



Case Information

Reference/Case ID		300018607	
Scheduled Monument	Holyrood Abbey, precinct and associated remains		
Index no	SM13031	Grid ref	NT 26900 73900
Date application validated		19 October 2016	
Summary of proposed works		Excavation of 12 no. trial pits in the Abbey Strand and Mews Stable buildings	

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for excavation of 12 trial pits in the Abbey Strand and Mews Stable buildings be granted with conditions

2. Background

The monument comprises Holyrood Abbey and precinct, associated buried remains which lie beneath the Palace of Holyroodhouse and beneath nearby structures and open spaces, and Queen Mary's Bath. As well as the upstanding remains of Holyrood Abbey and Queen Mary's Bath, the scheduled area includes the ground in the palace gardens, forecourt, Mews Court and the grounds of Croft-an-Righ House, together with ground now buried below structures including the Palace of Holyroodhouse itself, Croft-an-Righ House, the buildings on the N side of Abbey Strand and the buildings around Mews Court. The monument also contains buried archaeological remains of great significance, relating both to the abbey and palace. Buried remains of the abbey precinct survive to the E and SE of the abbey church, beneath the palace gardens. Holyrood was the principal royal palace in Scotland from the early 16th century onwards and significant remains of earlier structures are known to lie beneath and around many of the present buildings. Excavations in the palace forecourt have shown the existence of surfaces dating back to the 15th century and boundary walls and buildings exist S of the SW wing of the present palace.

The scheduled area excludes the above-ground elements of all buildings and sheds and their floors, except for the upstanding remains of Holyrood Abbey and Queen Mary's Bath, which are scheduled.



The monument is of national importance because the remains of Holyrood Abbey represent evidence for one of Scotland's foremost medieval monastic houses, adapted and modified at the Reformation. In the vicinity and beneath the present palace building and around the area are significant remains of early structures that have the potential to increase our understanding of the palace's construction, development and use, and its evolving relationship with adjacent structures, especially Holyrood Abbey.

It is the north side of Abbey Strand (referred to as the Abbey Strand buildings in the application documents) and the former stables in the Mews court (referred to as the Stables in the application documents) that this application relates to. The application is for excavation of 12 trial pits in and adjacent to the buildings on the north side of Abbey Strand and the former stables in the Mews court. It follows a previous conservation appraisal by the applicant's archaeological advisors, heritage consultants, structural engineers to inform the detail of works to the ground floors of various buildings and any potential strengthening or foundation works required. It has been submitted by Burd Howard Architects who act as agents for the Royal Collection Trust. The application is accompanied by a structural engineer's assessment; archaeological mitigation strategy, justification and drawings showing position of pits.

HES Heritage Directorate has undertaken pre-application discussions with the applicant regarding the scope and timing of works, and this application accords with the outcome of those discussions.

3. Proposals

Consented works – Excavation of 12 trial pits, 0.5x0.5x.75m deep, in the Abbey Strand and Mews Stable buildings

Aims – These trial pits are part of a series of investigative works that will enable the structures of these buildings to be better understood, and will inform emerging design proposals for their refurbishment and conversion.

The proposal is to put the two buildings back into public use. They are part of a series of site wide interventions in and around the Palace of Holyroodhouse that are proposed as part of the Royal Collection Trust's current Future Programme

Timetable – The works would be undertaken from late November 2016 onwards

Personnel – The archaeological excavations would be undertaken by Kirkdale Archaeology. The structural assessment is carried out by David Narro Associates.



4. Representations received

HES Conservation Directorate have been consulted. They have management responsibilities for part of the area subject to the works. They request the applicant informs them of the start date for the works.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

The application should be considered with the following legislative and policy considerations in mind:

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2: Control of works affecting scheduled monuments.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

3.16. Works on scheduled monuments should therefore normally be the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.

3.17. As each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs, any proposed change to it must be fully and explicitly justified.

3.18. Scheduled monument consent applications must be considered in terms of the cultural significance of the monument and the impact that the proposals would have upon this cultural significance. The more important particular features of the monument are to its cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify these features.

3.20. Where change is proposed, it should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, properly planned and executed, and where appropriate in the context of an individual monument, reversible.

3.22. Where consent for the range of works set out in paragraph 3.4 is granted, conditions are normally applied to ensure the works are undertaken in an appropriate manner. Common requirements are:



- a. the use of appropriate assessment methodologies to determine the full impact of any proposed management, use or development;
- b. the avoidance of irreversible change particularly wherever its effects cannot be adequately assessed;
- c. that where change is necessary, strategies should be adopted to mitigate its impact and limit intervention;
- d. that the management and execution of alteration, including remedial work, is sympathetic to the historic character;
- e. that appropriate skills and techniques, materials and construction techniques are specified where appropriate;
- f. that an appropriate level of record is made before, during and after any work and deposited in local and national archives, and, where appropriate, published;
- g. that it is possible, on close inspection, to differentiate new work from old particularly on masonry structures;
- h. that any archaeological excavation or other intrusive investigation should be based upon a detailed research strategy, with adequate resources, using appropriately skilled and experienced archaeologists with a satisfactory record of the completion and publication of projects; and
- i. that the design, planning and execution of works on scheduled monuments are undertaken by people with appropriate professional and craft qualifications, skills and experience.

b) Assessment

The proposed works involve the excavation of 12 0.5x0.5 trenches to depths of up to 0.75m deep. This is intended to check sub surface levels for structural loading and depth of any significant archaeological remains. The results of this work will inform detailed final designs.

The physical impact of the proposed works would be destruction of immediate sub surface levels, which are presumed to be only make up for modern surfaces. There may be impact on archaeological layers but only to a depth which establishes that they are archaeological layers. In situ and important layers, such as historic floor surfaces, shall not be excavated unless otherwise agreed in advance by HES.

The excavations would remove archaeological deposits and artefacts from the monument and consequently be destructive. The trench dimensions are restricted to the minimum possible to achieve the project aims and cover a relatively small proportion of the scheduled monument. Given the size of the trenches relative to the monument they would not have a material effect on the monument's overall archaeological value.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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The application has been accompanied by a detailed archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology.

The WSI sets out a suitable method for and timetable for reporting and process for designing post-excavation analyses and reporting. The project team are highly experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects through to publication. Accordingly, the specified method of the work is appropriate to ensure it is undertaken to a professional standard, including post excavation, reporting and archiving. It reflects all professional expectations. The applicant has not specified that reporting products will be sent to HES for approval following the project.

Further information is required to ensure that appropriate post-excavation reports are sent to HES. To ensure this, it is recommended that a condition requiring product of the reports is applied.

c) Other material considerations, including impact of the works on Protected Species and Places

No impact on Protected Species and Places considered likely – see PP&S assessment.

d) Conclusion

The application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and paragraph 3.4 of the policy statement.

The works would involve controlled archaeological excavation within a relatively small part of a scheduled monument. The excavations are the minimum necessary to achieve the project's objective and would leave the vast majority of the site's archaeological deposits intact. Important, in situ deposits would remain intact. They would not visually alter the monument. It is concluded that they would have no material effect on the overall significance of the monument and are, therefore, not inconsistent with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement. The results would inform future proposals and help avoid further future impacts.

The application partially meets paragraph 3.20 because it has partially demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned.

A Data Structure Report DSR would be required to be sent to HES following the works to monitor adequate reporting of works and post excavation analysis. Conditions covering the production of a DSR are required to enable the application to be fully compliant with paragraph 3.20 of the policy statement.



In order to ensure the works comply with the policy statement conditions as outlined in paragraph 3.22 are considered necessary.

Condition 1 is to monitor reporting of post-excavation analysis.

6. Recommended decision

Subject to compliance with the schedule of conditions, the works proposed are considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.

I recommend consent is **granted, subject to the conditions detailed below.**

7. Conditions

1. Within 3 months of the end of fieldwork the applicant shall submit to Historic Environment Scotland a Data Structure Report (as defined in Historic Scotland 1996 Project Design, Implementation and Archiving. Historic Scotland Archaeological Procedures Paper 2). This shall also be copied to the Sites and Monuments Record of City of Edinburgh Council.

Reason: to enable Historic Environment Scotland to monitor the progress of the work which is subject to consent and to ensure that a written record of the archaeological work is presented in an accessible form.

8. Approval

Case officer	George Findlater	Date	22 November 2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	22 November 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Site plan with proposed locations 1691_SK_160926_01
- Abbey Strand: Trial pit locations 16.244/SK110
- Mews: Trial pit locations 16.244/SK210
- Specification for investigations 16.244_Intrusive spec
- Archaeological Method Statement WSI_AS_181016