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**SENT BY EMAIL**

**Re: PA/2025/2274 – Former Science Buildings Olantigh Road Wye**

Thank you for your letter consulting us on the planning application for redevelopment of site for residential development of up to 11 dwellings with associated works.

The site of the proposed development lies within a general area of potential associated with prehistoric and later activity in view of the proximity of the River Stour. There is evidence of substantial Iron Age and Roman industrial activity beside the river and the settlement may have developed as an Early medieval village and later a minster town with a focus around the church and collegiate. Wye is a medieval market town too and there is potential for multi-period remains to survive on this site.

Although the site has been subject to “modern” development, the site and buildings are part of the incredibly important heritage of Wye College; its Grammar School and Wye Agricultural College. Wye College originated as a religious collegiate attached to the church and many of the earliest buildings are still present to the south, some are within the Scheduled Monument whilst others are listed buildings. The college passed into secular control in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. It was briefly used as a gentry residence but then developed again as a college/grammar school from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was part of the Joanna Thornhill Grammar School until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it became more of the research centre of the Wye/SE Agricultural College.

The application site itself is north of the earlier phases of the college but it contains mainly mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century laboratories, classrooms and social rooms, part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century research facilities, which include renowned botanical laboratories. Named complexes include the Guinness Research Lab (1935) and the Russell Labs (1960s). During WWII it was reputedly used by the Women’s Land Army before reverting back to being the research laboratories and agricultural college.

Wye college has been a key, influential part of the heritage of Wye and with the fundamental change of land use from educational establishment to residential, there needs to be measures to ensure the awareness, understanding and appreciation of Wye college is reflected in the new development.

The buildings within the application site may be predominantly 1960s and later buildings but they retain period fixtures, fittings, features reflecting this remarkable heritage, such as designed plaques on the external walls; internal lab facilities, classroom facilities and other archaeological “objects” with evidence of redevelopment and re-use. Although there has been several historic building deskbased assessments supported by some photographs (eg CAT 2017), there has not been a comprehensive archaeological and historical buildings survey of the extant buildings. In view of the proposed demolition, there needs to be a suitable full record of these particular remnants of the historic educational and research facilities. It is also essential that a representative sample of the historical fixtures and fittings are carefully retrieved during demolition work and retained as part of an archive. It is possible that some retained fixtures and fittings can be used in an interpretation scheme for the public realm of this residential scheme.

The application is supported by a heritage assessment which is welcome. However, although both the Union 4 Planning Heritage Impact Assessment and the earlier CAT Historic Building appraisal are substantial documents, both of them are summary accounts and interpretation with over two-thirds being the copied Kent HER records. Neither provides a reasonable, robust record of the current buildings and there is no sound assessment of significance of the buildings or the extent fixtures, fittings and other archaeological objects.

None of the buildings are currently designated and include some of the most modern phases of Wye College but it is essential that a reasonable historic building record is achieved and that there are suitable measures taken to ensure the Wye College legacy is reflected and respected as part of this proposed residential development.

I recommend the following conditions are placed on any forthcoming consent:

- 1 Prior to commencement of development, including demolition, the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological buildings survey and recording to HE level 4 in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure that historic building, structures and features are properly examined and recorded.

- 2 Prior to commencement of development, including demolition, the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will provide an Archaeological Objects Retrieval Methodology specification for the salvage, secure storage and re-use or long term storage of items of historic interest including: internal fixtures and fittings; external plaques; historic street furniture, etc. The Archaeological Objects Retrieval Methodology specification will be fully implemented in accordance with the approved*

*specification which has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure there is suitable retention, appropriate re-use and archive storage of important archaeological fixtures, fittings, street furniture, etc associated with the SE/Wye Agricultural College

- 3 *Prior to the commencement of development the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure:*
- i *archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and*
  - ii *further archaeological investigation, recording and reporting, determined by the results of the evaluation, in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority;*
  - iii *programme of post excavation assessment and publication.*

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined, recorded, reported and disseminated.

- 4 *No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of heritage interpretation strategy, including suitable re-use of objects retrieved under condition (2) in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure that heritage of this site is suitably disseminated

And

- 5 *Prior to occupation, the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure the implementation and completion of a programme of archaeological post excavation and publication work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure that results of archaeological investigation are properly assessed and disseminated in accordance with NPPF

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Rogers Senior Archaeological Officer Heritage Conservation