Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling

Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300018520

Scheduled Monument	Antonine Wall, Golden Hill Park, Roman fort, annexe and bathhouse		
Index no	SM7070	**Grid ref**	NS 49400 72700

Date application validated	28 September 2016
Summary of proposed works	Archaeological investigative works

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for archaeological investigative works to support the design of improved access be granted.

2. Background

The monument is a section of the Antonine Wall which runs across the slopes and summit of Golden Hill in Duntocher. It includes the surviving remains of one of the Antonine Wall forts. There have been several archaeological interventions in the park, including a series of excavations from 1949-51.

The fort is a complex structure of three phases, including an early fortlet, a later fort and an annexe. To the northwest is the site of a bathhouse. Faint traces of the earthworks of the fort, wall and fortlet survive in the park. The Antonine Wall formed part of the fort's northeast defences and continued downslope to the northwest where it crossed Duntocher Burn. On the northwest slope of Golden Hill a small area of rampart base has been left exposed within a square enclosure of iron railings, which have been recently renewed (Case 201507447).

The scheduled area includes much of the western half of Golden Hill Park. It includes the Antonine Wall rampart, berm (area between rampart and ditch), ditch and upcast mound; the fort and annexe and their associated ditches, and an area to the north and south where traces of activities associated with the construction and use of the Wall may survive.

The monument is of national importance as part of a major Roman frontier system. The Antonine Wall is the most substantial and important Roman monument in

Scotland. The fort is one of at least 18 Roman forts on the Antonine Wall military frontier. It is of particular importance because, with the exception of its south corner, it has not been built upon. The Antonine Wall is also part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site and has Outstanding Universal Value.

The applicant for the proposed works is the owner of the monument (West Dunbartonshire Council). They are planning to undertake improvements to footpaths within the park as well as other actions designed to improve the park's apperance and appreciation of the monument. In order to ensure these works do not have an adverse impact on Roman remains (which may survive at shallow depths within the Park) they have proposed to undertake some archaeological investigative works. The project has been subject to a range of discussions with HES Heritage Management and the World Heritage Site (WHS) Coordinator and the method for test pitting has taken those discussions into account. The applicaiton has been prepared by Rathmell Archaeology on behalf of the Council, and includes an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

3. Proposals

It is proposed to archaeologically hand excavate 12 test pits targeted at areas of path upgrading and five test pits targeted at the locations of other improvement works. The results would be used to inform the design of further works aimed at improving public access to, and enjoyment of, the monument and park.

Seventeen test pits would be hand excavated by a professional archaeologist at selected locations. The locations have been chosen because they would inform the design of improvement works, namely: path upgrades, drainage repair/improvement, removal of steps, removal of a hedge and creation of a new information panel.

The test pits would be 0.5 by 0.5m in plan unless otherwise agreed with Historic Environment Scotland. They would be excavated to the shallower of: the upper surface of natural subsoil, the upper surface of a significant archaeological horizon, the maximum depth of planned disturbance where known or to a maximum of 1m from the current ground surface.

The pits would be archaeologically recorded, backfilled and re-turfed. The results would be set out in a report. The report would be distributed, and the archive deposited, as per industry standards.

4. Representations received

No representations have been received.

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

3.14. A monument is included in the schedule to secure the long-term legal protection of the monument in the national interest, in situ and as far as possible in the state it has come down to us. Scheduled monuments have an intrinsic value as monuments, not related to any concept of active use. It is the value of the monument to the nation's heritage, in terms set out in the section on Scheduling in Chapter 2 of this policy statement that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

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.

The monument is part of the Frontier of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (Antonine Wall).

b) Assessment

The proposed works involve the hand excavation of archaeological test pits. This is intended to inform the design of improvements to the park. These are intended to enhance public access as well as improving the appearance and appreciation of the monument.

The pits are designed to establish the presence/absence and nature of any archaeological remains in areas that may be impacted by the planned improvement works (the latter would be detailed in a subsequent application). The test pits would not involve any excavation beyond the minimum necessary to provide this information. The results would be used to ensure the design of improvements do not impact on Roman remains within the monument.

The proposed works would be not have any adverse impacts on sensitve archaeological remains within the monument, because excavation would cease when such remains were exposed. The test pits would be backfilled on the completion of works and would only have a minor and temporary affect on the visual appearance of the monument. It is concluded that the work would have no effect on the cultural signficance of the monument.

The results of the work would improve our understanding of the nature of sub-surface deposits within the monument and allow sensitive design of works intended to enhance public access and the appearance of the monument. The works would therefore facillitate a greater appreciation of the monument.

The application has been accompanied by a detailed WSI that sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology. This has been amended during the application process to take into account the comments of HES (email from Rathmell Archaeology 29/11/16). The WSI sets out a suitable method 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.

Consequently, no conditions are considered necessary.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places is considered likely.

The work would have no impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

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, comprising archaeological test pitting, are being done to elements of the monument in such a way that they will have no impact on the cultural significance of the monument. They do not, therefore, conflict with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works would adversely affect an important part of the monument and have an adverse effect on its cultural significance. They do not, therefore, accord with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The objectives of the proposed work have been clearly set out. They should facilliate sensitive design of works that would improve public access to, and appreciation of, the monument. The works have therefore been justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 of the policy statement.

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

Consequently, no conditions are considered necessary.

6. Recommended decision

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 without conditions**.

7. Conditions

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Simon Stronach	**Date**	30 November 2016
Approved by	John Raven	**Date**	30 November 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Archaeological Method Statement (September 2016)
- Email from Rathmell Archaeology (29 November 2016)