

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Sites Plan – Additional Hearing AS27 Land at Horton Heath 14 Feb 2019

Comment from Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council.

FAO: the Inspector – Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Sites Plan.

I understand that at the Hearing last week there was discussion regarding the potential for the AS27 site to contain Bronze Age archaeological remains, and also whether the archaeological evaluation required should be undertaken at the current site allocation stage (before the site is allocated) or at the planning application stage.

I have discussed the archaeological assessment report for the AS27 site, undertaken by Forum Heritage Services, with the Inspector of Ancient Monuments of Historic England.

We consider that the report has missed an important point relating to the Bronze Age. The report correctly identifies the presence of Bronze Age barrows (burial mounds) in the area, but then seemed to miss the point that because people of this period were burying their dead here, there is a strong likelihood that they were also living in the vicinity. One point that has often been noted is that people in the Bronze Age seem to have intended barrows to be monuments to the dead that were visible to their surviving families and/or social group. The report, in contrast, had suggested a generally low potential for Bronze Age and other settlement evidence.

Following on from this, we felt that the report could have considered potential locations for any contemporary settlement in the area. Such locations would be relatively flat or on gentle slopes (the latter probably south-facing because these are warmer in winter), near to watercourses, and so on. Such consideration would assist in the design of a strategy for the archaeological evaluation.

However, my opinion on when such evaluation should take place differs to that of Historic England. In common with other sites that I have advised on, my view is that evaluation is a matter for the planning application stage. The submission of the results of an archaeological evaluation with a planning application would allow the Local Planning Authority to make an informed planning decision on the archaeological impact of the proposed works, allowing for the appropriate mitigation to be decided upon. This mitigation could include preservation in situ of archaeological remains on some or all of the site, or preservation by record (in effect, where they are dug and recorded by archaeologists).

Steve Wallis
Senior Archaeologist
Dorset County Council