
From: Burlachka, Yana <Yana.Burlachka@naturalengland.org.uk>
Sent: 14 October 2021 12:17
To: Aldridge, Steven
Subject: 19/000053/CM - Ancient Woodland Adjacent to Lea Castle site, Wolverley, Worcs
Attachments: RE: Additional Further Information (Regulation 25) - Land at Lea Castle Farm, Kidderminster, Worcestershire - Ref: 19/000053/CM; Ancient Woodland Inventory - Amendment request form FINALv1.docx

Importance: High

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your email and apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced standing advice for planning authorities in determining relevant planning

in accordance

During the current coronavirus situation, Natural England staff are working remotely to provide our services and support our customers and stakeholders. All offices and our Mail Hub are closed, so please send any documents by



WOLVERLEIGH (87023)

Since the mapping evidence is not of much help, I looked at the general history of Wolverley and Cookley. It appears that Burgred, King of Mercia, granted a charter in AD 866 which allowed pasture for 70 pigs in the wooded common known as

Finally, the plant known as *Cephalanthera grandiflora* (the white helleborine, a non native species) was recorded in Lea Castle Woods before 1867 by Scott (the author of a history of Stourbridge) and at Knight's Walks, Wolverley in 1789, by Dr Stokes. That this was an introduced species again seems to suggest that the woods at Lea Castle may have been created to beautify the mansion rather than already being there before it was built, though that cannot be proven.

In summary, the Habitat Inventory would appear to be a rather unreliable source as to what is truly ancient woodland, in the sense defined by Natural England and the Woodland Trust. I suspect that the Council's ecologists lack the necessary map or documentary evidence to prove that the woodland around the former Lea Castle really did exist before 1600, so it would be interesting to know what evidence they think they have for drawing that conclusion. Whilst it is clear that extensive woodland did exist in this area by the 9th century, we cannot now be sure of its exact location and extent, since Wolverley is quite a large parish and includes more than one settlement. Nor can we be sure that all the existing woodland is ancient; in fact, some of it clearly isn't, such as the area now called 'Wolverley Carr'.

I think we should therefore challenge the assumption that the woodland at Wolverley Lodge, Wolverley Carr (especially) and Reservoir Wood is ancient semi natural woodland, unless the Council can produce any convincing and conclusive evidence that such is the case (which I rather doubt). The woodland may still have significant ecological value, but that is not the same thing as being 'ancient'.

Hope that helps.

Regards,

Mark Singlehurst

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