

Boroughbridge and District Historical Society

c/o 7 Manor Drive, Kirby Hill, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire, YO51 9DY.



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Kathryn Daly
Head of Planning and Development
Harrogate Borough Council
Crescent Gardens
Harrogate
HG1 2SG

September 13th, 2017.

Dear Ms Daly

Ref: 17/03414/EIAMAJ – Proposed Motorway Service Area

Please accept this letter as a formal objection on behalf of Boroughbridge and District Historical Society. The Society has previously objected to MSA applications on or close to the proposed site and we remain adamant that this development is not needed because the requirements for motorway service areas have been met and the latest application is unacceptable at this location.

One of the key issues in determining this application is the spacing of MSAs to the north and south of the proposed site. In his decision letter of 2012 the Secretary of State accepted that the inquiry inspector had considered the spacing between Barton and Moto Services, near Wetherby, and endorsed his conclusion that one MSA would fulfil the need. Having considered a range of options, including Kirby Hill, he ruled out the others and granted permission for Leeming Bar Services to be upgraded to an MSA.

Construction of Motorway from Dishforth Interchange to Leeming Bar and its subsequent continuation north to Barton was interrupted while the Government reviewed its policy, but is now nearing completion. The new motorway is only weeks from fully opening and there is no reason to believe that Leeming Bar MSA will not soon be upgraded to standard. The site, formerly owned by County Councillor Carl Les, has been sold to an MSA developer. Having paid several million pounds for the site, it is inconceivable that it will not be developed as an MSA.

In relation to the proposed MSA site at Kirby Hill, our Society has the following points to make. The site is within 100 metres of Leeming Lane, the 'old A1', which has its origins as Dere Street, a Roman route from Isurium Brigantum (Aldborough) to Catterick (Cataractonium).

Although the area has the appearance of an undistinguished arable agricultural landscape, a more careful study reveals many ancient archaeological sites, some of which are marked on Ordnance Survey maps and well documented.

The most interesting are the three Devil's Arrows (SE391665) off Roecliffe Lane in Boroughbridge, the Cana Henge (SE 360718) at Marton-le-Moor, the Hutton Bank Henge (SE352735) east of Ripon, and Thornborough Henges (SE285794), north of Ripon. The latter have attracted national and international publicity over the last 10 years and the Newcastle University archaeologist Dr Jan Harding has described them as "the Stonehenge of the North".

Although academics have yet to reach a consensus, it is widely believed that there is a relationship between the Devil's Arrows at Boroughbridge and some of the Henge sites to the north. Indeed, it has been argued that the alignment of the henges with the Devil's Arrows forms part of some ancient sacred landscape corridor, which we may never fully understand.

Whatever ancient man intended, it took some determination to drag the three (originally four) Devil's Arrows monoliths – up to 22ft tall and weighing many tonnes – nine miles across country from the nearest source of matching stone at Plompton Rocks, near Knaresborough, and then erect them. Even using 21st century machinery, this would be some feat to achieve.

One of the things that concerns me - a view shared by Community Archaeologist Kevin Cale and other professionals who have studied this area - is that there may be far more archaeology hidden from view of which we are, as yet, unaware. I know any planning permission granted for an MSA site would include the imposition of appropriate archaeological conditions.

Nevertheless, I believe the historical importance of this landscape from Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, through Roman to the modern day should be weighed in the balance before an MSA is allowed to become a permanent and damaging feature.

Before the 13 miles of the A1M was built from Walshford to Dishforth, 9 Regiment, Army Air Corps, then based at Dishforth Airfield, provided aerial photographs which clearly showed a circular archaeological site (SE384689), possibly Bronze Age in origin, in the south-west quadrant at the point where the B6265 crosses the A1M. This is within 100 metres of the current MSA proposal. The photograph is now with the Archive Department of North Yorkshire County Council in Northallerton.

While preparations were being made for the construction of the A1M from Walshford to Dishforth Interchange, a previously unknown Roman fort was discovered west of the motorway close to the River Ure. This fort, which appears to have been abandoned in response to repeated flooding, pre-dated the fortified Roman town at Aldborough.

Geophysical work by archaeologists working along the motorway corridor also revealed significant remains immediately north of the proposed Kirby Hill MSA site. It led to a limited trial dig which found unexplained Neolithic remains crossing the line of the motorway at right angles and disappearing under the airfield. My understanding is that these took the form of aligned, paired pits, which may have been some form of defensive structure up to 2.7 metres wide. The work was carried out on a consultancy basis by Northern Archaeological Associates, of Barnard Castle.

Please may I ask that when councillors carry out site inspections they and officers visit the Devil's Arrows in Roedcliffe Lane, Boroughbridge, and the Cana Henge sites so that there is a full understanding of their national importance and their relationship to the surrounding landscape? Sadly, I am afraid that familiarity with the Devil's Arrows means that their importance is not fully appreciated by some local people.

When you look out from the B6265 flyover at Kirby Hill and take in the beautiful vista across to the White Horse carved on the Hambleton Hills in 1857, may I also remind you that English Heritage has confirmed that you are looking at an Iron Age hill fort on the rim of the cliffs surrounding Sutton Bank.

During the 2011 public inquiry, witnesses in support of the then MSA proposal told the Inspector that the presence of the former Second World War bomber base at Dishforth was an indication that the landscape could readily absorb MSAs. While the hangars and runways are a legacy we have learned to live with, local people totally reject this suggestion. Those witnesses may have professional qualifications, but I would invite you to share our opinion that the suggestion was laughable.

Harrogate Borough Council accepted the need for one MSA within the Borough and that is now operational as Moto Services at Kirk Deighton. Since that development was approved, the Secretary of State has granted planning permission for the conversion of Leeming Bar Services at the A684 junction into a Motorway Service Area.

Enough is enough. There is no need for a further MSA at Kirby Hill only 12.32 miles north of J46 at Kirk Deighton. I ask you to strongly recommend that the current application should be refused.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Linda M. Dooks (Mrs)

Secretary Boroughbridge and District Historical Society