

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT OLDPORT, WHITTINGTON ROAD, OSWESTRY

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT



April 2014

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report explores the potential impact on archaeology and cultural heritage of a proposal to allocate land at Oswestry North for a mix of development uses. The proposal is currently being put forward in accordance with Policy CS3 of the adopted Shropshire Core Strategy, and Preferred Policy Direction MD7 of the Site Allocations and Management Development Plan. As part of the representation to the Local Plan Inquiry, a masterplan has been prepared to indicate how development might be accommodated on the site.
- 1.2 Heritage policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) urge local planning authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, to recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. It is therefore important that in considering site allocations, attention is given to the potential impact on heritage assets.
- 1.3 While the Council has reacted positively to the principal of sensitively planned development in this area, early consultation with English Heritage (EH) resulted in an expression of concern. EH's initial response was that any expansion of the urban area north east of Oswestry could have a detrimental impact on the significance and setting of the Old Oswestry Hill Fort, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In response to these comments, and in consultation with the Council and English Heritage, careful thought has been given to possible areas for development within the context of a masterplan and a detailed visual analysis. It was also agreed that an independent heritage impact assessment should be carried out to establish what the potential effect of proposed development on the significance and setting of the hill fort might be. This has been an iterative process, and the initial masterplan has been significantly changed following the assessment process and a series of consultation discussions. This document assesses the impact of the final masterplan proposals Rev G (April 2014).
- 1.4 The assessment, which has been carried out by Peter de Figueiredo, follows the methodology set out in the English Heritage guidance document *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (October 2011).
- 1.5 Following the Consultation Responses submitted on the Shropshire SAMDev Plan, two additional sections have been added to this document. These are a new Section 5 which summarises the relevant sites included in the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER), and a new Section 7, which provides an assessment of the significance of the buildings at Oldport Farm. Section 9 has also been amended to include an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the above ground HER monument sites (the impact on below ground sites is included in the Archaeological Summary Statement). Comments on the Heritage Statement submitted by the HOOOH campaign are made in Annex 1.

2 RELEVANT POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The following national and local planning policy documents and guidance are relevant to assessment of impact on the setting of the Old Oswestry Hill Fort:

National

- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- CLG, DCMS and English Heritage, PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Planning Practice Guide 2010
- English Heritage: Seeing the History in the View, a method for assessing significance within views 2011
- English Heritage: The Setting of Heritage Assets 2011
- English Heritage: Conservation Principles
- Malcolm Reid and Jenny Marriott, Old Oswestry Hillfort Conservation Plan, 2010
- English Heritage, Old Oswestry, Selattyn and Gobowen, Shropshire: Analysis of Earthworks, Archaeological Survey Report, 2010

Local

- Shropshire Council 'Saved' Planning Policies for the former Oswestry Borough Council

- 2.2 The forms of designation and regulation that apply to heritage assets are:

National

- Scheduling under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended)
- Listed buildings
- Conservation Areas
- Development Plans
- Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England

Local

- Protection of landscape or green space such as Green Barriers and Special Landscape Areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (OANB)
- Lists of Buildings of Local Interest

- 2.3 The NPPF defines a heritage asset as '*a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)*'.

3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

3.1 Definition of 'Setting'

- 3.1.1 Under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, a scheduled area includes 'any adjacent land which (in the opinion of the Secretary of State or English Heritage or any local authority) is essential for the support or preservation of the ancient monument' (Section 61 (9)).
- 3.1.2 Section 128 of the NPPF states that 'in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including the 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'. Section 129 states that 'local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise'. While a planning application is not currently proposed for the sites under consideration at Oswestry North, the identification of potential development sites in the Local Plan is likely to lead to applications being made in the future. Hence the call for a heritage impact assessment of the potential effect on the significance and setting of the Old Oswestry Hill Fort in order to assist the decision making process.
- 3.1.3 The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset 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'.
- 3.1.4 The definition of setting is supported by a set of principles that allow the concept to be better understood for the purpose of both the plan making and development management processes. These are set out in paragraphs 113 to 117 of the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (HEPPG) that accompanied PPS5,¹ and are as follows:
- Setting is the surrounding in which an asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that asset, or may be neutral.

¹ The HEPPG provides generic guidance on decision making for changes that affect the historic environment. It remains in place as national guidance until it is replaced.

- The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration; by spatial associations; and by our understanding of the historic relationships between places.
- Setting will therefore, generally be more extensive than curtilage, and its perceived extent may change as an asset and its surroundings evolve or as understanding of the asset improves.
- The setting of a heritage asset can enhance its significance whether or not it was designated to do so.
- The contribution that setting makes to the significance does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. Nevertheless, proper evaluation of the effect of change within the setting of a heritage asset will usually need to consider the implications, if any, for public appreciation of its significance.

3.2 Scope of Work

3.2.1 In the document *The Setting of Heritage Assets*, English Heritage has set out guidance on managing change within the setting of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas and landscape. The guidance includes a methodological approach to assessing the effect of proposed development on the setting of assets, which has been followed in this study. The methodology has five stages:

- Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected
- Step 2: Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s)
- Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance
- Step 4: Explore the way maximising enhancement and avoiding or minimising harm
- Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

3.2.2 The impact assessment includes an assessment of the effect of direct and indirect impacts, including physical changes, visual or aural impacts on individual heritage attributes, assets, and intangible associations. Professional judgement has been used to evaluate the significance of effect.

- 3.2.3 It is generally accepted that conservation is about managing sustainable change, and that every reasonable effort should be made to avoid, eliminate or minimise adverse impacts on significant places. In accordance with the NPPF, however, it may be necessary to balance the public benefit of any proposed changes against the harm to the place. In this regard, an overall assessment of impact on setting has been made balancing any public benefits and disbenefits within a summary and conclusion.

3.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 3.3.1 In addition to the assessment of impact on heritage assets set out in this document, a separate assessment of landscape and visual impact has been carried out by Planit-ie Limited. This follows the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment produced by the Landscape Institute. Since the two studies focus on impact on the hill fort as the principal landscape and heritage feature, both draw on common baseline data and use many of the same view points to assess impact on the hill fort.
- 3.3.2 Prior to representations made to the current Local Plan Inquiry for the sites to be allocated for development, a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment for defined areas around Oswestry and other settlements in the former Borough was carried out by White Consultants in 2008. This complemented a County Landscape Character Assessment by Shropshire County Council. The study assessed the capacity of the landscape to accommodate housing and employment development, identifying those landscapes that should be protected from development.
- 3.3.3 Sites on the north-west urban edge of Oswestry were defined in the 2008 study as having medium landscape impact, with medium capacity for employment and medium/low capacity for housing. The A5 corridor was considered to reduce the tranquillity of the potential development site, but to make it visible. Visual detractors included the power line across the site and the commercial/industrial buildings to the south and south west. The hill fort was observed to be a prominent landmark, and the study identified that the part of the site with least effect would be the southern half, defined by a line from the northern edge of the existing industrial development at Park Hall running west, using a hedge line as a northern boundary. This would avoid extending development further north than existing development and would not impinge on more sensitive parts of the hill fort setting. The study recommended that should the site be developed, there would be a need for large scale planting on the northern boundary and breaking up the massing of development. It was also recommended that opportunities should be taken to respond to the hill fort in any development layout by using the axes of view corridors, especially from the surrounding road.
- 3.3.4 This guidance has assisted the preparation of the masterplan and the consideration of impact on both landscape and heritage.

4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

- 4.1 The following heritage sites in the vicinity of the hill fort are included on the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER).
- 4.2 An assessment of significance, included in the gazeteer is based on the following sensitivity criteria:

Sensitivity	Examples of Receptors
Very High	World Heritage Sites, Grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments
High	Grade II Listed Buildings Conservation Areas, sites of national importance
Medium	Sites of Regional/County importance
Low	Sites a local interest, Sites with a low local value or interest for education or cultural appreciation, Sites that are so badly damaged that too little remains to justify inclusion into a higher grade.

4.3 Gazetteer of Heritage Asset Sites

Site Name	St Edith's Chapel
NGR	SJ 2977 3031
Site Type	Chapel (medieval)
Period	medieval
HER No	00338
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Site of medieval chapel, destroyed 1844
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Old Oswestry Hill Fort
NGR	SJ 2956 3108
Site Type	Multivallate Hillfort
Period	Iron Age
HER No	00351
Statutory Designation	Scheduled Monument
Description	A fine example of a nationally rare type of Iron Age hillfort (large and with multiple ramparts), Old Oswestry forms part of a significant concentration in the Marches and is of particular interest because of its later reuse as part of Wat's Dyke.
Assessment	Very High significance

Site Name	Wat's Dyke
NGR	SJ 2950 3100
Site Type	Frontier Defence
Period	Early-mid Saxon
HER No	01001
Statutory Designation	Scheduled Monument
Description	A major boundary earthwork which survives intermittently between Maesbury and the Dee Estuary, Wat's Dyke is commonly dated to the early 8th century (though it could be earlier), thus predating Offa's Dyke, to which it runs parallel for part of its length .
Assessment	Very High significance

Site Name	Findspot before 1964 of Neolithic Axe
NGR	SJ 296 311
Site Type	Findspot (Neolithic)
Period	Neolithic
HER No	02749
Statutory Designation	None
Description	A broken Neolithic stone axe found in a hut on the Old Oswestry hillfort
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Findspot in 1974 of Neolithic Stone Axe
NGR	SJ 296 311
Site Type	Findspot (Neolithic)
Period	Neolithic
HER No	02750
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Small stout Neolithic stone axe found in WWII crater in 1974 on the Old Oswestry hillfort
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Railway Yard, Oswestry
NGR	SJ 2944 2987
Site Type	Railway Station
Period	1848
HER No	05704
Statutory Designation	None
Description	The Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Chester Junction Railway was completed in 1848. The railway station and yard is extensive and includes a number of historic buildings: station building, goods shed, signal box and signal post, and Cambrian Works.
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Findspot in 1940 of a Prehistoric Arrow Head
NGR	Not known
Site Type	Findspot (Prehistoric)
Period	Prehistoric
HER No	05706
Statutory Designation	None
Description	A barbed and tanged arrowhead found in 1940 at 11 Cambrian Drive, Oswestry
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Railway Junction
NGR	SJ 3007 3154
Site Type	Railway
Period	Mid 19 th to 20 th century
HER No	05779
Statutory Designation	None
Description	The Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Chester Junction Railway was completed in 1848
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Medieval Street System
NGR	SJ 2894 2970
Site Type	Road
Period	Medieval
HER No	05785
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Medieval street system of Oswestry
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Post-medieval Street System
NGR	SJ 2894 2970
Site Type	Road
Period	Post-medieval
HER No	05844
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Post-medieval street system of Oswestry
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Find of a Spindle Whor South of Old Oswestry
NGR	SJ 2964 3062
Site Type	Findspot
Period	
HER No	00282
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Spindle whor found in a sand pit in 1932
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Rectangular Enclosure West of Old Oswestry
NGR	SJ 2923 3117
Site Type	Rectangular Enclosure
Period	Early Iron Age to Roman
HER No	00685
Statutory Designation	None
Description	A single ditched rectangular cropmark enclosure of probable Iron Age to Roman date
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Possible Roman Camp NE of Old Oswestry
NGR	SJ 2950 3100
Site Type	Temporary camp?
Period	Early Iron Age/Roman
HER No	01412
Statutory Designation	None
Description	A rectangular enclosure of probable Iron Age to Roman date, a possible temporary camp of Roman date
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Milestone on B5069 North of Oldport
NGR	SJ 2999 3101
Site Type	Milestone
Period	Early 19 th century
HER No	21050
Statutory Designation	None
Description	An early 19 th century milestone with a metal plate and inscription Holyhead 86 M Salop 18 M
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Vyrnwy Aqueduct
NGR	SJ 3171 3441
Site Type	Aqueduct
Period	Late 19 th to 20 th century
HER No	21491
Statutory Designation	None
Description	A 68 miles long aqueduct opened in 1891, taking water from Lake Vyrnwy to Liverpool
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Pit near Oldport Farm
NGR	SJ 3029 3083
Site Type	Pit
Period	Post-medieval
HER No	21710
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Excavated pit forming a shallow sub-oval cut, probably truncated by modern ploughing, found in 2009
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Pit near Oldport Farm
NGR	SJ 3033 3070
Site Type	Pit
Period	Post-medieval
HER No	21711
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Excavated pit showing a shallow concave feature, found in 2009
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Post-medieval Ditch
NGR	SJ 3019 3074
Site Type	Ditch
Period	Post-medieval
HER No	21712
Statutory Designation	Scheduled Monument
Description	Excavated ditch likely to be of post-medieval date but its function was not ascertained, found in 2009
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Military Training Camp at Park Hall, Oswestry
NGR	SJ 3046 3107
Site Type	Training camp
Period	WWI to 20 th century
HER No	21713
Statutory Designation	None
Description	During the First World War the owner of the Park Hall estate, Major Wynne Corrie, gave Park Hall over to the military as their local headquarters, and in spring 1915 a military camp was constructed to train the troops. This spilled out onto the Oldport Farm site, with the area to the east of Old Oswestry Hillfort being used for excavating trenches and setting off explosives. Following the death of Major Wynne Corrie the estate was conveyed to the War Office in 1920. The training camp was used once again from the Second World War up until 1968, after which it was used for training Junior Leaders until late 1975
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Mortar Crater
NGR	SJ 3033 3070
Site Type	Bomb crater
Period	WWII
HER No	21714
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Mortar crater associated with a WWII training camp; not fully excavated. Fragments of ballistics and other unknown metal objects were partially excavated
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Mortar Crater
NGR	SJ 3018 3074
Site Type	Bomb crater
Period	WWII
HER No	21715
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Mortar crater associated with training camp in World War II; not fully excavated. The southern end of the feature appears to have been truncated, probably as a result of ploughing. Metal fragments were observed that appeared to be from a large mortar or shell casing. It was concluded, based on the shape of the pit and the number of metal objects present, that this feature was most likely to represent a crater, created as a result of mortar detonation and associated with the military training activities on the site
Assessment	Low significance

Site Name	Oldport Farm
NGR	SJ 2987 3077
Site Type	Farmstead
Period	Early 19 th century to unknown
HER No	26499
Statutory Designation	None
Description	Farmstead, described as 19 th century. The building is described and assessed in Section... of this report
Assessment	Medium significance

- 4.4 There are 22 sites included in the HER. Of these, two are assessed as being of Very High Significance and nine are of Medium Significance. The remainder are of Low Significance. The two sites of Very High Significance are considered in detail in Section 5 of the report and Oldport Farm, one of the sites of Medium Significance, about which little has been recorded to date, is considered in Section 7.

5 SIGNIFICANCE OF OLD OSWESTRY HILL FORT

5.1 Scheduled Ancient Monument

- 5.1.1 The Old Oswestry Hill Fort together with two adjoining sections of Wat's Dyke is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended). The list entry reads as follows:

Name: *Old Oswestry hillfort, and two adjacent sections of Wat's Dyke*

List entry Number: 1014899

Date first scheduled: 15-May-1934

Date of most recent amendment: 08-Dec-1997

Reasons for Designation

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.

The site of the monument includes a 5 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

National Grid Reference: SJ 29574 31019



Western entrance



Eastern entrance



Notional reconstruction by EH, showing dwellings, ramparts and rectangular hollows

5.2 Understanding Values

- 5.2.1 English Heritage's approach to sustainable management of the historic environment is set out in the document *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance*, 2008. The document states that the process begins with understanding and defining how, why and to what extent a heritage asset has significance. Only through understanding significance is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm or loss.
- 5.2.2 In order to identify significance, it is necessary first to understand its fabric, and how and why it has changed over time; and then to consider:
- Who values the place, and why they do so
 - How those values relate to its fabric
 - Their relative importance
 - Whether associated objects contribute to them
 - The contribution made by the setting and context of the place
 - How the place compares with others sharing similar values
- 5.2.3 The heritage values that contribute to significance are varied and often inter-related. To assist the process of identification, English Heritage suggests that there are four distinct categories of value, which are defined as follows:
- **Evidential:** derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
 - **Historical:** derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be *illustrative* or *associative*
 - **Aesthetic:** derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place

- **Communal:** derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.

5.2.4 The Conservation Management Plan prepared for the monument in 2010 applies these principles, on the basis of which the following values can be identified:²

Evidential Values

- 5.2.5 The archaeological examination of cultural remains, aided by historical information has provided indication of episodes of past human activity stretching back c.3000 years and possibly beyond. But the earthworks and the remains associated with occupation within the interior of the monument cannot be precisely dated. There is evidence that it was occupied in the Roman period though the character and chronology of this phase remains uncertain. Use in the early medieval period is also unclear, despite physical associations with Wat's Dyke. The site has the potential to provide more accurately dated construction and occupation sequences through such methods as radio carbon dating.
- 5.2.6 As described in the list entry, the interior of the hill fort will retain evidence for occupation including post holes, foundation trenches and refuse pits, as well as 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 sunken features on the west side of the hillfort will 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.
- 5.2.7 Aerial photos and recent English Heritage field survey has demonstrated an extensive and well-preserved World War I trench system. The preservation of this has been enhanced by recent infilling, probably carried out soon after the end of the war. The complex provides tangible evidence of the physical form of battlefield trenches and can be compared with construction information in contemporary field manuals produced by the War Office.
- 5.2.8 In spite of the absence of written records, the evidence of human activity contained in the hill fort provides the material record for understanding the monument and its usage. The physical remains, albeit that they have not been fully explored, are therefore crucial aspects of significance.

² Malcolm Reid and Jenny Marriott, *Old Oswestry Hillfort Conservation Plan*, 2010

Historical Value

5.2.9 The historical value of the hill fort depends to a large degree on the evidential values which provide the means for understanding its history.³ Collective evidence based on other comparative settlements, also throw light on the lives of past people and events associated with the site. Since there is potential for much evidence of past activity still to be found, and further interpretations of evidence will therefore be presented, the historical understanding and the values on which it rests will continue to evolve. Such information and interpretation will rely on 'expert' investigation and analysis.

5.2.10 A summary of historical understanding is as follows:

- The hill fort was constructed and occupied during the Iron Age (800 BC – 43 AD). It probably began as a univallate enclosure crowning the summit of the hill, to which a second rampart was added following an unknown interval. An annexe or homework complex was appended to the western entrance of this bivallate enclosure. Finally an outer rampart was added following the lower contour of the hill and substantially increasing the size of the hill fort. Irregular earthwork configurations and extensive re-working of the ramparts has added to the complexity of the remains which are visible today. It is one of a dense band of hill forts in eastern Wales and the Marches.
- The discovery of a stone axe and flint tools suggest that the site was first occupied in the Neolithic period. However, the first direct evidence of settlement dates to c.1000BC, at which time it appears that it was surrounded by some sort of fence or palisade.
- The round houses on the summit were built using wooden posts with wattle and daub walls. A central post probably supported a thatched roof and inside was a hearth. A pottery crucible was found in one of the hearths, showing that activities such as bronze smelting were taking place.
- By the Iron Age, when the first ramparts were built, the settlement comprised stone-kerbed round houses. Two houses identified during excavations were 7 m in diameter and had central hearths. Several sherds of early Iron Age (7th century BC) pottery had been imported from Wiltshire, as well as salt containers from Cheshire, showing that the community had long-distance trading links.
- After the two final ramparts were built, evidence of occupation consists of curious stone circular structures, each divided into two compartments by an internal stone division. These may date to the later Iron Age, but their exact date remains unknown.

³ Information about the monument is derived from Nicky Smith, *Old Oswestry, Selattyn and Gobowen, Shropshire; Analysis of Earthworks, Archaeological Report*, 2010; and Hughes, G, 1994, 'Old Oswestry Hill Fort: excavations by W J Varley 1939-40, *Archaeologia Cambriensis*, 143, 46-91.

- The excavations carried out By Varley in 1939-40 show that the defensive ramparts that surround the hill fort were not built at the same time and four distinct phases can be discerned. The banks and ditches would have created a formidable defence, but may also have been for display so as to symbolise the dominance of the hill fort.
- Phase 1: The two innermost ramparts, dating from the Iron Age, were the first to be built. They enclosed the whole hill top and consisted of a clay core, supported by timber and boulders, covered with earth, known as a box rampart. In several places these boulders can be seen protruding from the ramparts.
- Phase 2: Probably in the middle Iron Age, there was a period of reorganisation of the fort. The existing ramparts were repaired and enlarged, perhaps in anticipation of an attack. In addition, a third rampart was added to the western part of the hill fort.
- Phase 3: Later, the third rampart was massively reconstructed and the complex of pits near the western end were created.
- Phase 4: Finally, two enormous ramparts were added to the fort. These later ramparts were built in a continual slope or 'glacis' up to the crest of the rampart.
- The entrances were originally simple gaps in the ramparts, but were rebuilt during the Iron Age to form complex entrance corridors.
- To make the entrances more secure, the inner rampart was extended outwards on each side, forming two lengthwise ramparts. These, together with the inner ditches, protected a sunken entrance roadway which meant that people entering and leaving could be closely monitored and any attackers would be vulnerable.
- To either side of the western entrance a series of large rectangular pits can be seen. The purpose of these is unknown, but suggestions have included storage pits, water tanks, quarry pits, shelter for industrial activity or simply additional obstacles against attack.
- Aerial photography has shown evidence of possible Iron Age settlements and field systems nearby. It is possible that Old Oswestry was a place of refuge for this outlying population at times of conflict.
- The elaborate defences may have been a necessity because the hill on which the fort sits is unusually low for an Iron Age defensive site.

5.2.11 The hill fort probably remained in use until the Roman conquest, though there are no signs of it having been taken by force in the Roman period. After it was abandoned, it was one of nine hill forts that became incorporated into a linear earthwork known as Wat's Dyke during the Anglo-Saxon period. The remains of the Dyke are a slight bank running along the base of the hill on the east side. A hedge line marks the Dyke, where it continued on the north side of the fort. Wat's Dyke is c. 65 km long, running from the River Morda at Maesbury to the Dee Estuary at Holywell. It originally consisted of a substantial bank with a deep ditch on the Welsh side.

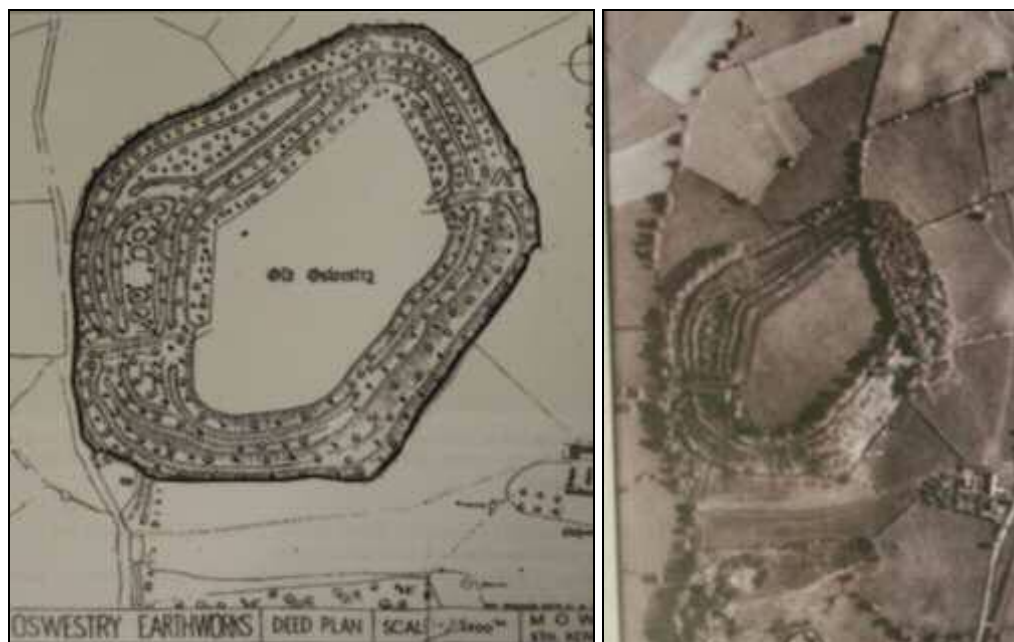
- 5.2.12 Following the Conquest, the Norman advance towards Wales resulted in numerous motte and bailey castles being constructed along the border, of which the castle at Oswestry c. 0.8km south of Oldport is one example. This provided a base for incursions into Wales, and led to the development of the town. Oswestry, however, was attacked by the Welsh in 1263 and in the 1400s, and was later a focus of combat during the Civil War.
- 5.2.13 By the medieval period, the area around the hill fort may have reverted to woodland. During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries the hill fort and the Oldport land was part of the Park Hall estate, and the thickly wooded state of the hill invited comment from early historians and antiquarians such as John Leland, William Dugdale and Thomas Pennant.⁴ In 1848 the railway line from Gobowen to Oswestry was constructed, running parallel to the B5069.
- 5.2.14 During World War I, the hill fort was used as a military base for training Canadian troops stationed at the nearby Park Hall camp. Trenches were dug, rifles and mortars were fired and canisters containing explosives were detonated, causing the creation of wide, shallow craters, sometimes mistaken for archaeological features. Although evidence of archaeological interest of the fort was damaged at this time, the survival of an unusually complete system of World War I military trenches within the hill fort's centre is of considerable significance in the context of the monument's history, and its military associations. These consist of lines of trenches with zig zags and crenellations so as to confine blast impact from shells and prevent enfilading if the enemy gained access.
- 5.2.15 During this period Wilfrid Owen, who was born at Plas Wilmot in Oswestry, was stationed for a month at Park Hall Camp while training his men in the use of rifles. Some of this training is likely to have taken place at Old Oswestry, and may have influenced aspects of his poetic sensibility and creativity.

Aesthetic Value

- 5.2.16 The hill fort is a landmark within the wider landscape. Despite a modest elevation of just 165m above sea level, the summit of the hill stands up to 30m above the surrounding countryside. Its geological composition is Fluvio-glacial deposits of sand and gravel, laid down on boulder clay of Midland Plain during the retreat of the Irish Sea in the last glaciations. Yet its aesthetic value is dependent on its historical interpretation. Glacial mounds are not uncommon features of the landscape, and will not necessarily be seen as objects of aesthetic stimulation. In coal mining areas such as north east Wales, such geological features can be confused with spoil tips which have been top-soiled and grassed, in which case associational values transmit a very different response. Furthermore, aesthetic appreciation usually responds to a landscape in which the features are assimilated according to defined principles of the picturesque or sublime.

⁴ J Leland, *1540 Itinerary*; W Dugdale, *1665 Visitation of Shropshire*; Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales 1726-1798*

- 5.2.17 The hill fort is situated on a glacial mound north of the town of Oswestry, with commanding views to west, north and east. Those looking to the west are the most impressive, with a background of wooded slopes and the ridges along which Offa's Dyke runs. A gentler pastoral landscape is visible to the north. The land to the east, with extensive panoramic views across the Cheshire and Shropshire plains, is more fragmented. It is broken by three assertive north-south lines, the B5069, the pylons carrying the high voltage electricity supply and the A5 by-pass, the latter mostly raised above the adjoining land. Beyond the by-pass is the extensive area of employment and residential development at Park Hall and Whittington House. The Oswestry conurbation is visible to the south west, though the town centre is largely concealed by the wooden hilltop immediately to the south of the hill fort.
- 5.2.18 Notwithstanding the ongoing process of archaeological analysis, the monument has a powerful presence which communicates intangible characteristics of past communities that inhabited it and their activities. This experience is heightened by the physical and topographical form of the hill fort and its landscape setting. It also depends on exposure to the elements and the 'otherworldly' nature of the place. The sense of long-term abandonment itself is a particular aesthetic value.
- 5.2.19 The otherworldly character of the hillfort depends to a considerable degree on its lack of trees or shrubs. These are deliberately excluded to protect the physical fabric of the monument, but contrast with the gentler topographical features of the surrounding landscape, in particular the wooded slopes of the adjoining hill. This makes the monument distinctive, but in aesthetic terms it defies conventional landscape values which would result from the incorporation of trees.



Deed plan and aerial photo of 1946 showing extent of trees on the hill fort slopes

5.2.20 Indeed, in its present form, the hill fort has a degree of artifice that falsifies its historical authenticity. 18th century records show that the slopes were thickly wooded and that the woodland was under management. The 1840 Tithe Map and apportionment indicates that it was a plantation under cultivation, and the OS maps of 1874, 1901 and 1926 show mixed woodland over the defences, with only the central area free of trees. The trees were not cleared until the site was placed in Guardianship in 1946, as seen in the MOW map dated February 1946 copied above.

5.2.21 With the clearance of the trees, In aesthetic terms, it is important to be able to see the rings of ramparts that surround the hill fort and give it its sculpted profile in order to appreciate its multi-vallate structure. This is the key to understanding its defensive capability. Likewise the sunken features on the west side of the hill fort are part of its distinctive form. However, these only become clearly visible as the viewer approaches the monument, and are seen from a limited number of viewpoints. Therefore aesthetic appreciation relies to a very considerable degree on understanding its history; aesthetic and historical values being inter-dependent.

Communal Value

5.2.22 The hill fort is a popular destination for walkers: both local people and visitors. It affords extensive views over attractive countryside, provides a bracing walk, and allows exploration of the monument and its history. Many walkers approach the site by the section of Wat's Dyke, which forms part of the monument. It is therefore appreciated for its recreational value.

5.2.23 The isolated, bare character of the hill top, elevated high above the modern world also provides a sense of history and a connection with past communities, whose lives are not recorded except in the evidence of the monument itself. As a historical landmark, this has a powerful meaning in affirming a sense of local identity and pride of place.

5.2.24 The presence of the World War I training facility, associated with Park Hall Camp, gives the hill fort another dimension, and provides a tangible reminder and memorial to all those who went from the camp to fight in the trenches on the Western Front, many of who were never to return.

5.2.25 The hill fort is a valuable ecological resource with diverse plant life supporting a wide range of birds and mammals.

5.2.26 The hill fort is the subject of a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, completed in 2010, which includes a series of policies respecting the cultural and natural heritage of the site. It highlights the need for a more tightly controlled maintenance regime, based on sound and up-to-date information, and advocates investigative programmes which will lead to greater understanding of the site, thus contributing to an enhanced visitor experience.



Stark and otherworldly character at the summit of the hill fort



Top rampart on south eastern face

5.3 Statement of Significance

- 5.3.1 The statement of significance set out below is a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values identified above and how they inter-relate. It explains the relative importance of the heritage values, how they relate to physical fabric, the uncertainty about its values in relation to the potential for buried elements, and the tensions between conflicting values.
- 5.3.2 **Old Oswestry Hill Fort is one of the finest and most spectacular Iron Age hill forts in Britain. It is an important example of a multivallate hill fort which illustrates several phases of development and occupation. Understanding of the monument is principally derived from excavations carried out in 1939-40 by W J Varley, and the hill fort is likely to retain further evidence for its construction, development and usage. Similar evidence for the date and construction of Wat's Dyke will be preserve in the stretches of earth bank which adjoin the hill fort and are included in the scheduling.**

The hillfort is situated on a glacial mound north of the town of Oswestry, with commanding views to west, north and east. 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 it was one of nine hill forts incorporated into the line of Wat's Dyke, which extends to the north and south. Old Oswestry saw military use during the First World War, and contains a well-preserved system of trenches used by troops based at nearby Park Hall camp. It is associated with Wilfred Owen who was stationed at the camp in September 1916.

Old Oswestry has a roughly diamond-shaped plan, with 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. 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, the function of which is unclear. The outer and latest phase of defences are formed by two massive earthen banks with steep sides rising directly from the bottom of their deep outer ditches and standing up to 6m high. Both entrances were altered as the defences developed; the western entrance in particular survives today as a sunken approach flanked by transverse banks and ditches; the eastern entrance is defended by an earth 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 thus represent the culmination of several phases of construction, which successively increased the defensive capabilities and status of the site.

The earliest occupation within the rampart was a Late Bronze Age settlement of round huts. A pottery bronze working crucible found in the hearth of one of the huts indicates that small-scale industrial activities were taking place at this time. A number of stone kerbed huts and associated finds from the Early Iron Age are contemporary with the first and second ramparts and suggest a sixth century date. The impressive glacis-style ramparts probably date from between the fifth and third centuries BC, which may be contemporary with a large circular hut with stone footings partly overlaying the inturn of the inner bank, south of the west entrance.

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. 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.

Old Oswestry is a prominent local landmark, set within a predominantly rural landscape on the northern edge of the town. It 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. The site of the monument includes a 5 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.



Plan showing layout of World War trenches in the interior of the hill fort

6 CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HILL FORT

6.1 Extent of Setting

- 6.1.2 Given the size of the hill fort and its landmark status, it is clear that its setting is extensive, and must embrace all its surroundings, in particular the immediate areas from which it can be experienced. While little of the monument is visible from the centre of Oswestry, its historical relationship with the town is an important factor.

6.2 Relationship between Setting and Significance

- 6.2.1 The NPPF definition of setting states that 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. In other words, setting does not have significance itself. It enhances or detracts from the significance of the heritage asset.
- 6.2.2 The significance of the hill fort is set out in section 4.3.2 above. The way in which that significance can be experienced and understood is influenced by its setting. Views both of the monument and from it are important, but environmental factors such as noise and weather conditions; spatial associations; and our understanding of the historical relationship between places can also play a part.

6.3 Contribution of Setting to Significance

- 6.3.1 11 key viewpoints have been identified from public places that surround the monument. These can be grouped into four categories as follows:
- Distant View/Panorama looking to the hill fort
 - General View looking to the hill fort
 - Kinetic or travelling View looking to the hill fort
 - Panoramic View from the hill fort

Other views that include the proposed development areas but do not necessarily feature the hill fort have also been identified in order to assess the impact on landscape. The viewpoints are shown on Fig 1.

Views of the Hill Fort

- 6.3.2 Distant views providing broad-ranging panoramas can be of particular significance since they place the hill fort within its wider urban, rural and topographical context. The relationship between the hill fort and its setting is important to understanding the history of the area. Yet given the restricted number of views, and the fact that many of them can only be glimpsed from a travelling vehicle, their kinetic nature means that understanding of significance relies on a matrix of views rather than a few static viewpoints. This makes it difficult to model the potential impact of the proposed development, since the setting changes in a dynamic sequence of vistas.

- 6.3.3 Localised views can provide more information about the hill fort itself, since its form and structure is better revealed when the viewer is close to the monument.
- 6.3.4 In view of the importance of protecting the relationship between the hill fort and its setting, the proposal for development of the open area of land to the east and south east is singled out for special attention. Here the importance of views of the hill fort as orientation points on the approach to the town, and the landscape value of the setting, have been carefully considered.
- 6.3.5 Nos. 2, 5 and 6 are kinetic views which will only be seen from a moving vehicle. In each of these views the hill fort is glimpsed as the background and skyline object in a largely rural landscape, which represents its visual setting.
- 6.3.6 The closer views such as 6, 14 and 15 convey more information, since it is possible to understand the earthworks and hence the defensive nature of the structure, while the more distant views provide little more than its outline. Since the land on the east side is mostly flat, highway trees and planting tend to obscure views of the hill fort, particularly in summer.

Views from the Hill Fort

- 6.3.7 Hill forts were built on elevated sites for defensive reasons, since this provided good all round surveillance as well as opportunities for the construction of effective defensive earthworks. The sense of inter-visibility is therefore important to understanding its significance.
- 6.3.8 A walk around the upper rampart of the hill fort affords views over the surrounding countryside in all directions. From any one point, the views are extensive and largely uninterrupted, and in addition to the sense of surveillance, enjoyment of the view (although not in itself an essential attribute of significance) is one of the primary pleasures to be gained by the present-day visitor.
- 6.3.9 The sense of looking down from a once-inhabited natural structure over a modern world is an aspect of its heritage value, drawing on the relationship between historical and aesthetic values, and in this sense the wide setting contributes to significance. The sense of detachment the viewer feels, however, comes from the elevated viewpoint and the otherworldly character of the structure (as described in paragraph 4.2.16-17 above), rather than because of the particular nature of the setting. Hence the view over open fields and woodland seen to the west may be very attractive, but it contributes no more to the significance of the hill fort than the view of pylons and traffic passing along the A5 to the east. Indeed the view of modern day activity as seen in the buildings and roads that are spread more densely across the eastern side can help the viewer to understand the continuity of human occupation on the site and the links with its hinterland.

Environmental Conditions

- 6.3.10 The relative quietness of the site contributes to its significance, for it allows a more contemplative appreciation of the monument and its past. Quietude is a consequence of its rural setting and the lack of nearby development. However, traffic noise from the A5 which runs at a high level in relation to the land between it and the hillfort has a considerable impact, and detracts from quietude. Noise of tractors and mechanised farming equipment such as grass cutting for silage, harvesting and fertilising can also have a significant impact at certain times of the year. Noisy activities are often carried out at present at Oldport Farm, which is the closest development to the hill fort.
- 6.3.11 The exposed situation, with no shelter from the elements also contributes to significance and allows the visitor to experience something of the nature of past life at the hill fort.

Spatial Associations

- 6.3.12 The relationship with the town, which is largely concealed from view is an aspect of setting. The town of Oswestry is the successor to the hill fort and glimpses of its edges position it in a close relationship without the need to see it. Hence the town is part of the setting, and contributes to the significance of the monument by its historical association.
- 6.3.13 The hill fort rises to 165m AOD, approximately 50m above the main area of the development site. Immediately to south of the hill fort is a steeply-sided wooded hill which reaches a height of 161m AOD. Both hills are distinctive local landmarks of contrasting form and character.
- 6.3.14 The landscape character of the area around Oswestry is described in the LVIA. The upland area to the west forms the edge of the Clwydian Hills and affords views into Wales and eastwards across the Cheshire Plain. The border area contains a number of prominent hill forts which have historic associations with the Old Oswestry fort. The area to the east is characterised by the gently rolling Shropshire Plain, which is predominantly rural with farms defined by field boundaries consisting of well-managed hedgerows, hedgerow trees and copses. Importantly, the slope of the hill fort is immediately surrounded by a belt of agricultural land which is perceived as part of the monument and is the most crucial element of its setting, particularly when viewed from the summit looking out.
- 6.3.15 The hill fort is a prominent local landmark seen when approaching the town from the north along the A5 and the B5069, and is also visible above the hedge lines along Wittington Road and from the A5 heading north from the junction with Wittington Road. It is also visible from a limited number of viewpoints on the west side, as described in Chapter 7.

Symbolic Associations

- 6.3.16 The role of hill forts has been a subject of much academic debate in recent times, with theories around symbolic and ritual functions being proposed as against the conventionally proposed military role. There have also been claims for additional roles such as political centres, elite residences, sacred precincts, stock enclosures, crop stores, gathering places or sites of fairs.⁵ Whether they housed a large proportion of the local community, or a select, perhaps dominant group, is not certain, and they may have differed from site to site.
- 6.3.17 The strategic importance of hill forts commanding tracts of countryside and controlling important passes or river crossings has been considered an important factor in their siting. Old Oswestry has been seen as strategically placed to dominate the route between the Rivers Dee and Severn. A stronghold, however, can only control what lies within effective range of defenders' weapons or within reach of a fighting force, and thus it did not realistically command a zone much more than 100 metres from the defences. The River Dee is not visible, and neither is much of the intervening area. Indeed views from the summit are restricted to the south and west and immediately surrounding the slopes. Nonetheless, there are far-reaching views from Old Oswestry, which stands within sight of at least 15 other hill forts.
- 6.3.18 The close proximity of some hill forts to one another has further emphasised that their purpose was not one of regional defence.⁶ The construction of a new hill fort on a neighbouring site, for example, may have occurred if the original site had become sacred or taboo following an inauspicious event such as the burial of a chief.
- 6.3.19 While such academic debates are likely to continue, the spiritual importance of the monument's setting as well as any functional aspects associated with its hinterland will require that the visual interest and appeal of the hill fort must be safeguarded.

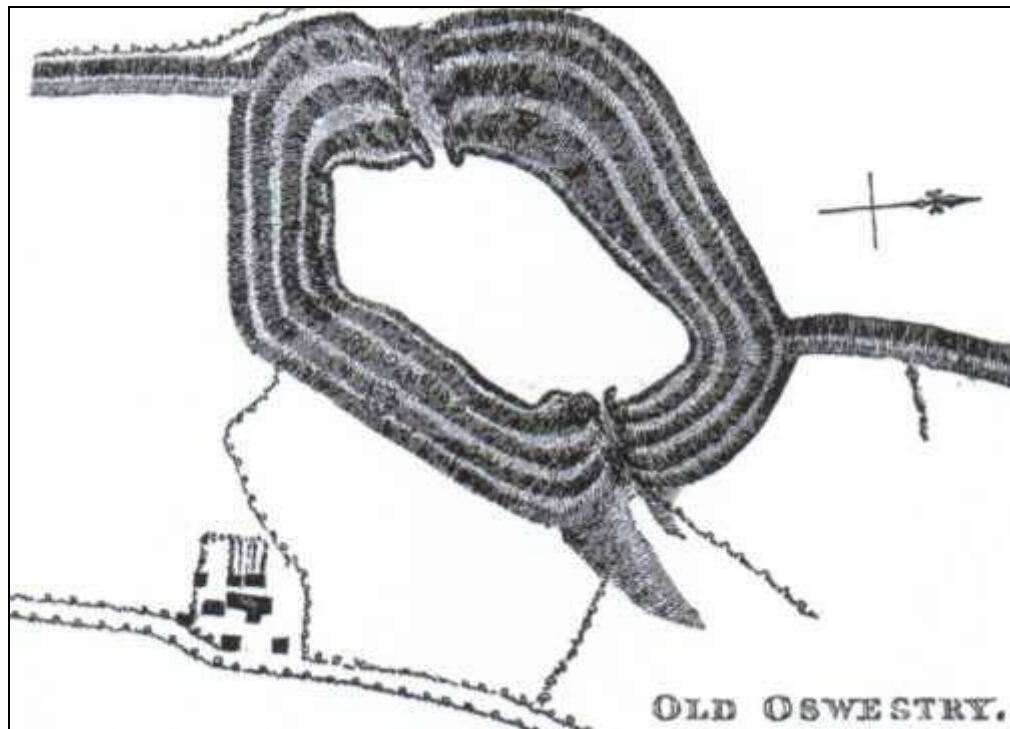
⁵ I Armit, *Hillforts at War*, Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society, 73, 2007

⁶ J Collis, *Hillforts, enclosures and boundaries*, The Iron Age in Britain and Ireland, T Champion and J Collis, eds

7 ASSESSMENT OF OLDPORT FARM

7.1 History of Oldport Farm

- 7.1.1 The earliest plan showing the farm is included in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* of 1770. This shows the farmhouse in its present location, with a large T-shaped barn immediately to the north. Two further buildings flank the entrance from Gobowen Road.

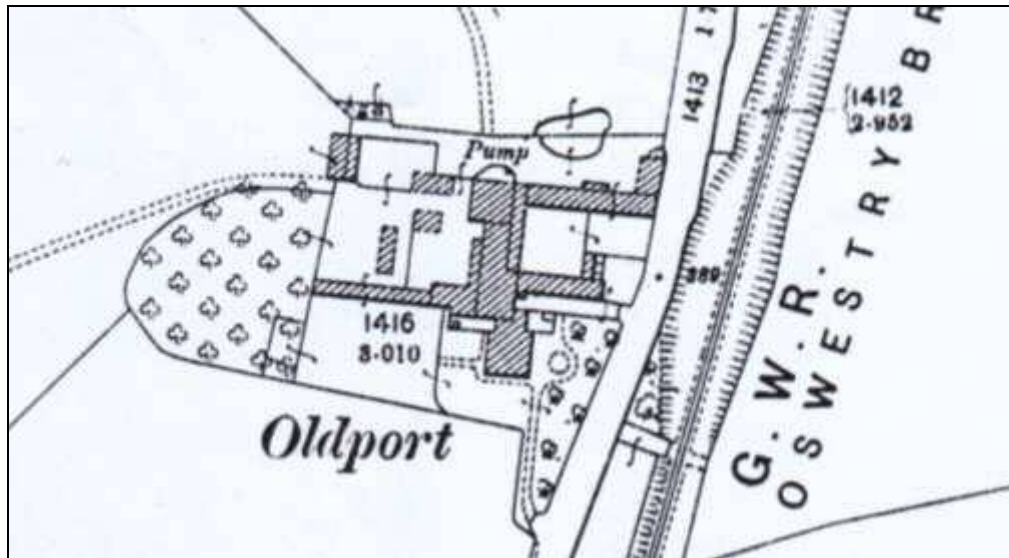


Plan taken from Thomas Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, 1770

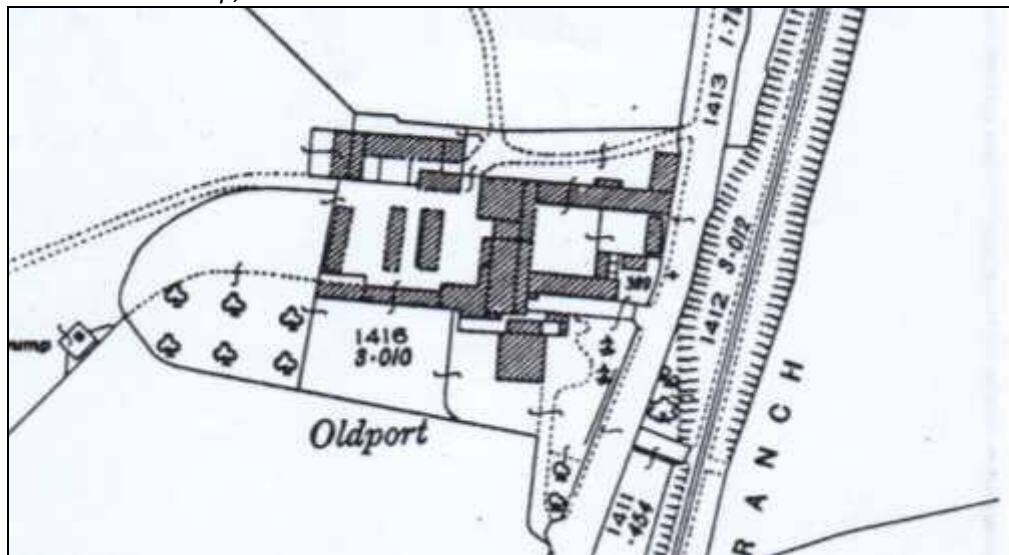
- 7.1.2 The earliest plan showing the farm is found in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* of 1770. This shows the farmhouse in its present location, with a large T-shaped farm building immediately to the north. Two further buildings are shown flanking the entrance from Gobowen Road.



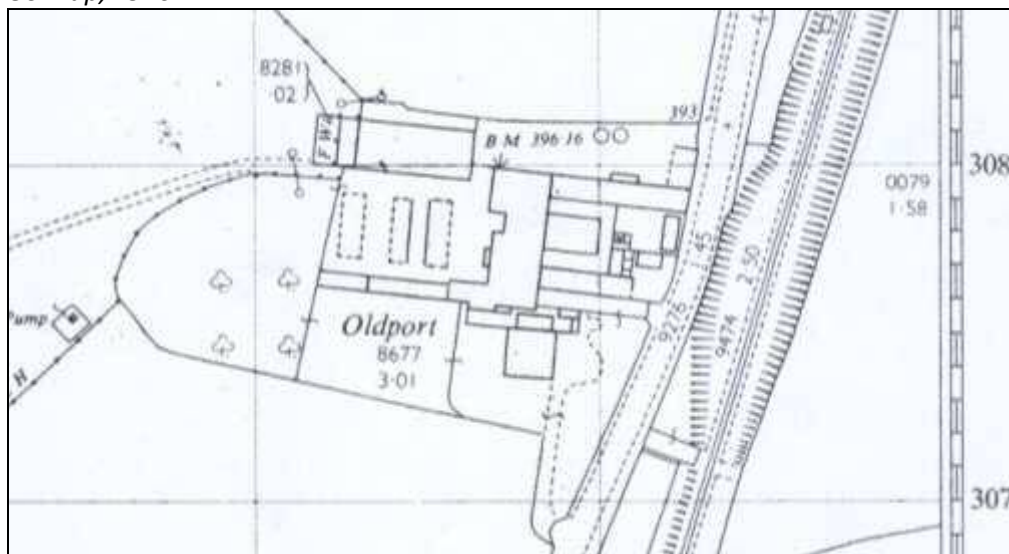
1st edition OS map, 1874



2nd edition OS map, 1901



OS map, 1926



OS map, 1969

7.1.3 The 1874 OS map shows the farmhouse and outbuildings, which had by that time been considerably enlarged, linked together, with a long range of shippens stretching westward towards the hill fort. The 1901, 1926 and 1969 OS maps show progressively more development of the farm buildings around front and rear yards. Since then additional buildings and a silage clamp have been erected to the west of the farmstead.

7.1.4 Oldport Farm was part of the Brogyntyn Estate until 1928 when the Kempster family, who had previously been tenant farmers, acquired it.

7.2 Description of the Farmhouse

7.2.1 The present farmhouse dates from the late 19th century. It is built of machine-made red brick to a Flemish bond, which was later refaced in pebbledash on the east and south elevations. The roof is covered with Welsh slate. The two front gables have applied half-timbering, and the house is fitted with large pane sash windows throughout. A modern conservatory has been added on the west side.



East elevation



West elevation

- 7.2.2 It is possible that the present house replaced an earlier timber-framed building, for two ground floor rooms contain fragments of a stone fireplace and timbers that can be dated stylistically to the 16th or early 17th century. Although these elements may have been part of the earlier farmhouse which appears on the Pennant map, they are probably not in their original locations and are used in a decorative rather than structural manner. As such they have no historical integrity, and may even have been salvaged and brought in from elsewhere.

7.3 Description of the Farm Buildings

- 7.3.1 The nucleus of the agricultural complex is the large central barn, which runs north-south and is connected to the north side of the farmhouse. This has been built incrementally, and dates from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, with extensive alterations made in the 20th century. The earliest part is the south wing, which retains its box timber framing to the upper east elevation and dates from the early 17th century. The lower part has been replaced in brick. The timbering also remains in the upper west gable wall, but this is now concealed by a 19th century extension. A floor was inserted later.



East wall of south wing of large barn



Threshing barn from south west

- 7.3.2 In the late 18th century the building was extended northwards to create a threshing barn, as recorded on the Thomas Pennant map. The barn is built of brick with a slate roof supported by king post trusses. It retains its cart entrance on the west side to the former threshing floor, although in the mid-19th century a lower secondary doorway with a four centred brick arch was formed and after 1874 lean-to shippons were added along the west side. At this time the western extension to the south cross wing was also built.



Roof of threshing barn



Milking parlour in threshing barn



Late 19th century extension to south wing



South west range of shippons



South east range of shippons



Cart house with shippon to right

- 7.3.3 In the 20th century, the barn was subdivided and converted for a number of uses, including milking of cattle and preparation and storage of animal feeds. A floor was inserted in the northern part of the barn and a passageway was created on the east side.
- 7.3.4 Two ranges of shippons were built prior to 1874, one to the south west, and another to the north east, the latter forming an L shape with a cart house backing onto the road. These buildings were both constructed partly of stone and partly of brick. A further range of shippons running south east was erected between 1875 and 1901, this time entirely of brick.

- 7.3.5 In the later 20th century a number of new buildings and structures were built, reflecting the mechanisation of agriculture. These include Dutch barns, silage clamps, cattle sheds and storage buildings. These are mostly located on the west and north sides of the farmstead, closest to the hill fort.



Late 20th century buildings and structures on west side of the farm

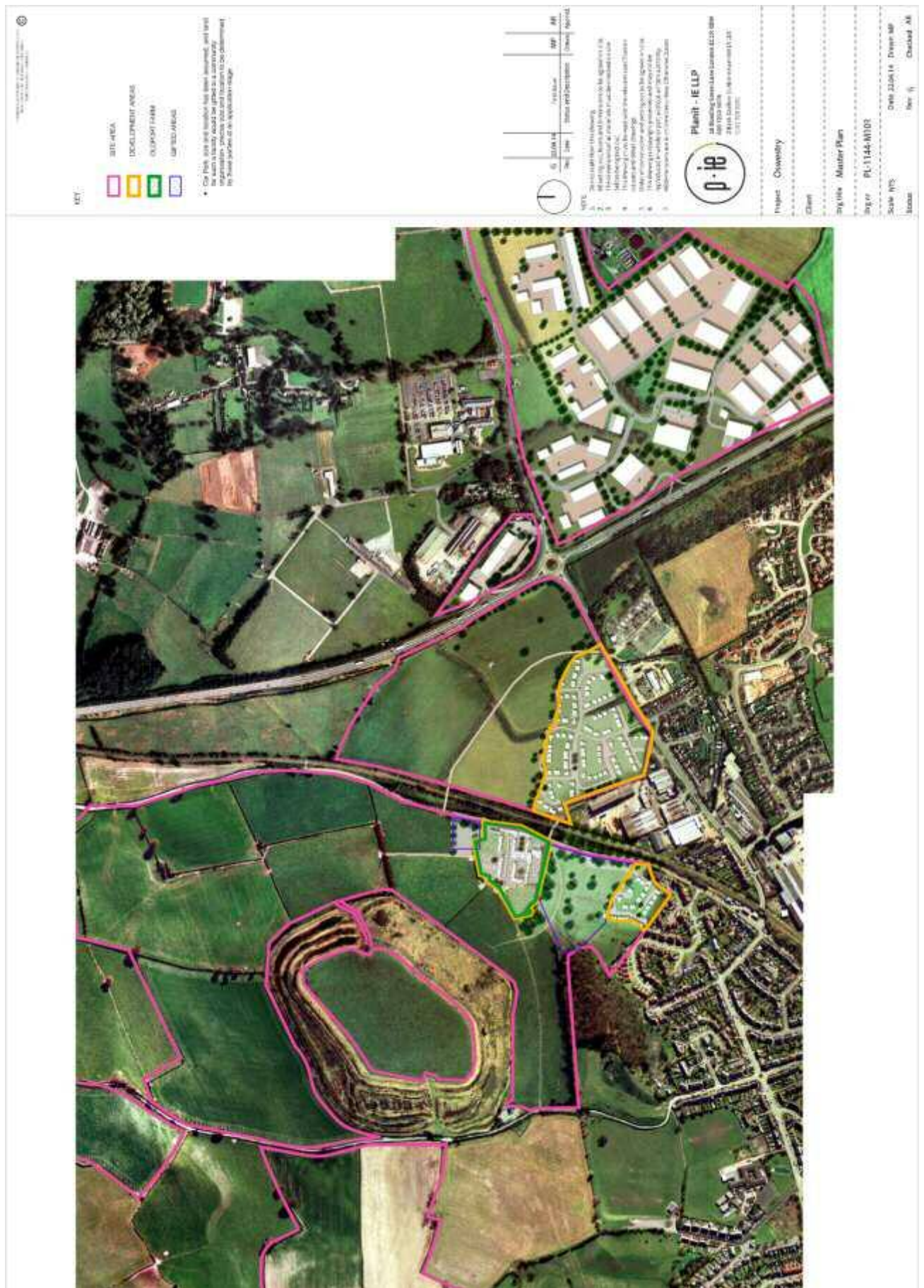
7.4 Assessment of Significance

- 7.4.1 Oldport Farm has historic interest as an estate farm for the Brogyntyn Estate, which included the hill fort and surrounding land. However, it was never intended as a model farm, and displays no aspects of progressive agricultural management or architectural innovation.

- 7.4.2 The farmhouse is a late Victorian building of no special interest, except for the presence of some fragments of a late 16th or early 17th century stone fireplace and oak posts and floor beams, which may survive from an earlier house on the site. It appears that they have been introduced after the construction of the house for a decorative purpose, and have no structural purpose or historical integrity. Notwithstanding the antiquarian interest of these fragments, the house has low significance.
- 7.4.3 The south wing of the central barn dates from the early 17th century. It retains the upper level oak frame to the two gable ends. The box frame is of interest, but the other elevations and the lower gable end walls, have been rebuilt in brick, and with the exception of the oak purlins, the roof has been renewed. The building is probably insufficiently intact to meet the criteria for listing, and is of interest at a regional or county level, making it of medium significance.
- 7.4.4 The threshing barn which was attached to the timber-framed barn in the late 18th century is also of interest, and retains its cart entrance and full height central space. The king post roof, purlins and some of the rafters are original, and some areas of flooring are stone paved. The building, however, was much altered in the late 19th and 20th centuries, and like the earlier part, would not meet the listing criteria. It is of interest at a regional or county level, and is of medium significance.
- 7.4.5 The other historic buildings include the ranges of shippens, and the cart sheds which are connected to the central barn. These all date from the 19th or early 20th centuries and have been substantially altered. None is of special interest.
- 7.4.6 On the basis of the surviving portions of the 17th century timber-framed barn and the 18th century threshing bar, Oldport Farm can be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The significance of the historic buildings, however, has been adversely affected by modern agricultural structures, which seriously detract from its setting. There is an opportunity to safeguard the heritage value of the buildings and enhance their setting through sensitive conversion, clearance of poor quality structures, and sympathetic development.

8 THE PROPOSAL

- 8.1 Seven potential linked development sites within Oswestry North are shown on Fig. 2. All are located on the west side of the hill fort at varying distances from the monument. Closest are Sites 1, 2 and 3 which are on the west side of the B5069 at the foot of the slope.
- 8.2 **Site 1:** is residential and forms an extension of the existing housing area on the northern edge of Oswestry. It occupies a site which is currently green space between the foot of the hill fort and the urban fringe. The layout is more rural in character than the adjoining suburban development, and incorporates a significant amount of green space, with a wide landscape buffer between the proposed housing and the farm. On plan it can be seen to complete the urban edge in a rational line, occupying the land between the woodland slope and the B5069.
- 8.3 **Sites 2 and 3:** consist of the existing Oldport Farm and the proposed car park for visitors to the hillfort. The proposal for the farm involves retention of the farmhouse and ranges of barns, and their conversion for residential use. The unsightly cattle sheds, silage clamps and other modern structures will be demolished. A new L-shaped range replaces the poor quality farm buildings, and the layout is arranged around a courtyard to retain the agricultural character. A substantial area around the site is retained as open fields. A new access immediately to the north will provide access to the site and will serve a new car park and interpretation point with a pedestrian link to the hill fort.
- 8.4 **Site 4:** is residential. The south-western part is largely screened from the hill fort by existing development. The remainder is relatively low density and has a village green at its heart. Informal tree and copse planting along the northern edge of the housing forms a soft boundary, allowing views over the open agricultural land. The existing hedgerow is retained as part of a green chain running through the area. A new footpath link through the fields connects the existing neighbourhoods with the proposed access to the hill fort and provides new opportunities for viewing the monument.
- 8.5 **Site 5:** is proposed to be retained as open fields. This had previously been proposed for B1 office use, but all development has been omitted following further discussion with English Heritage. A belt of perimeter planting provides landscape buffers to the A5 and Whittington Road at the edges of this site.
- 8.6 **Site 6:** is the corner plot adjoining the existing industrial site off the A495. It is proposed for B2/B8 employment use with development set back behind a wide perimeter landscape strip.
- 8.7 **Site 7:** is proposed for employment use and is set back behind a wide landscape buffer along the southern side of the A495. The northern part is proposed for B1 light industrial use with B2/B8 employment to the south.



9 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Assessment of Views

9.1.1 A number of techniques exist for assessing heritage significance in a view and the impact of development on that view. No perfect technique exists, since many views are dynamic and change as the viewer moves along; views assume different qualities in different light and climatic conditions; a photographic view can be changed dramatically by the width of the subject matter; and there is much subjectivity in the relative importance of views.

9.1.2 This assessment makes use of the methodology *Seeing the History in the View*, published by English Heritage in 2011. The following stages are taken to ensure consistency and objectivity in the assessment process, which focuses on the attributes of significance of the hill fort each of the views:

- Establish the importance of a viewpoint
- Description of the view
- Identify heritage assets and attributes of OUV in the view
- Understand the significance of heritage assets and attributes in the view
- Changing aspects of the view
- Assess the overall heritage significance in the view
- Assess the magnitude of impact on heritage assets and attributes of OUV
- Determine the overall impact
- Identify ways of mitigating the impact of the development if appropriate

9.1.3 As encouraged in the guidance, reliance has also been placed on the experience and professional judgement of the author as a historic environment 'expert'. A selection of photomontages, some from the LVIA assessment and others additional to it, illustrate the nature of the impact.

9.1.4 As an aid to the assessment process, in *The Setting of Heritage Assets* English Heritage provides a list of attributes for consideration. Those which are relevant to the development proposals and their impact on the setting of the hill fort are as follows:

Location and siting of the development

- Proximity to the hill fort
- Extent of development
- Position in relation to the land form
- Degree to which development will physically or visually isolate the hill fort
- Position in relation to key views

Form and Appearance of the development

- Prominence, dominance or conspicuousness
- Competition with or distraction from the hill fort
- Visual permeability (extent to which it can be seen through)
- Design and layout
- Materials
- Introduction of movement or activity

Other Effects of the development

- Change to skyline
- Noise, odour, vibration, dust etc
- Lighting effects and light spill
- Change to general character
- Changes to public access, use and amenity
- Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover
- Changes to archaeological context
- Changes to communications, accessibility, permeability

Permanence of the development

- Anticipated lifetime
- Reversibility

Longer term or consequential effect of the development

- Changes to ownership arrangements
- Economic and social viability
- Communal use and social viability

9.1.5 These issues are considered where relevant in the context of the views analysis and assessed in terms of impact on the setting of the hill fort as set out below. The overall impact on significance is a combination of the importance of the view and the magnitude of impact.

9.1.6 The 11 viewpoints selected for consideration, and agreed with Shropshire Council, are shown in Fig 1 as follows:

- View 2: From A5 by-pass just south of junction with B 4580 Whittington Road, looking north west
- View 5: From A5 by-pass looking south west
- View 6: From B5069 looking south west
- View 9: From hillfort looking south east
- View 10: From B4579 looking east
- View 11: From A5 by-pass looking west
- View 12: From Whittington Road looking north west
- View 13: From B5069 looking north west
- View 15: From back lane from Oswestry to Cross Lanes looking south
- View 16: From recreation ground looking north
- View 17: From Watt's Dyke looking south

9.2 Impact on Key Views

View 2: From A5 by-pass just south of junction with B 4580 Whittington Road, looking north west



Summer view as existing

9.2.1 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the west verge of the by-pass looking across the B 4580 Whittington Road. It is the first point travelling north along the A5 from which the hill fort can be seen. There is no footway along the verge, and this is strictly a travelling view, which is glimpsed at a point where there is a short gap in the planting belt that lines the by-pass. At this point, the driver is slowing to meet the roundabout, and there is little scope for safely observing the view of the hill fort. Although the viewpoint itself is of limited importance, it gains value as part of a sequence of views from the by-pass.

9.2.2 Description of the View

In the foreground is a double hedgerow of blackthorn and hawthorn. These are relatively newly planted, and may be allowed to grow higher as they develop in accordance with the majority of the hedgerow along the edge of the highway. In the middle ground are street lights illuminating Whittington Road and a clump of trees. In the background is the outline of the hill fort.

9.2.3 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the hill fort forms the horizon feature, but it is largely indistinguishable from the wider landscape structure, for the ramparts are barely visible. The full outline of the hill is obscured by middle distance trees, so it is not possible to understand its three-dimensional form in this single view. The flatness of the summit and the absence of trees are the most distinctive attributes.

9.2.4 Changing Aspects of the View

Since this is a long view, changes in daylight and weather conditions have a marked effect on visibility. At night, the orange glow of street lights is the dominant feature, and the hill fort is not visible. The degree of visibility also depends on the seasons, with leaf cover on the trees and hedgerows greatly restricting the extent of view. Since the viewer is moving and not static, the viewpoint is indeterminate, and thus the information contained in the view is not constant.

9.2.5 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The view has value as one of a kinetic sequence of glimpsed views stretching one and a quarter miles between the traffic junctions with the A495 and the B5069. Travelling in a northerly direction, after the first half mile, the viewer must turn backwards to glimpse the hill fort. The views are similar when travelling southwards, although they do not require a backward glance. While the topography, landform and outline of the hill fort can be seen and understood by mentally piecing together information gleaned from a sequence of partial glimpsed views, the dominant feature in these views is the line of electricity pylons and telegraph poles, as well as the aerial cables that stretch between them. These 20th century features occupy the foreground and therefore attract the eye more than the hill fort. Although the value of the individual view illustrated here is low, when assessed as one of a sequence of glimpsed views, its value can be considered high. However, as the trees and hedgerows along the western edge of the by-pass continue to mature, it is likely that the hill fort will become virtually invisible, in which case the significance of the view will be substantially diminished or negated altogether.

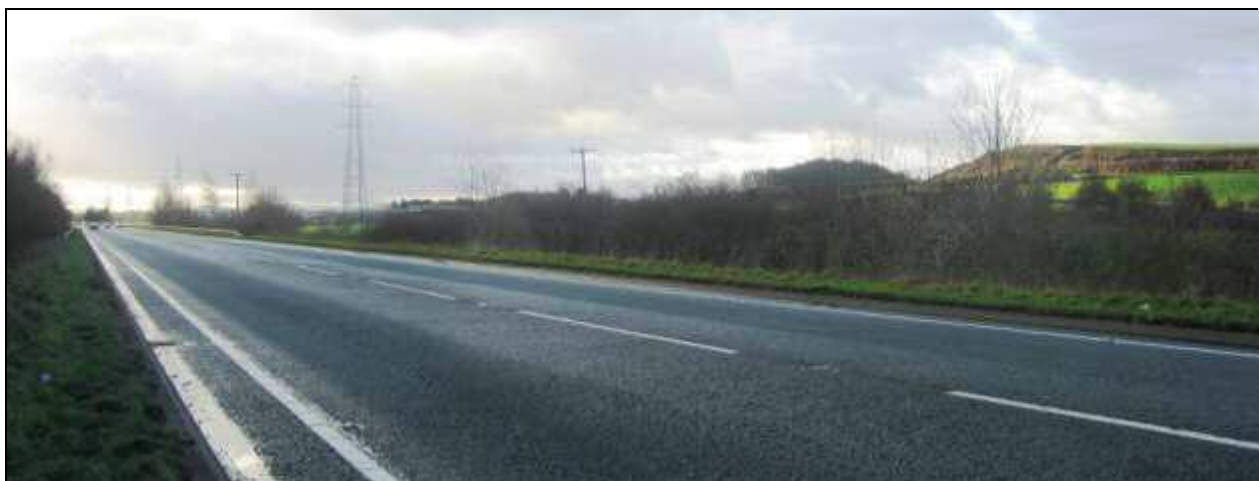
9.2.6 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The development proposal has not been modelled from this viewpoint. This is because there will be no visual impact. The development occupies lower ground, and would be concealed by the land form and vegetation, even in winter. This is not to say that the development will be invisible along the totality of the by-pass. It will be glimpsed from a small number of viewpoints as described in View 5. The impact in the case of View 2 alone, however, is neutral.

9.2.7 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development from this single viewpoint is neutral. As one of a sequence of kinetic views however, as explained in relation to View 5, the impact on the significance of the hill fort is slight adverse.

View 5: From A5 by-pass south of junction with B 5069, looking south west



Winter view as existing



Summer view as proposed



*Enlarged view showing the impact of development (red line indicates where it is hidden by foreground and middle-ground planting) - **Note that this foreshortened view could not be seen with the naked eye***

9.2.8 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the east verge of the by-pass looking across open farmland. There is no footway along the verge, and this is strictly a travelling view, which is glimpsed at a point where there is a gap in the planting belt that lines the bypass. As with View 2, although the viewpoint itself is of limited importance; it gains value as part of a sequence of views.

9.2.9 Description of the View

The view is afforded because there is a short gap in what is otherwise a dense hedgerow and tree belt running along the edge of the highway. Beyond that is the line of telegraph poles and the taller pylons both carrying aerial cables. In the background is the outline of the hill fort. Much of the highway is elevated above the fields, which fall away and then rise up to the base of the hill fort.

9.2.10 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the hill fort is not easily distinguished from the wider landscape structure, for the ramparts are difficult to see, and the full outline of the hill is obscured by middle distance trees. The flatness of the summit and the absence of trees are the most distinctive attributes.

9.2.11 Changing Aspects of the View

Since this is a long view, changes in daylight and weather conditions have a marked effect on visibility. The degree of visibility also depends on the seasons, with leaf cover on the trees and hedgerows greatly restricting the extent of view. Since the viewer is not static, the viewpoint is indeterminate, and thus the information contained in the view is not constant.

9.2.12 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The view has value as one of a kinetic sequence of glimpsed views stretching one and a quarter miles between the B5069 and the A495. While the topography, landform and outline of the hill fort can be seen and understood by mentally piecing together information gleaned from a sequence of partial glimpsed views, the dominant feature of these views is the line of electricity pylons and telegraph poles, as well as the aerial cables that they carry. These 20th century features occupy the foreground and therefore attract the eye more than the background features. However, although the value of the individual view illustrated here is low, assessed as one of a sequence of glimpsed views, its value can be considered high. As the trees and hedgerows along the western edge of the by-pass continue to mature, it is likely that the hill fort will become virtually invisible over time, in which case the significance of the view will be substantially diminished or negated altogether.

9.2.13 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

While this view has been taken where there are substantial gaps in the hedging of the western side of the by-pass, the proposed development will still be substantially obscured as indicated by the red line on the montage image. The development that can be seen is the housing on Site 4. This is mostly two storeys and the montage shows glimpses of houses between trees and hedgerows. This part of the development will be screened by the proposed landscape buffer along the edge of the agricultural land, and will be seen in the context of generous tree and shrub planting. The pylons are due to be removed, and the foreground setting to the view will therefore be enhanced.

As with Views 2 and 11, this should be seen as one of a series of kinetic viewpoints, from which it will be possible to get glimpses of the development. However, this viewpoint is probably the best from which to see the hill fort, and the montage shows that the impact will be modest. Cumulatively, the impact may be greater than the single view, but it will still be slight in overall terms.

9.2.14 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development from this single viewpoint is neutral, but as one of a sequence of kinetic views, the impact on the significance of the hill fort is slight adverse.

View 6: From B 5069, looking south west



Existing view



Proposed view



Enlarged view showing development of Oldport farm site - Note that this foreshortened view could not be seen with the naked eye

9.2.15 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from a field gate on the west verge of the B 5069 looking across open farmland. There is no footway along the verge, and this is essentially a travelling view at a point where there is no hedgerow. Since the hedgerow is cut low, however, it is possible at many points to see the hill fort above the hedge, as indicated in the two additional views from slightly closer viewpoints included below. As one of a sequence of kinetic views along the B 5069 leading into Oswestry, this is a very important viewpoint.

9.2.16 Description of the View

The near foreground is the field gate, and beyond that a number of fields stretch up to the slopes of the hill fort. To the left, and partially behind the hill fort, the tree-covered hill top recreation ground is visible. There are no foreground or middle ground obstructions from this viewpoint.



Additional winter views from the B5069 looking towards the hill fort

9.2.17 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the apparent height of the hill fort is not as great as from other angles, but the ramparts can easily be picked out and its flat-topped profile is evident. These attributes become increasingly visible as the viewer moves closer, as seen in the additional views included above. There are few trees along the field boundary to the B5069, but a hedge of *cupressus leylandii* screen which was planted to screen the farmyard at Oldport Farm has an impact on the closest view of the hill fort. This is an alien landscape feature.

9.2.18 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions. There are no street lights.

9.2.19 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The B 5069 is the major route into Oswestry from the north, and provides the best views of the hill fort when approaching the town. Although it is not on a pedestrian route, the view has value as one of a kinetic sequence of glimpsed views stretching for more than half a mile as far as Oldport Farm. The topography, landform and outline of the hill fort can be seen and clearly understood, with the ramparts readable. There are few impediments to the view, although the absence of any lay-by or stopping point means that the traveller has no opportunity to study the hill fort from any fixed position along the highway. Assessed as one of a sequence of views, its value can be considered to be very high.

9.2.20 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The modelled view shows that some of the roofs of the proposed development on the existing farm site will be visible in the far distance to the left of the hill fort from this viewpoint. As they are not seen in conjunction with the hill fort nor obscure any significant part of the view, this is not harmful. As the traveller moves closer to Oldport Farm, the proposed car park and the farm buildings will become more visible. The roof forms of new development picks up references to the existing buildings, including the main central barn adjoining the farmhouse. Roofs slope downwards towards the hillfort, which reduces visual impact. Timber is used for cladding as well as red brick. Over time, the car park will be screened by a hedge and new tree planting, so that the cars will not be seen. The removal of the unsightly modern outbuildings and the leylandii hedge and the more sympathetic new development will have a low beneficial impact on the setting of the hill fort from the travelling viewpoints closer to Oldport Farm.

9.2.21 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development from this single viewpoint is neutral, but as one of a sequence of kinetic views, the impact on the significance of the hill fort is slight beneficial.

View 9: From hill fort, looking south east



Existing view



Proposed view

9.2.22 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the eastern edge of the summit of the hill fort looking over Oldport Farm towards the A5 by-pass and the north east edges of the town. The hill fort affords panoramic views in all directions, and the absence of trees allows unobstructed vistas of the surrounding landscape. A series of footpaths run around the circumference of the hill fort and its ramparts, and views from any point along their circuit provide interest and enjoyment to the viewer, as indicated in the subsidiary images included below.

9.2.23 Description of the View

The near foreground is the top rampart, and below this is the farm complex, where the modern outbuildings are the dominant features. A band of open pasture land separates the base of the hill fort and the farm. On the opposite side of the B 5069 is the open farmland which comprises the proposed development sites 4 and 5. To the right are the industrial buildings off Whittington Road and the housing areas on the north eastern fringe of the town. The line of the by-pass is marked by the distant planting strip, and beyond this are the employment and housing areas on the Park Hall estate.



View looking west



View looking north west

9.2.24 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the rampart of the hill fort in the foreground is the physical attribute of principal significance, but intangible factors associated with surveillance are also important. Thus the view looking towards Wat's Dyke, and the views of the two entrances are of special significance. The series of views over the surrounding landscape is diverse, ranging from the picturesque vistas of the rising ground to the west, the panoramic view over the flat land to the east, and the view of the town (which is partly concealed by the wooden hill top mound to the south).

9.2.25 Changing Aspects of the View

The extent and quality of the views from the hill fort is very dependent on light levels and weather conditions. Surveillance too depends on good visibility and would have been a principal factor in defending the hill fort against attack in the period when it was settled.

9.2.26 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

In their extent and diversity, the views from the hill fort are engaging and enjoyable. For this reason, possibly above the particular appeal of its heritage significance, the place is popular with walkers and local residents.

Each of the views provides information about the surrounding landscape. The hill fort is evidence of pre-history; the present-day rural landscape is largely the product of 18th, 19th and 20th century agricultural improvements. The railway line that runs parallel with the B5069 and the A5 by pass both speak of developments in transport, while the pylons and telegraph poles are the basis of modern communications and industrialisation. These are testament to the continuing process of change and development over many centuries. Views of the historic town of Oswestry are restricted, but are also of great interest in defining the urban layout, as well as the developing relationship with the hill fort itself. While these views are rewarding both for the information they provide about the area and its changing way of life, and for their picturesque appeal, beyond the fact that they remain open and unobstructed, they do not in themselves contribute greatly to the significance of the hill fort.

9.2.27 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The photomontage which superimposes the proposed development on the existing view shows a number of substantial changes, as follows:

- Firstly, there is a change in the layout, form and scale of the farm complex, Site 2. All large-scale modern agricultural buildings and plant are removed and replaced by residential buildings which, combined with the converted 19th century farm buildings, results in a more unified and compact layout, and a better grouping of forms. Roofs pick up references to existing buildings and slope downwards towards the hill fort, and the long range is broken up with step backs.
- Development is also moved further away from the hillfort, the base of which is currently encroached on by the working farm. Timber and brick are used for cladding. The car park at Site 3 is not shown on the photomontage, but would have a limited impact when screened by trees and hedging.
- Secondly, the proposed housing development on Site 1 is visible to the left of the wooded hill slope above the recreation ground on the right of the view. While this represents a small extension of the existing housing area to the south, it appears as a natural infill between the current urban layout and the wooded slope to the west. It does not significantly reduce the extent of the green buffer.

- The open farmland on the opposite side of the B5069 which comprises Sites 4 and 5 is part of the background view. Here the proposed extension of development northwards from the B4580 Whittington Road will have an impact on the view.
- Site 4 is developed for housing, and is in the middle distance. The nearest part of the site is substantially screened by trees along the eastern edge of the B5069. The development beyond and to the south is more visible, but this part of the site adjoins the existing industrial and commercial units off Whittington Road and is perceived as part of the urban fringe of the town. The masterplan proposes a relatively low density development with clusters of housing to each side of a village green, and bounded by generous landscape buffers to the north and south. In the photomontage it can be seen how there is a balance of planting and built development which successfully breaks up the urban form which relates to the existing context. The focus of the view remains the open agricultural land between the A5 and the B 5069 which is not substantially compromised.
- Site 5 is no longer proposed to be developed and will remain as open fields. The tree belt along the edge of the A 5 and Whittington Road will be strengthened to soften the distant views of development on Sites 6 and 7 beyond.
- Site 6 is proposed for B1 light industrial and stands on the opposite side of the by-pass beyond the development on Site 5. Seen in the montage, it is softened by the existing tree cover along the edge of the by-pass.
- Site 7 is proposed for B1 light industrial and B2/B8, and constitutes the largest area of development. It is visible in the background stretching along the edge of the by-pass. The montage shows that it would fill an existing green gap between the urban edge of the town and the Park Hall development, which is currently a feature of the view. However, the buildings are proposed to stand in a parkland setting with generous landscaping, and the impression seen from such a distant view would therefore be less urban.

9.2.28 Overall Impact on Significance

This view looking out from the hill fort differs from all the other views, which look towards the monument. Because the viewpoint is elevated and extensive panoramic views are afforded, a substantial part of the proposed development will be visible. The magnitude of change is therefore cumulatively much greater. There is a difference too in that the development seen from this viewpoint would not obscure any part of the monument itself; the impact is entirely on land that can be seen when looking outwards.

The question to be addressed is how far this change impacts on the setting of the hill fort, and in that respect what effect it would have on its significance. The fact that the view will change is not in itself harmful, it is the degree to which the change of environment would impact on the values identified in the chapters above. As stated in 5.3.14, the most important physical element of the setting is the belt of agricultural land which surrounds the hill fort and is perceived as part of the monument, particularly when viewed from the summit looking out. This will be affected to some degree by the development proposed on Sites 1, 2 and 3. Site 1 is not part of the belt of land that surrounds the foot of the hill fort, but it is a visible extension of it, and encroachment of housing into this parcel of land will have a slight adverse impact. The impact of the changes to the farm complex, Site 2, which is the closest site to the hill fort, will be medium beneficial. The car park, Site 3, will have a slight adverse impact in the short term, but will be neutral after the landscaping has matured.

Beyond the B5069 the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the monument is much more limited. Put simply, the main observable change that would occur as a result of development of Sites 4, 6 and 7 would be the replacement of some part of the area of open agricultural land in the middle distance and background with a mix of buildings and designed landscape. Whether or not such a change would be harmful to the view depends to a large extent on the design and layout of the development and the landscape structure, and the masterplan and montage views go some way to demonstrating how buildings can be satisfactorily integrated into the wider landscape context. A change in the balance of built and natural forms in a distant view could not in itself prevent or hamper understanding of the hill fort's significance, which is based on tangible factors as those identified in the Statement of Significance set out in Sections 4 and 5 of this report, rather than the enjoyment of the view of an agricultural landscape. Furthermore, any suggestion that development per se is harmful – that the view would be 'spoiled' – is untenable, since this would not be a response based on a rational assessment of impact on significance. Analysed in these terms, the effect on the view of developing Site 4 would at worst be slight adverse, and sites 6 and 7 as neutral.

Thus, taking account of the significance of the view, and the beneficial effects arising from development of the farm site, the overall impact on this view from the summit on the significance of the hill fort is neutral.

View 10: From B 4579, looking east



Existing view

9.2.29 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from a field gate on the east verge of the B 4579 looking across open farmland. There is no footway along the verge, and this is essentially a travelling view where there is a gap in the hedgerow. Other glimpses along this section of highway also provide a distant prospect of the hill fort. The road is a local route and carries relatively little traffic, but this is an important viewpoint from a location above the level of the hill fort itself.

9.2.30 Description of the View

The near foreground is the field gate, and beyond that large fields stretching towards the slopes of the hill fort. To right and left are clumps of woodland, and the view is of a picturesque rural landscape, in which the hill fort is a distinctive feature.

9.2.31 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view looking down onto the hill fort, its flat top is the most noticeable feature. The view is too distant to be able to pick out the form of the ramparts, and the absence of trees is the only other attribute of special note.

9.2.32 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions.

9.2.33 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The B 4579 is a local route, but it provides a long view across open countryside to the hill fort when approaching the town. Although this is not on a pedestrian route, the view has value, and is complemented by other glimpsed views stretching for a short distance just south of Oakhurst, and before entering the north western fringe of Oswestry. The topography, landform and outline of the hill fort would only be understandable with prior knowledge of its history and physical character. Assessed as one of a short sequence of views, its value can be considered to be moderate.

9.2.34 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The proposed development will not be visible from this viewpoint, and will therefore have no visual impact.

9.2.35 Overall Impact on Significance

The overall impact on the significance of the hill fort will be neutral.

View 11: From A5 by pass just north of junction with B 4580 Whittington Road, looking west



Existing summer view



Existing winter view

9.2.36 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the east verge of the A5 looking across the by pass. It is similar to View 2, except that the hedgerow is denser and the hill fort is consequently much less visible. There is no footway along the verge, and this is strictly a travelling view. Although the viewpoint itself is of limited importance, it gains value as part of a sequence of views from the A5.

9.2.37 Description of the View

Across the highway is a hedgerow of blackthorn and hawthorn with a scattering of hedgerow trees. These are relatively newly planted, and may be allowed to grow higher as they develop in accordance with the majority of the hedgerow along the edge of the highway. One of the pylons is visible in the middle distance. In the background is the faint outline of the hill fort.

9.2.38 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the hill fort forms the horizon feature, but it is only with difficulty that it can be seen through the hedgerow. Its outline from this distance is largely indistinguishable from the wider landscape structure, for the ramparts are barely visible. Since the full outline of the hill is obscured, it is not possible to understand its three-dimensional form in this single view. The flatness of the summit and the absence of trees are the most distinctive attributes.

9.2.39 Changing Aspects of the View

Since this is a long view, changes in daytime and weather conditions have a marked effect on visibility. At night, the orange glow of street lights is the dominant feature, and the hill fort is not visible. The degree of visibility also depends on the seasons, with leaf cover on the trees and hedgerows greatly restricting the extent of view. In summer, the hill fort would not be visible at all from this viewpoint. Since the viewer is moving and not static, the viewpoint is indeterminate, and thus the information contained in the view is not constant.

9.2.40 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

As with views 2 and 5 this one has value as one of a kinetic sequence of glimpsed views stretching one and a quarter miles between the traffic junctions with the A495 and the B5069. While the topography, landform and outline of the hill fort can be seen and understood by mentally piecing together information gleaned from a sequence of partial glimpsed views, the dominant feature of these views is the line of electricity pylons and telegraph poles, as well as the aerial cables that stretch between them. These 20th century features occupy the fore and middle ground and therefore attract the eye. Although the value of the individual view illustrated here is low, assessed as one of a sequence of glimpsed views, its value can be considered high. However, as the trees and hedgerows along the western edge of the by-pass continue to mature, it is likely that the hill fort will become completely invisible, in which case the significance of the view will be substantially diminished or negated altogether.

9.2.41 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The development proposal has not been modelled from this viewpoint. This is because the development will be screened by the hedgerow and trees along the edge of the A5 in summer, and there would only be slight glimpses of it in winter. The development occupies lower ground, and would in any case be largely concealed by the land form. This is not to say that it will be invisible along the totality of the by-pass. It will be glimpsed from a small number of viewpoints as described in View 5. The impact in the case of View 11 alone, however, is neutral.

9.2.42 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development from this single viewpoint is neutral. As one of a sequence of kinetic views, as explained in relation to View 5, the impact on the significance of the hill fort is slight adverse.

View 12: From B 4580 Whittington Road, looking north west



Existing view



Proposed view



Enlarged view - Note that this foreshortened view could not be seen with the naked eye

9.2.43 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the south side of Whittington Road looking through a field gate across open farmland towards the hill fort. There is a footway along the edge of the road, and this is the route taken by pedestrians walking from Park Hall to the town centre. It is also a travelling view from the by-pass into the town. Since the hedgerow is cut low, the hill fort is visible above the hedge along much of the road, until it is hidden by the industrial units on the urban fringe (see subsidiary views below). As one of a sequence of kinetic views along the B 4580, this is an important viewpoint.

9.2.44 Description of the View

The near foreground is the field gate, and beyond that a number of fields stretching up to the slopes of the hill fort. To the left is the tree-covered hill top recreation ground, and the higher ground along which Offa's Dyke runs is visible beyond. While the fields are visible through the gateway, they are hidden by the hedge along the remainder of the road.



Additional existing view from a point on Whittington Road further north



Additional existing view from a point on Whittington Road further north

9.2.45 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the flat-topped profile of the hill fort is evident, though the ramparts are difficult to detect. These attributes become increasingly visible as the viewer moves closer.

9.2.46 Changing Aspects of the View

Since this is a long view, changes in daytime and weather conditions have a marked effect on visibility. At night, the orange glow of street lights is the dominant feature, and the hill fort is not visible.

9.2.47 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The B 4580 is a major route into Oswestry from the east, and provides a good series of views of the hill fort when approaching the town. It is both a pedestrian route and a travelling route. The topography, landform and outline of the hill fort can be seen and clearly understood, with the ramparts readable in good light conditions. Looking through the gateway, across the open fields, there is no impediment to the view of the hill fort, and its outline is visible above the hedge as the viewer continues on towards the town. Assessed as one of a sequence of views, its value can be considered to be high.

9.2.48 Magnitude of Impact on Setting and Significance of the Hill Fort

The montage shows the effect of development of Sites 4. Because the land falls away from Whittington Road, and the housing development on Site 4 is well set back from the road frontage behind a landscape strip, only the roofs of the houses will be visible. None of the development will obscure the hill fort, and its outline will remain completely unchanged.

Passing along Whittington Road, the view will change as shown in the additional views included above. However, except at the access points, the residential development will be no more prominent than in View 12. Two access roads are proposed, but each leads through a landscape buffer before the housing is encountered, and as with View 12, the outline of the hill fort will not be obscured. There is also a proposed footpath link across the parkland and fields to the new hill fort car park. This will provide valuable opportunities to view the hill fort from locations that are currently inaccessible. It will also create a new pedestrian connection between the town and the hill fort.

9.2.49 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development from this single viewpoint is neutral. As one of a sequence of kinetic views, the impact on the significance of the hill fort is also neutral.

View 13: From B 5069, looking north west



Existing view



Proposed view

9.2.50 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from eye level, looking over the hedge on the west side of the B 5069 towards the hill fort. There are no gaps in the hedge, which runs between the residential development on the fringe of the town and Oldport Farm, but this view is taken at the point where the hedge is at its lowest, and as the viewer moves northwards, the view of the hill fort is obscured. This means that the hill fort is only partially visible to the pedestrian walking along the footway of the B5069 and not at all to the motorist. The viewpoint is therefore of only limited importance.

9.2.51 Description of the View

Behind the hedge, the ground rises to the left up to the base of the wooded hill that adjoins the recreation ground. In the background is a partial view of the hill fort. There are a number of hedgerow trees, and the view is taken at a point where there is a gap between the trees.

9.2.52 Heritage Attributes of the View

In this view the hill fort appears as a natural feature of the landscape, with its distinguishing features such as the ramparts, entrances and other earthworks largely indiscernible. The flat outline of the hill can be understood, but from this angle, with the sides of the hill being cut off, its identity as a heritage asset is not strongly displayed.

9.2.53 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions.

9.2.54 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

The B 5069 is the major route out of Oswestry travelling north, but the number of people who would see this view of the hill fort above the hedge is very limited. As a result its significance is low.

9.2.55 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The montage shows that the development of Site 1 will be visible above the hedgerow. As discussed above, the area of land proposed for development is not part of the important belt of open farmland that surrounds the hill fort, but it forms a spur that continues a short distance along the B5069 before it reaches the existing housing on the northern edge of the town. Development of the site is a logical extension of the urban fringe, and the montage shows that it would create a positive edge to the land which surrounds the hill fort.

From this viewpoint, the proposed housing would conceal the south eastern slope of the hill fort, and the clump of trees at the base of the wooded hill overlooking the recreation ground. The impact on setting, however, would be slight.

9.2.56 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development on the significance of the hill fort is slight adverse.

View 15: From the back lane leading from Oswestry to Cross Lanes looking south



Existing view

9.2.57 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from a field gate on the east side of the narrow lane leading from Cross Lanes to Oswestry, half a mile to the north of the existing hill fort car park. The lane is bounded by banks with tall hedgerows, and it is only possible to see the hill fort at this point and in partial glimpses where there is a break in the vegetation. The road carries very little traffic, and although the view is both revealing and impressive, it will only be seen by a small number of people.

9.2.58 Description of the View

The view is taken through a gateway, across a gently rising field to the hedgerow that forms the base of the hill fort. The profile of the hillfort is outlined against the sky.

9.2.59 Heritage Attributes of the View

From this viewpoint the hill fort is seen in close range and is unimpeded. The ramparts can be easily picked out and the distinctive profile of the hill is very evident. Hence this is one of the best viewpoints to appreciate the monument and understand its defensive construction.

9.2.60 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions.

9.2.61 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

This is one of the best public views of the hill fort for understanding its landform and historic importance. Therefore, despite the fact that the lane on which this viewpoint is situated is little used, its value can be considered to be very high.

9.2.62 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The proposed development will not be visible from this viewpoint, and will therefore have no visual impact.

9.2.63 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development on the significance of the hill fort is neutral.

View 16: From the wooded hill top adjoining the Recreation Ground looking north



Existing view

9.2.64 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the only point at the summit of the wooded hill adjoining the recreation ground where the hill fort can be seen. The trees and vegetation covering the slopes of this well wooded counterpoint to the hill fort are otherwise too dense to afford any views out. Many people walk through the woodland and will catch this glimpse of the hill fort which makes it an important public viewpoint.

9.2.65 Description of the View

From this viewpoint the southern edge of the hill fort can be seen at fairly close range, seen across the declivity between the two slopes. In the foreground is the informal planting, which in summer largely obscures the view. Indeed, if the view is valued, and is not to be lost, the woodland will need to be managed more effectively. At present, even in winter, only a partial view of the hill fort is obtained.

9.2.66 Heritage Attributes of the View

From this viewpoint the hill fort is seen in close range. The ramparts can be easily picked out and the distinctive flat-topped profile of the hill is evident. In spite of its partial nature, this is a valuable and high vantage point from which to appreciate the monument and understand its defensive construction.

9.2.67 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions.

9.2.68 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

This is a good public view of the hill fort for understanding its landform and historic importance, and would be further improved with judicious woodland management. Therefore, despite the fact that it only offers a limited view at present, its value can be considered to be very high.

9.2.69 Magnitude of Impact on Setting of the Hill Fort

The proposed development will not be visible from this viewpoint, and will therefore have no visual impact.

9.2.70 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development on the significance of the hill fort is neutral.

View 17: From Watt's Dyke looking south



Existing view

9.2.71 Importance of the Viewpoint

The view is taken from the public footpath that follows the line of Watt's Dyke looking south towards the hill fort. The footpath is well-used, and since Watt's Dyke and the hill fort are historically connected, this is an important viewpoint.

9.2.72 Description of the View

The view is from a corner of the field looking along the hedgerow that follows the line of Watt's Dyke. The dyke is no longer a strong landscape feature, but the view is well terminated by the hill fort which is outlined against the sky.

9.2.73 Heritage Attributes of the View

From this viewpoint the hill fort is seen in close range and the view is impeded only by a single tree. The ramparts can be easily picked out and the distinctive profile of the hill is very evident. The view is similar to View 15, and is one of the best viewpoints to appreciate the monument and understand its defensive construction.

9.2.74 Changing Aspects of the View

The view is subject to little change apart from light levels due to the time of day and weather conditions.

9.2.75 Overall Heritage Significance of the View

This is one of the best public views of the hill fort for understanding its landform and historic importance, as well as its historic link with Watt's Dyke. Therefore, despite the fact that it will only be seen by walkers using the public footpath, its value can be considered to be very high.

9.2.76 Magnitude of Impact on Setting and Significance of the Hill Fort

The proposed development will not be visible from this viewpoint, and will therefore have no visual impact.

9.2.77 Overall Impact on Significance

Taking account of the significance of the view, the overall impact of the development on the significance of the hill fort is neutral.

9.3 Summary of Impacts on Key Views

9.3.1 The scoring system adopted follows the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Cultural Heritage Environmental Impact Assessment* methodology, as adapted by ICOMOS for assessing impacts on the outstanding universal value of World Heritage Sites.

9.3.2 The Assessment of the proposed masterplan development shows that the impact on key views will be as follows:

Very large beneficial	Large beneficial	Moderate beneficial	Slight beneficial	Neutral	Slight adverse	Moderate adverse	Large adverse	Very large adverse
			1	6	2			

9.3.3 Views 2, 5 and 11, the three viewpoints identified along the A5 by-pass, have been treated as one kinetic view for the purposes of the assessment.

Where negative impacts have been identified, there are two principal causes:

- **The effect of development on Sites 4 as seen from a kinetic view travelling in a vehicle along the A5 by-pass which will in some part be seen against the background of the hill fort (Viewpoints 2, 5 and 11).** In winter, in glimpsed views from the by-pass, some of the residential development on Site 4 will be seen. Visibility of the hill fort itself, however, is only possible where there are gaps in the hedgerow planting, which in time will mature, so that the views will disappear. In no views will the outline of the hill fort be obscured.
- **The effect of the development on Site 1 as seen from Viewpoint 13 by a pedestrian or by a traveller in a vehicle passing north along the B5069, where it will partly obscure the western slope of the hill fort.** The impact on this view, however, will be limited, since the hedge line is only low enough to see the hill fort along a very short stretch of the road.

- 9.3.4 A beneficial impact is identified in kinetic views travelling south along the B5069 where the redevelopment of Oldport Farm will enhance the setting of the hill fort.

9.4 Other Effects of the Development

9.4.1 Change to skyline

The outline of the hill fort will not be affected in any existing public views.

9.4.2 Noise, odour, vibration, dust etc

The proposed development is a considerable distance from the hill fort, and there will be an overall diminution in both noise and odours due to the discontinuence of the existing farming operations at Oldport Farm. In addition, the introduction of increased planting along the western edge of the by-pass and other tree belts within the development sites will provide better aural and visual screening of the hill fort from the impact of the A5.

9.4.3 Lighting effects and light spill

The development areas will need to be illuminated, which will increase the amount of lighting in the area to the east of the hill fort. This will be designed to avoid light spill, and will have no direct impact on the hill fort which will remain unlit.

9.4.4 Change to general character

There will be no change to the general character of the hill fort, apart from the re-location of the car park, and the provision of a new footpath and additional interpretation. There will be changes to the setting of the monument, which will have visual consequences as outlined in 7.2 above.

9.4.5 Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover

There will be a fundamental change in land uses within the development sites, from agriculture to housing and employment. The land cover, instead of being pasture and arable farmland will be a mix of buildings, hardstanding and planting. The amount of tree cover and planting will be very substantially increased and the ecological potential of the sites would be greatly enhanced as a consequence.

9.4.6 Changes to archaeological context

This is considered in section 8.1 below.

9.4.7 Changes to communications, accessibility, permeability

There is currently no public access to any of the proposed development areas. Development would increase permeability, with consequent opportunities to secure greater visibility of the hill fort from public land. New parkland and a footpath across the open fields will improve access links between the town and the hill fort for pedestrians.

10 MITIGATION MEASURES

10.1 Archaeology

- 10.1.1 Whilst the heritage impact assessment does not consider the impact on below ground archaeology, this issue has previously been addressed in the Archaeological Evaluation carried out by Oxford Archaeology North in 2009. The Historic Environment Record has been interrogated, and a summary is provided in Section 4 of the report.
- 10.1.2 The evaluation did not identify any significant archaeological deposits or features during the evaluation trenching in the area east of the B5069 Gobowen Road. The conclusion was that development of that area is likely to have little impact on any archaeological remains or finds.
- 10.1.3 In the area west of the B5069, however, close to the hill fort, there is a high probability that archaeological remains will be present and hence further work would be required to assess the impact of any proposed development. This would take the form of further on-site evaluation prior to the submission of any planning applications relating to Sites 1, 2 and 3, and subject to agreement of Shropshire Council and English Heritage.
- 10.1.4 There is a potential for greater understanding of the hill fort as a result of further archaeological evaluation.

10.2 Access to the Hill Fort, Car Parking and Interpretation

- 10.2.1 The present road access to the hill fort is from Llwyn Road through a dense housing area, which provides a poor sense of arrival. The existing parking is inadequate for the number of visitors that are attracted to the historic site, and can cause problems on the narrow back lane which is also used by walkers.
- 10.2.2 To improve the visitor experience, the development proposal includes the provision of a new visitor facility, located at Site 3, and accessed from the B5069. This will include car parking and an interpretation point for visitors to the hill fort. It will be linked to the hill fort via a new footpath leading up to the historic north east entrance. The proposals will raise the profile of the hill fort, improve access to the historic site, and promote greater understanding and appreciation of its significance.
- 10.2.3 Furthermore, a new footpath link across the parkland and fields from Whittington Road to the new hill fort car park is proposed. This will provide valuable opportunities to view the hill fort from locations that are currently inaccessible. It will also create a new pedestrian connection between the town and the hill fort.

- 10.2.4 The proposal for the visitor facility and new footpath link will have a substantially beneficial impact.

10.3 Landscape and Ecology

- 10.3.1 The most important existing landscape features within the proposed development sites are the hedges and hedgerow trees that define the current field boundaries. All existing hedgerows around each of the development sites will be retained and strengthened, and almost all of the existing hedging within the sites will also survive.
- 10.3.2 In addition, a high number of new trees will be planted, in both formal and informal arrangements to create an improved landscape structure and greater ecological diversity. The location of trees will be designed to preserve and enhance principal views of the hill fort, and to screen the proposed development from those views.
- 10.3.3 A far more diverse landscape framework will be introduced, within which the built development will be designed to sit. Native planting of woodland areas will provide enhanced green corridors incorporating the existing hedgerows, and provide better aural and visual screening of the hill fort from the impact of the A5.
- 10.3.4 The landscape proposals thus have the potential to mitigate any harmful impacts on the setting of the hill fort from development.

10.4 Oldport Farm

- 10.4.1 This report includes an assessment of the significance of Oldport Farm in Section 7. This finds that the central barn has special interest for the survival of historic fabric from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The historic buildings as a group have medium significance, and can be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The significance, however, is currently harmed by the poor quality 20th century buildings and structures, which adversely affect their setting.
- 10.4.2 The impact of the proposed scheme, which involves the removal of all unsympathetic buildings, and the repair and refurbishment of the historic buildings will reveal their significance, as encouraged in the NPPF. Their conversion to housing will provide a sustainable use for the buildings, and ensure their future protection. This offers a substantial heritage benefit, which would not otherwise be achievable.

10.5 Potential Impact on other 'above ground' Monument Sites in the HER

10.5.1 A list of other heritage sites in the vicinity of the hill fort which are included on the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is included in Section 4 of the report, and their level of significance has been assessed. The potential impact on 'below ground' sites is assessed in the Castleryng Archaeological report. The potential impact on 'above ground' sites is considered below.

Site Name	Railway Yard, Oswestry
NGR	SJ 2944 2987
Site Type	Railway Station
Period	1848
HER No	05704
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Railway Junction
NGR	SJ 3007 3154
Site Type	Railway
Period	Mid 19 th to 20 th century
HER No	05779
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Medieval Street System
NGR	SJ 2894 2970
Site Type	Road
Period	Medieval
HER No	05785
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Post-medieval Street System
NGR	SJ 2894 2970
Site Type	Road
Period	Post-medieval
HER No	05844
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium Significance

Site Name	Milestone on B5069 North of Oldport
NGR	SJ 2999 3101
Site Type	Milestone
Period	Early 19 th century
HER No	21050
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium significance

Site Name	Military Training Camp at Park Hall, Oswestry
NGR	SJ 3046 3107
Site Type	Training camp
Period	WWI to 20 th century
HER No	21713
Statutory Designation	None
Potential Impact	Neutral
Assessment	Medium significance

10.5.2 The potential impact on all other 'above ground' heritage sites in the vicinity of the site will be neutral.

11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The report considers the impact of potential development on the significance of the Old Oswestry hill fort.
- 11.2 The way in which significance can be experienced and understood is influenced by its setting. The assessment has been carried out in accordance with the English Heritage Guidance Document *The Setting of Heritage Assets*.
- 11.3 Seven potential development sites are proposed, all of which are situated within the setting of the hill fort. A masterplan has been prepared to indicate how development of the sites might be configured.
- 11.4 The assessment has considered the potential visual impacts of development in terms of a number of key viewpoints. Other potential effects of development have been assessed.
- 11.5 A number of changes in the setting of the hill fort are identified. These have been assessed in terms of impact on significance. Slight adverse impacts are found in relation to kinetic views from the A5 by-pass and from a single viewpoint on the B5069 travelling north. A beneficial impact is found in relation to kinetic views from the B5069 travelling south. Other effects of development are found to be either neutral or beneficial.
- 11.6 Mitigation measures are proposed in relation to archaeology; access to the hill fort, car parking and interpretation; landscape and ecology; and the conservation and enhancement of Oldport Farm. These will substantially offset the adverse visual consequences of development.
- 11.7 The potential impact on all other 'above ground' heritage site within the vicinity of the proposed development area and included in the Shropshire Council HER will be a neutral.
- 11.8 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 and Wat's Dyke, 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.

Annex 1:

Comments on Heritage Statement submitted by the Old Oswestry Hillfort Campaign Group

A Heritage Statement commissioned by the HOOOH Campaign Group from Dr George Nash dated December 2013 was submitted in support of the Group's representations regarding the allocation of land at Oswestry North for development. There is much within this document with which I agree, notably Sections 1-5. In assessing the potential impact of the proposals for Sites OSW002, OSW003 and OSW004, however, Dr Nash makes some comments which deserve to be challenged.

He finds fault in the fact that the original Heritage Impact Assessment did not specifically include the data from the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER), and in order to address that point, it has now been included in Section 5 of the updated version above. The potential impact of the development proposals on all the HER sites has been assessed either in this report or in the Archaeological Summary Statement prepared by Castlering. The inclusion of this data and the additional assessments, do not affect the conclusions that had already been reached.

The assertion in Section 5 of Dr Nash's report that the Oxford Archaeology North archaeological evaluation was inadequate and did not involve trial trenching in the southern area of OSW002, as well as the lack of trenching north of Oldport Farm, is addressed in the Castlering Summary Statement. This points to the fact that the appropriate time for investigation is at the pre-application stage, and that detailed trenching was not something that was ever required on this side of the B5069. The advice of Mike Watson at Shropshire Council was followed in that these areas had been the subject of the GSB Geophysical survey, but because they were not at the application stage (unlike the central site off Whittington Road, where an application was being mooted) such detail was not necessary.

Section 6 of Dr Nash's report is a Statement of Archaeological Potential, which I am happy to accept in principle, although the author draws attention to the criticism of my Heritage Statement made by RESCUE, which is rebutted below.

Section 7 of Dr Nash's report consists of a very brief and unsubstantiated impact assessment, largely an expression of opinion. The author accepts that there will be no direct impacts on the hillfort, Wat's Dyke or the majority of the HER sites, but claims that the heritage value of Oldport Farm has not been adequately understood. In order to address this point, I have carried out a detailed inspection of the buildings at Oldport Farm and assessed their historic and architectural interest. The findings are set out in Section 7 of the revised Heritage Impact Assessment. On the basis of the surviving portions of the 17th century timber-framed barn and the 18th century threshing bar, Oldport Farm is of medium significance and can be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Its significance, however, is adversely affected by modern agricultural structures, which detract from its setting. The impact assessment demonstrates that the proposal would have a substantially beneficial impact on the significance of Oldport Farm.

Regarding indirect impacts, Dr Nash's assessment is vague and sweeping. He states that the proposed car park would severely impinge on the setting of the hillfort (taking no account of the fact that its size, location and design are as yet undetermined, and that it would be gifted to a Community Trust who would be responsible for delivering whatever scale and provision was deemed necessary), and otherwise states that if planning permission is granted for the three sites, the experience of 'an evocative and ionic statement of a past landscape' will be lost.

In his summary, he states that no development should take place within OSW002 and OSW004, and that within OSW003 sensitive development could be constructed as long as the historic elements of the farmstead are given the utmost priority including a full assessment of their heritage potential.

Comments on the RESCUE Letter submitted by the HOOOH Campaign Group

The RESCUE letter is also largely an expression of opinion. It states that the impact of development of the three sites would significantly compromise the historic and scenic value of the fort, but gives no explanation of why this would be so.

The letter claims that the hillfort was designed with the surrounding open space as an integral and indispensable part of the layout, and draws attention to the outlook across Oldport Farm being of particular significance in affording views across miles of countryside, and on a clear day to the Wrekin. These views are considered by RESCUE to be critical to the understanding of the monument and 'should be preserved without interruption'.

I have carefully analysed the significance of the views in the Heritage report, where the potential impact on significance has been assessed. I do not accept that the present man-made agricultural landscape in any way reflects that which existed when the hillfort was created. The outlook was clearly important for defensive reasons, but the landscape was likely to have been wooded, rather than open fields. Nor will the proposed development impede views across the surrounding countryside, while large-scale planting of trees would provide a landscape more closely aligned with the character of the area at the time the hillfort was occupied.

Conclusion

Above all, it is important to understand what the masterplan is seeking to do. It has been undertaken to support an allocation in the Local Plan; thus setting out the principle of acceptability. It is a *masterplan* and not a detailed planning application, as the HOOOH Campaign appears to regard it, and it is only at the point when an application is being proposed that more detailed assessments would be expected to be undertaken and submitted.