dating to around the sixth century BC, and they enclose a gently domed area of c.8.4ha. They comprise an earthen bank with a flattish top and steep outer*

slope with a ditch some distance outside it, and a second, slighter bank beyond. Both banks completely surround the hilltop, except where they are broken by the entrances. A third bank and ditch extend around the west side of the hillfort, the bank surviving to c.2.4m in places. Downslope of these, to the north and south of the western entrance, are a series of roughly rectangular hollows between additional steeply sloping banks. They have been variously described as cisterns, storage pits, stock enclosures, and quarry pits, although their regular shape would argue against the latter. The outer and latest phase of defences are formed by two massive 'glacis style' earthen banks with steep sides rising directly from the bottom of their deep outer ditches and standing up to 6m high. These banks and ditches again surround the whole hillfort except where broken by the entrances, and the banks survive in places up to 6m high. Both entrances were initially created by inturning the inner bank to form short passages into the hillfort's interior. As the defences developed, the western entrance in particular became more complex, and survives today as a sunken approach flanked on both sides by transverse banks and ditches extending to the outer edge of the rampart. The eastern entrance is defended by an earthen bank along its south side. In general the banks and ditches are better preserved on the north and west sides of the hillfort, as the steeper slope to the south east has caused the ditches to become more infilled, producing an almost continuous slope in places. The visible earthworks of Old Oswestry represent the culmination of several phases of construction, which successively increased the defensive capabilities and status of the site. Excavations during the 1940s revealed that the earliest occupation within the rampart was a Late Bronze Age settlement of round huts. Charcoal from similar settlements elsewhere has been dated to the ninth century BC. The trench for a surrounding timber palisade was found, and a pottery bronze working crucible was found in the hearth of one of the huts, indicating that small-scale industrial activities were taking place. During the Early Iron Age the palisade was replaced by the hillfort's innermost earthen bank. This was of 'box rampart' construction, with revetment walls constructed of boulders, some of which can be seen protruding from the bank. The shallow surrounding ditch was quarried roughly 10m outside the bank, and a second bank and ditch was constructed beyond it, rather lower than the first. The box rampart may have had a timber lacing similar to examples elsewhere, which have been radiocarbon dated to the sixth century BC. Excavations at Old Oswestry found a number of stone kerbed huts to be contemporary with this phase of rampart construction, and associated finds of Early Iron Age pottery supports a sixth century date. The inner bank was later enhanced by a sloping earthen revetment against the inner stone wall, and the third bank and ditch were added around the western half of the monument. It is likely that the inturned entrances were created at this time, while occupation is represented by circular stone-walled huts which replaced the earlier stone-kerbed variety. The third, western, bank and ditch were also extensively rebuilt, with the original bank and ditch buried beneath an enlarged bank around a boulder core. These impressive glacis-style ramparts probably date from between the fifth and third centuries BC, and were constructed in a similar way. The complex western entrance had probably already been created by this time and was enhanced during the construction of these outer works. Contemporary with these developments, a large circular hut with stone footings was found to partly overlay the inturn of the inner bank, to the south of the western entrance.

Although a Roman presence at the site is indicated by finds of pottery and tile from the upper fills of the ditches, exactly where their activity was concentrated remains uncertain. However, some centuries later the hillfort was again utilised for defence as a strong point in the earthwork known as Wat's Dyke, which stretches for roughly 38 miles from Morda Brook in Shropshire northwards to Basingwerk-on-Dee. Wat's Dyke lies to the east of Offa's Dyke, and its northern section, beyond the end of Offa's Dyke, stands alone as the early border with Wales. The remains of the dyke's earthen bank and flanking ditch extend north and south from Old Oswestry. The southern section stands as an earthwork for roughly 140m, starting from the south west quarter of the hillfort and ending at a recreation ground whose landscaping has modified the archaeological remains. Mid-way along this stretch the bank has been reduced and the ditch utilised as a pond, although it will survive as a buried feature in this area. From the northernmost quarter of the hillfort the dyke extends for over 700m NNE, its first 400m marked by a low earthen bank which has been incorporated into the post-medieval field boundary and is planted with a hedge. Along this line the ditch had become infilled but will survive as a buried feature. Further north the ditch survives as an earthwork and the broad bank remains up to 1m high. After roughly 140m the western side of the bank spreads and its line continues north as a clear scarp which peters out just south of the track to Pentre-Clawdd. The ditch is again buried along the line of the scarp, but a pond indicates its alignment. At the north end of this stretch of dyke the construction of Pentre-Clawdd Farm and its approach roads will have modified the remains, but further sections survive to the north and are the subject of separate schedulings. All fences and gates around and across the monument, information boards and stiles, metalled road surfaces, electricity pylons, the outbuildings of Oldport Cottages, and the wooden shed on the line of the northern stretch of Wat's Dyke, are all excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.



## Appendix 2: RESCUE CORRESPONDANCE

15a Bull Plain, Hertford  
Hertfordshire, SG14 1DX  
Telephone: 01992 553377  
[www.rescue@rescue-  
archaeology.freemove.co.uk](mailto:www.rescue@rescue-archaeology.freemove.co.uk)

21st August 2013

Dear Sir

### RE: SAMDev Revised Preferred Option

Rescue - The British Archaeological Trust is a non-political organisation dedicated to supporting archaeology and archaeologists in Britain and abroad. We do not receive any state support and are entirely dependent on the contributions of our members to support our work.

We believe the development proposed for areas OSW002, 003 and 004 will have an unacceptably negative impact on the Old Oswestry hillfort, a statutorily protected Scheduled Ancient Monument. Old Oswestry is described by English Heritage as 'the most hugely impressive Iron Age hillfort on the Welsh Borders' and is one of the largest and best preserved of such monuments in the country. Hillforts are rare monuments and very few survive in the exceptional condition of Old Oswestry with such complete circuits of earthworks. Its outstanding condition is denoted by the fact of its relatively early scheduling in May 1934.

Under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, scheduled monuments are protected from destruction or disturbance and the impact on the setting of a Scheduled Monument by development is also a material consideration in the planning system. The setting of hillforts is a fundamental part of their importance as they were originally designed with the surrounding open space as an integral and indeed indispensable part of the layout. Any development in the areas, OSW002, 003 and 004 will have a serious impact on the landscape setting of the hillfort. We believe that the current proposals conflict with the protection afforded to the monument by the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Monuments Act, and contravene the UK's commitments to the protection of the historic environment set out within the Valletta Convention (1992).

It is clear that all the proposed development areas, OSW002, 003 and 004 will be clearly visible from the eastern side of the hillfort and the loss of this open space would significantly compromise its historic and scenic value. The certain impact of allowing the development to proceed will be to damage the visual magnificence and special character of one of this country's most important prehistoric strongholds. Any incursion into this space would be catastrophic for the archaeological integrity of the monument.

The outlook across Oldport Farm is of particular significance affording views across miles of countryside to, on a clear day, the Wrekin. Such views would have been of significance to the hillfort builders and occupiers and would have certainly influenced its siting. It is critical to the understanding of the monument that these views are preserved without interruption and that visitors get the chance to experience them. Any loss of this would dilute the visitor experience and potential impact on visitor numbers.

Old Oswestry is an extremely important contributor to the tourism income of this area (and the country as a whole); Heritage-based tourism now contributes at least £5 billion GDB and 134,000 jobs and is one of the significant growth industries in the country<sup>10</sup>, having increased significantly (more than 20%) between 2010 and 2013. It is therefore vital that the economic benefits to the local economy of Old Oswestry are taken into account and are not compromised by unsympathetic development.

We are also concerned that the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted is not NPPF-(National Planning Policy Framework) compliant, as there is no HER information included. Whilst it does adequately address the immediately visible above ground aesthetic matters that are important in setting, the below-ground potential and contextual data that is essential is absent. At the Danebury hillfort, for example, the excavator proved that it was surrounded by evidence of contemporary field systems and occupation, but this possibility is almost entirely

<sup>10</sup> Kareen El Beyrouty, and Andrew Tessler, 2013. *The Economic Impact of the UK Heritage Tourism Economy*. Oxford Economics

unconsidered in the Oswestry assessment (with the exception of a one line mention about aerial photo evidence on page 15), and it doesn't appear to have been researched properly. This potential is massively important in considering the "setting" of the monument, and to brush it aside in section 8.1 as being "previously addressed in an evaluation in 2009" entirely misses the point. Did they evaluate everything around the site? The author has also stated that Oswestry is visible to 15 other Hillforts (paragraph 5.3.17, pg. 25) - yet hasn't considered the views from those sites to Oswestry should the allocation proceed at all. Again, previous research has clearly demonstrated that intervisibility between these sites is part of their strategic nature and therefore fundamental in considering their significance. The English Heritage guidance on setting<sup>11</sup> demonstrates quite conclusively through the definition on pages 4-5 that this ought to be assessed. If nothing else, the housing allocation might be damaging to the setting of the other 15 monuments as well. In Rescue's opinion, the author has actually only adequately considered the curtilage of this site, and as the English Heritage guidance makes clear, curtilage and setting are entirely different things altogether, with setting being a far wider, esoteric and flexible concept. The Heritage Impact Assessment is inadequate, and further consideration - by a properly qualified archaeological organisation or individual is required.

Yours sincerely

Diana Friendship-Taylor  
Chair,

RESCUE: The British Archaeological Trust

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<sup>11</sup> *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2011): English Heritage