



**National
Trust**

mark.funnell@nationaltrust.org.uk
Direct line: 01747 873269

Your ref: TR010036
Our ref: MF/

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National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Email: A303Sparkfordtollchester@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

A303 SPARKFORD TO ILCHESTER DUALLING

This letter responds to the Examining Authority's written questions and requests for information (ExQ1); specifically the two questions where a response from the National Trust has been requested.

1.5.10. St Michael's Hill

a) Chapter 7 of the ES [APP-044] paragraph 7.6.1 sets out the study area. The Cultural Heritage assessment [APP-043] paragraph 6.6.2 includes the effect from St Michael's Hill in the proximity of Montacute House and this is also referenced by the National Trust [RR-029]. However, the landscape and visual effects from St Michael's Hill do not appear to have been assessed. Why was this viewpoint omitted from the assessment?

b) What are the landscape and visual effects from this location and are they significant?

In respect of (a), we would expect Highways England and its specialists to respond to this directly to ensure any impacts are adequately assessed. St Michael's Hill and the Lytes Cary estate, both in NT ownership, have views towards the proposed road scheme (as highlighted in our letters of 24th March 2017 and 7th March 2018, responding to consultations). It is however acknowledged that St Michael's Hill is some distance from the proposed scheme, although it does have wide-ranging views as set out below.

In respect of (b), we have not made a specific assessment of how the scheme would affect views from St Michael's Hill (scheduled monument and listed tower). From the hilltop of St Michael's Hill there are clear views across the landscape, including to the Somerset levels, the Mendip Hills, Glastonbury Tor, Cadbury Castle, and – in the distance – King Alfred's Tower and Cley Hill (both in Wiltshire).

National Trust
South West Region
Place Farm Courtyard, Court St
Tisbury, Wiltshire, SP3 6LW
Tel: +44 (0)1747 873250
Fax: +44 (0)1747 873251
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

President: HRH The Prince of Wales
Regional Chair: Doug Hulyer
Regional Director: Rebecca Burton

Registered office:
Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon, SN2 2NA
Registered charity number 205846

In essence, our position remains as per our Relevant Representation, in which we stated:

“...there are unlikely to be significant impacts on the landscape, views and settings of Trust properties. However, the proposed dual carriageway would pass over Camel Hill and includes new junctions and cuttings, so it may be visible in the wider landscape, including from Lytes Cary estate and in long distance views from St Michael’s Hill. Any such impacts should be carefully considered, and ameliorated through detailed design and mitigation as appropriate (including new landscaping to provide screening, and minimising light pollution from any street lighting)”.

1.5.11. St Michael’s Hill

a) In the Appendix 6.1 of the ES, Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment [APP-067] on page 71 as regards the significance of effect it is stated: “Neutral evaluation, if remains are present and it is not possible to retain them in situ, an appropriate archaeological level of recording will be undertaken in accordance with an agreed WSI”. Given the distance to St Michael’s Hill could the second part of this statement please be justified?

We would expect Highways England to respond directly to this question. Given the distance to St Michael’s Hill and the location of the proposed road scheme, there should be no physical impacts on the archaeological interests of St Michael’s Hill.

We would however like to take this opportunity to note that – also on page 71 – it is stated that views from St Michael’s Hill are screened by trees during the summer. The views are not fully obstructed by trees in all directions. The Trust has a programme of tree management on the hill, so it should not be assumed that trees have or will always screen views from the hilltop during the summer, and this should be taken into consideration when assessing any potential visual impacts.

Yours faithfully

Mark Funnell BSc(Hons) MSc PGDip MRTPI
Planning Adviser – South West Region