

Waddesdon and Quainton

DODDERSHALL DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGE SITE

HS2 references: Area CFA12 - Unique ID WAD063

Summary:

The site of the deserted medieval village, although correctly identified by the Environmental Statement Cultural Heritage Survey (see Appendix volume 5 map CH-004-12.05), appears to have remained either unnoticed or misplaced by the Construction and Mitigation planning process (see CFA12 volume 2 maps CT-05-051 'Construction Phase' and CT-06-051 'Proposed Scheme'). This may lead to the deserted village site's almost complete destruction. Even low-level intrusion on this archaeological site, rated as of 'High' heritage value, can cause irreversible damage.

This is a serious error which needs immediate correction:

- The Construction Phase and Proposed Scheme maps must be corrected immediately in order to show the full extent of the deserted village site, so that construction plans may be altered before they become irreversible.
- The majority of the deserted village site, which is not needed for the HS2 line itself, should be protected from construction work of any kind, including any temporary use for material stockpiles.
- Where the HS2 line itself crosses the medieval village site and its destruction is unavoidable, the site should be subjected to a full professional archaeological survey and excavation before any construction work begins.

Assessment:

The major remains of Doddershall's medieval village are spread across open fields to the north-east of Doddershall House (WAD066). They are shown clearly on the ES Remote Sensing Survey Interpretation map (Appendix volume 5 map CH-004-12.05): a kilometre-square network of earthbanks and ditches to the south-west of the HS2 centre-line with a further section 1km x 250m curving away to the north-east on the other side of the line (see Figure 1 below.)

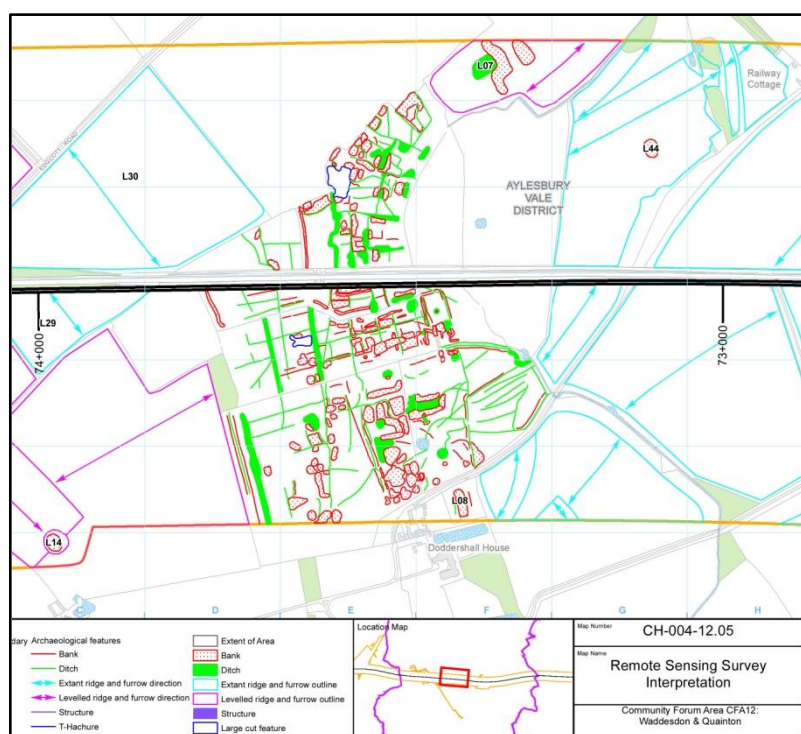


FIGURE 1:
A section of the ES
Remote Sensing Survey
Interpretation map
showing the deserted
village. Earthbanks are
displayed in red, ditches
in green.
(Appendix volume 5 map
CH-004-12.05)

The ES Cultural Heritage Baseline Report is unequivocal: ‘The earthworks at Doddershall are considered to be a heritage asset of high value as an extant example of medieval settlement. ... Doddershall deserted medieval village has a historical relationship with the nearby Doddershall House and has a well-established date of abandonment, enhancing its value.’ (Appendix CH-001-012 page 18 paragraph 3.9.4)

The route of HS2 will cut through the centre of the deserted village earthworks, causing the destruction of a section 1km long by about 100 metres wide (see CFA12 volume 2 map CT-05-051). The ES Impact Assessment defines this impact as ‘High Adverse’ and its effect as ‘Major adverse’ (Appendix CH-003-012 page 10 item WAD063)

In an extraordinary omission, however, the accompanying Construction Phase and Proposed Scheme maps (CFA12 volume 2 maps CT-05-051 and CT-06-051) appear to misplace the deserted village site. The extent of the deserted village earthworks is marked on neither map, while the descriptive caption to Doddershall House reads ‘Doddershall House and Doddershall Deserted Medieval Village’ – implying that the deserted village site is confined to the area immediately around the house.

On the Construction Phase map (CT-05-051) the actual site of the deserted village is shown as empty fields (see Figure 2 below.)

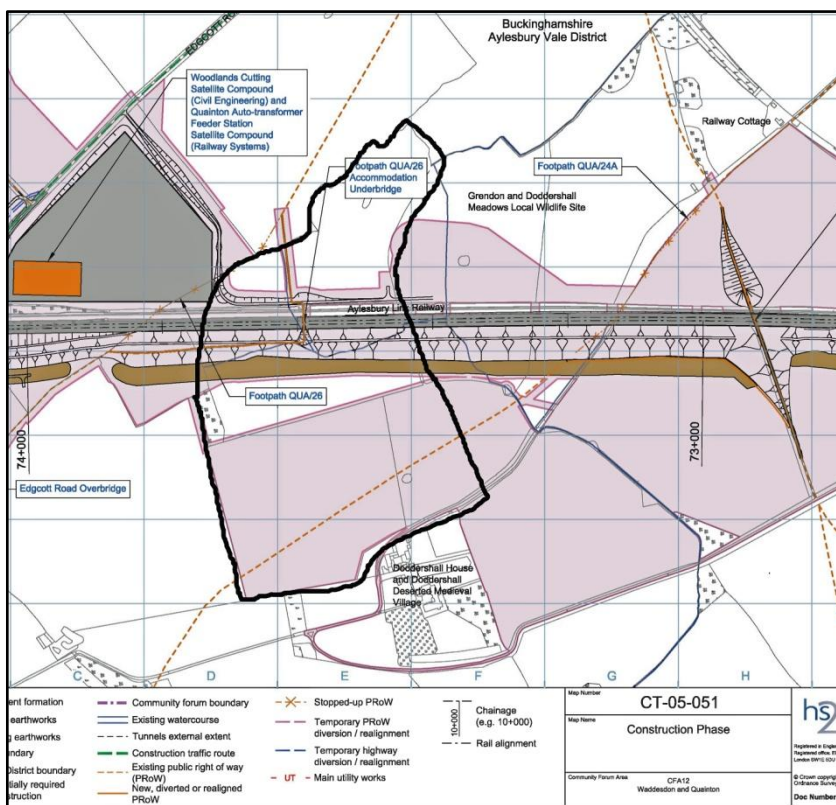


FIGURE 2:
The same section on the HS2 Construction Phase map with the deserted village erroneously marked in the grounds of Doddershall House. The areas shown in pink are ‘required for construction’ of HS2. The black outline has been added to the map to show the actual position of the village earthworks.
 (CFA12 volume 2 map CT-05-051)

Most likely as a result of this omission, the deserted village site appears to have been afforded no protection at all during the construction work for the HS2 line.

Because the Civil War Earthworks only 700 metres to the south-east, though rated as of only ‘Moderate value’, have been excluded from the land required, we assume that this treatment of Doddershall deserted village site is erroneous rather than intentional. But it is a serious error which needs to be corrected immediately, before construction plans become irreversible.

The Construction Phase map (see Figure 2) shows the majority of the deserted village site marked as ‘Land potentially required during construction’, with an 80-metre-wide strip bordering the line itself marked for Landscape earthworks and a Temporary material stockpile. To the north-east of the line further strips of the site will be taken by a new inserted access road and the diversion of Footpath QUA/26.

It is not clear for what purpose most of this area is required, but any movement by heavy vehicles will destroy the earthworks of the deserted village – and this is the certain result of the construction of a ‘bund’, the management of stockpiled materials, and the building of an access road.

The Proposed Scheme map (CT-06-051 – see the relevant section in Figure 3 below) shows how this damage will be compounded by planned landscaping works after construction. The large area of the deserted village to the south-west is to be recreated as ‘Grassland habitat’ with a large 100m x 50m ‘Land drainage’ pond. To the north-east the access road and diverted footpath will be bordered by the creation of a ‘Hedgerow habitat’ and a 50m x 120m ‘Balancing pond’ is to be excavated.

None of this land use is compatible with a heritage asset whose value has been defined as High. In our view this is a site which could have been considered for scheduling as an ancient monument. Yet all of these activities will destroy further sections of the deserted village earthworks.

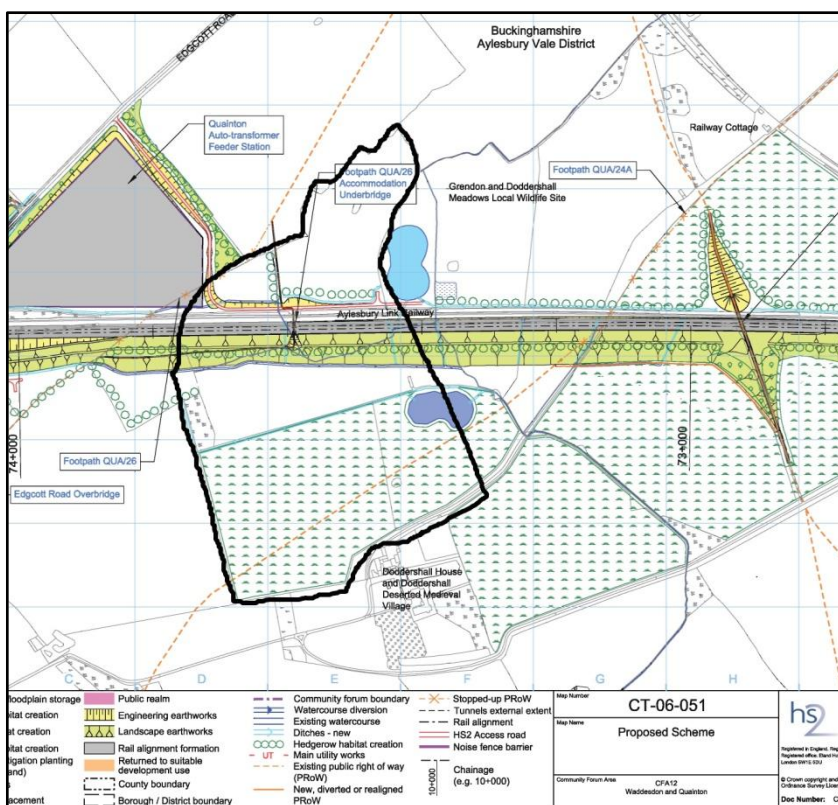


FIGURE 3:
The same area on the HS2 Proposed Scheme showing the re-creation of ‘Grassland habitat’ across most of the deserted village site, the excavation of two large ponds and addition of an access road, path redirection and hedgerows. Again the village earthworks (outlined) are not shown. (CFA12 volume 2 map CT-06-051)

Conclusion:

As a matter of urgency:

- the Construction Phase and Proposed Scheme maps (CT-05-051 and CT-06-051) should be amended to display the correct position and extent of the deserted village earthworks.

Also as a matter of urgency we propose that in view of the high value of Diddershall deserted village as a historic asset,

- only the minimum strip necessary for the HS2 line itself should be taken from the deserted village earthworks;
- all areas of the village earthworks to be removed by HS2 should be subjected to a full professional survey and excavation before any construction work begins;
- the earthworks on both sides of the line should be set aside as a protected area to be kept free from all construction and related works;
- the Land drainage pond should be moved 100 metres to the south-east to take it outside the area of the deserted village and to avoid damage to the earthworks during its construction;

- the Temporary materials stockpile should be removed where it would overlay the deserted village earthworks;
- the Balancing Pond should be moved 100 metres to the south-east to avoid damage to the village earthworks during its construction
- the diversion of Footpath QUA/26 and its Accommodation Underbridge should be moved 135 metres to the north-west so that this does not cross the village earthworks.

Consideration should also be given to

- whether the new access road along the north-east side of the line might be shortened to avoid its crossing the village earthworks,
- whether the 'bund' might be replaced by a narrower form of noise-barrier where it crosses the village earthworks in order to minimise the area destroyed.

These changes will

- render the 'Grassland habitat creation' unnecessary in the deserted-village area to the north-east of Doddershall House,
- remove the necessity for Hedgerow habitat creation on earthworks to the north-east of the line.