

Scottish ministers back plans for archaeological dig at Roman Fort

Plans to dig trenches on the site of an important Roman Fort in East Lothian have been backed by Scottish Ministers ahead of a housing application for the site.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES), who oversee work carried out at the site at Inveresk, have been given the go ahead to approve the work at the scheduled monument.

And it was revealed plans to build a home on the land have been lodged with East Lothian Council on a number of occasions over the last 27 years.

HES have been involved because the house plans are on land which is within the Roman Fort site. The buried remains of the fort are considered to be one of the most important and extensively investigated Roman sites in Scotland.

The overall site comprises an extensive complex including a Roman fort, adjacent civil settlement, one known and one probable bath house, a possible amphitheatre, field systems and temporary military camps.

In a report to Scottish Ministers HES told them they had initially objected to the plans for a house because of a lack of information about the land involved but were happy to approve plans for the archaeological evaluation

now proposed which would provide the information required.

They said they were happy to grant permission for the work which would see five trenches dug and examined.

They said: "Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) has previously been granted four times by Historic Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers for the development of a single house and garage in approximately the same location.

"SMC was first granted in 1997, before modern SMC policy was developed, and the most recent consent was dated 16 January 2015. All these consents have now lapsed.

"HES understands that there is a parallel history of planning consents for the same single house development. The purpose of the evaluation would be to show the location and extent of archaeological remains in order to inform assessment by HES and the planning authority of a proposal to build one new house at the site"

.The Scottish Government Reporter confirmed Ministers did not plan to call the application in and were happy for HES to grant approval for the work.

A planning application for a house and garage on land to the west of St Michael's House, at the site in Inveresk is currently being considered by East Lothian planners.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter