



Case reference	SMC-SBD-001
Application details	Excavation of 4 trenches to better understand the buildings onsite
Site address	Mantle Walls, Ancrum, Bishop's Palace
Applicant	Ancrum and District Heritage Society
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Local Authority Area	Scottish Borders Council
Reason(s) for notification	Notification Direction 2015 – works to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent by Historic Environment Scotland go beyond the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument
Representations	NIL
Date notified to Ministers	11 July 2019
Date of recommendation	30 July 2019
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for archaeological excavations at Mantle Walls, Ancrum, Scottish Borders. The monument comprises buried archaeological deposits, which make up the remains of a palace of the bishops that was occupied during the 12th and 13th centuries (figure 1).
- The application has been submitted by AOC Archaeology Limited on behalf of the Ancrum and District Heritage Society. The works involve archaeological excavation of four trenches with a total area of approx. 222m².
- Mantle Walls is of national significance for its potential to enhance the understanding of medieval high status dwellings in Scotland. Particularly the construction, form and function of bishops palaces, which were a rare building type in Scotland.
- Residences were often created for bishops to serve as a base from which they could circulate. This was because bishops often spent a great deal of time travelling around their dioceses and it was important that they could both see and be seen by the public.

- Survey work carried out on the site indicates potential for survival of extensive non-masonry deposits, including middens and the remains of an external enclosure around the main building.



Figure 1 - Site Location (borderarchaeology.co.uk)

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were made.
- PAD consulted the Scottish Government's Culture and Historic Environment Division and they are content and have no further comment to make.

Assessment:

1. The application has been notified as HES is minded to grant scheduled monument consent for works that are not considered the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument.
2. The physical impact of the proposed works on the monument and its cultural significance could result in the partial, or total loss of the surviving archaeological deposits within the areas excavated. However, in order to minimise this impact, the excavations have been targeted on areas of previous investigation and known erosion.
3. The aim of the proposed works, is to better understand the nature of the buildings and archaeological deposits on the site and the potential risk they may face from erosion processes, due to their hilltop location within a field that is ploughed on a regular basis.

4. HES states that while the principle aim of the project is to investigate and clarify the physical remains of the monument, the research design also incorporates elements beneficial for the future management of the monument. The project is also being grant aided by HES's Archaeology section as the project is community led and has the added benefit of enhancing local knowledge of the monument, community empowerment and cohesion, active citizenship and contributes to community health.
5. HES acknowledges that although the proposed works are extensive, they are effective for the purposes of the research and are the lowest level of intervention required in order to achieve the project's objective. As a result, HES is of the view that the works are being done in such a way as to fully maintain the cultural significance of the monument.
6. HES is also of the view that the application has been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. Therefore, no conditions are considered necessary.
7. HES did highlight that there were two areas of AOC Archaeology's research design that could be altered and enhanced. Namely; the staff to volunteer ratio and the emphasis on investigating erosion impacts. However, HES has confirmed that these concerns have since been addressed and agreed by email with AOC Archaeology.
8. Overall, HES consider that whilst the works are assessed as extensive, they would generate public benefits which offset the impact on the monuments cultural significance. As a result, HES conclude that the application is consistent with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy.
9. In summary, it is considered that the application does not raise issues that would merit intervention by Ministers.

Decision/Recommendation:

- The application should be cleared back to HES to issue Scheduled Monument Consent with no conditions.