

BAMPTON CASTLE – a historical site

The new Play Area – conservation considerations

In terms of the consideration as to the sensitive nature of the site, we did contact Historic England who also came and visited the site. Our plans were initially for the entire area around the Motte & Bailey at that point, including a ditch at the bottom of the Motte in the field beyond the designated play area. Concerns were raised that this was a particularly sensitive area of the site due to the nature of material interest having possibly fallen into this ditch and being archeologically rich. It was in part due to this, that we significantly scaled back our ambitions to solely the existing play area.

The fact it is already designated as a play area made it far easier from a planning point of view. Having consulted with Mid Devon Council, we were advised that as a "restocking" exercise, we would need to ensure that none of the new play equipment was in excess of 4 meters in height or 200 cubic meters in volume. We have ensured this will be the case.

In addition to the above, we have also been at pains to ensure the new play area is aesthetically in keeping with the historic nature of the site. The castle theme to the play equipment was an important consideration, as were the natural materials that would be used. Previously, the swings were made of metal and painted red, and there was also a metal perimeter fence. Not only will the castle and other play equipment be made of wood (with obvious links to the Motte and Bailey castle) but we will be planting a native hedge around the perimeter of the play area as well.

The first person we spoke to, right the way back in April 2019 was Ken Mills of the Heritage Centre. He attended a number of our initial meetings and gave enthusiastic support to our ideas. As a person with a vested interest in maintaining not only interest in the site but also preserving its history, we felt Ken was the right person to seek consent from at the outset.

I think we have achieved an optimal balance between raising the profile of the site, but whilst also sensitively preserving its history.

I'd be interested to hear anyone's views on the above timeline of consideration to this feature.

Tim Williams