

CIVIC SOCIETY APPLICATION TO REGISTER THE LAND NORTH OF DORCHESTER (INCLUDING THE PROPOSED SITE FOR THE DOR 13 DEVELOPMENT) AS A NON-DESIGNATED LOCAL HERITAGE ASSET.

PRESENTATION TO STINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL.

Dorset Council launched a call in the autumn of 2021 for members of the community, and community groups, to nominate locally important buildings, sites, monuments and features to be included on a new Local Heritage List.

This forms part of a nationwide campaign to provide an initial Local Heritage List for each local authority which will be regularly updated in the future by new additions. The contents are to be added to each county's Historical Environment Record.

Dorset Council received a grant of £70,000 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to help finance publicity for the campaign and the costs involved in setting up the initial List.

The intention is to introduce a measure of protection for significant local assets which do not benefit from any other protection, such as that conferred by designation as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings or Local Green Spaces.

An area can be listed as a Non-Designated Local Asset even if it already benefits from a being a Conservation Area and/or is covered by a Neighbourhood Plan. The protection so accorded is cumulative and not mutually exclusive.

It will constitute an additional hurdle for any developer, such as the North Dorchester Consortium, seeking to develop the land north of Dorchester since Paragraph 203 of the NPPF provides "the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application for planning consent]. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset".

Further, such a Local Listing might well ultimately lead to a national listing.

The campaign is due to be ended in mid-April (11th or 18th April) when the deadline for applications for assets to be included on the initial List will expire.

The criteria which will be used to decide whether a nominated asset qualifies for admission to the List will be Historic England's standard criteria for Local Listings, to which may be added local criteria specific to Dorset's wide range of communities and heritage.

The Guidance issued by Historic England makes clear that assets should be understood in a broad sense and includes buildings, other physical structure, sites and/or landscape. They must be of archaeological, architectural, historic or artistic interest.

Advice on how applications should be made is set out on Dorset Council's website under the heading "The Dorset Local Heritage List". Helpfully, that advice includes a model application for protection of Dorchester's water meadows, which clearly indicates that the Council considers that an application concerning that site is admissible.

However, the Civic Society intends to apply for protection of a larger range of assets, covering a wider geographical area than this model application.

The draft on which the Society is working would extend the application to cover not only the water meadows outside the town, but the whole of the area north of the town, including the water meadows and the areas of arable and grazing land up to Waterstone Ridge to the north and, also potentially, as far west as the river Cerne in Charminster and eastwards to West Stafford. It would therefore cover a great deal of the area comprised within the Stinsford parish boundaries, together with areas beyond it.

The grounds for the application will be multiple since the site identified by us is:

- important from an archaeological perspective by reason of the Scheduled Monuments situated on or near to it, its other man-made features, and numerous finds and hidden underground potential,
- of literary importance world-wide since it fed the imagination of Thomas Hardy and is the setting for many of his novels, short stories and poems,
- of artistic importance because of numerous painters attracted to the site,
- representative of an agricultural system made up of water meadows (with S.S.I. status), arable and grazing land which forms the agriculture and historical setting of the town,
- a rare surviving example of a county town in its rural setting, with its northern boundary remaining constant since the foundation of the Roman town, unblighted by suburban sprawl which also provides the setting for its Conservation Area, together with those of Stinsford and Charminster, within whose boundaries there are numerous Listed Buildings.

The application will be accompanied by maps, numerous photographs and supporting evidence.

We believe that Civic Society's application would be strengthened if it were to receive the support of Dorchester Town Council, together with that of Stinsford Parish Council and those of the other Parishes affected.

IAN GOSLING

CHAIRMAN DORCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

11th MARCH 2022