



# THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

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Ms Daphne Woof  
Programme Officer  
C/O Planning Policy Team  
Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

July 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

Dear Ms Woof

*Re SAMDEV plan: Old Oswestry area*

I am writing on behalf of the Prehistoric Society to register an objection to the continued inclusion of the revised scheme of 'Oswestry Area' as one of the councils 18 revised preferred 'place plan' options for strategic development. My predecessor as President of the Society, Alison Sheridan, wrote to you previously, outlining the reasons for objection. We firmly believe the proposals will cause significant harm to the setting of Old Oswestry Hillfort. This monument, designated by government as a site of national importance, is an extremely impressive Iron Age multivallate enclosure, with clear evidence pointing to the use of the landscape in the Bronze Age and Neolithic periods, indicating clear continuity of landuse over several thousand years. Additionally, it's incorporation into Saxon defensive lines shows it was used and valued in the historic period and of course its use in the First World War is well known. It is remarkably well preserved and one of the best examples surviving in Britain. Its striking position on a high glacial feature raises the enclosure within the landscape, creating a magnificent site with easily readable defensive earthworks and soaring views, both to and from it.

It is very disappointing that the Inspector has not removed OSW004 from the proposals. I have reviewed the June 2015 Main Modifications document, and welcome the proposal in MM163, that a master plan is required and that a full archaeological assessment must be undertaken to further understand the significance of the site. However, I wish to challenge MM163 Design Principal 2: '*Ensuring long distance views to and from the Hillfort within its wider setting are conserved.*' This cannot be achieved by constructing 117 dwellings within the immediate setting, and consequently, this Design Principal cannot be achieved without removing OSW004 from the scheme and protecting the setting of the hillfort.

I also wish to challenge MM163 Design Principle 4 '*The layout of the development, its form, massing, height and roofscape design will be designed to minimize the landscape impact.*' This form of terminology and design modification is more suited to an urban zone where form, massing height and roofscape are being designed to blend harmoniously with, or be subservient/recessive to, an existing architectural form and character. This is clearly not the case here in the rural landscape, so it will not be possible to 'minimize' the impact as there is nothing existing against which the impact can be judged to have been minimized.


As our previous letter noted, the importance of the setting of designated assets is enshrined within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department of Communities and Local

Government 2012), paragraphs 128, 129 and 132. Additionally, the English Heritage document *The setting of Heritage Assets* (EH 2011, under revision) clearly underscores the importance of setting and *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008) stresses that understanding the significance of places is vital and that significant places should be managed to sustain their values. The values in question are Historic, Evidential, Aesthetic and Communal. The designation of the monument indicates it has high historic and evidential values, and it is clear from the strong and vocal campaign that the communal value is also extremely significant; both within the local community but also much further afield wider. The aesthetic value, of a designed earthwork in a strategic position within a glacial landscape must also be considered high. To compromise the setting and impede views both from and to the monument must be considered as significant harm.

Old Oswestry is one of remarkably few surviving hillforts that can be read so well in the British landscape – many were not so well sited initially, have been partially removed through development, or have suffered from natural erosion or obscured as a result of forestry. Old Oswestry has suffered none of these depredations and its preservation intact should be a priority for the local authority, to enable the public to appreciate and understand the nature of prehistoric occupation now and forever.

I ask on behalf of the Prehistoric Society, that Shropshire Council remove OSW004 from the scheme, and preserve the setting of this most magnificent site; one that should be preserved and championed as a fundamental contributor to the history, character and distinctiveness of the area.

Yours faithfully

  
Alex Gibson, BA, PhD, FSA, FSA (Scot), MCIfA  
President