Warwickshire County Council

Proposed Kenilworth Railway Station

Cultural Heritage Assessment

Report 1052

November 2010
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1. Introduction

1.1 An assessment of the impact on the cultural heritage of the proposed Station development as shown on Atkins Ltd Drawing 5091203-ATK-SKE-006 Kenilworth Station Proposed Car Park Layout; Car Park Option B, Footbridge Option 3, Platform Access 1 of March 2010 was carried out by the Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Projects Group in September-October 2010.

1.2 A previous assessment of this and an alternative site was carried out in 2000 (Warwickshire Museum 2000). The scope of the present work, agreed with the Planning Archaeologist in June 2010, included checks of the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record for sites recorded since 2000, consultation of the Warwickshire County Record Office collections of early maps and photographs, and a rapid walkover survey of the site and its environs carried out in September 2010.

2. Cultural Heritage sites in the vicinity

2.1 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Battlefields, Listed Buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens (National or Local) in the vicinity of the proposed development. However the site lies just to the east of the Kenilworth Conservation Area (Area 3 - Waverley Road and Station Road) which is identified as an area of special historic and architectural interest as part of the mid/late 19th-century expansion of Kenilworth (WDC 2005, 9.7, Inset Plan 5).

2.2 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) records the following sites and finds within a 300m radius of the site:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HER Ref</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Grid Ref</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA 3258</td>
<td>Later 19th-century Whitemoor Brickworks</td>
<td>SP 294 718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 3261</td>
<td>Methodist Chapel, Priory Road, built 1902-3</td>
<td>SP 2914 7183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 3266</td>
<td>Find of 17th-century Delft tile</td>
<td>SP 2924 7196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 4097</td>
<td>Find of 18th-century crystal seal</td>
<td>SP 291 715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 6938</td>
<td>Site of Kenilworth Railway Station</td>
<td>SP 2922 7165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 6939</td>
<td>Site of Railway Signal Box</td>
<td>SP 2921 7168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 7838</td>
<td>L&amp;NWR Coventry to Leamington Branch Railway</td>
<td>SP 2922 7165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 The find spots HER WA 3266 (17th-century tile) and HER WA 4097 (18th-century seal) mark chance finds only and do not indicate the presence of a site.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 No prehistoric remains have been recorded in the vicinity of the site, the earliest recorded archaeological activity being a possible Romano-British tile kiln 500m to the north whose presence is suggested by a stone wall, pottery and waster (reject) tiles found in excavations in the 1960s (HER WA 3243). The presence of some Romano-British activity nearby means that it is possible that other currently unknown early sites may survive in the area, even within the development site.

3.2 During the medieval period the site lay within the Castle Manor of Kenilworth (Wallsgrove 1991, figs 5, 6; VCH 1951, 138). This area which lay east of the Castle End settlement appears to have been enclosed as fields by at least 1279 and seems to
have remained as such into the post-medieval period (Wallsgrove 1991, fig 8). The earliest detailed maps of this area of 1781 and 1840 support this general picture although they do not cover the proposal site (WRO P35, WRO CR 569/139).

3.3 It was the coming of the railway in the mid 19th century that began the development of this part of Kenilworth. The Coventry to Warwick Branch of the London and Birmingham Railway (HER WA 7838; Clinker 1954, 14; Christiansen 1983, 146-7) was opened in December 1844 with a station at Kenilworth on the current site (HER WA 6938). This was a relatively early railway but no significant original features seem to have survived later alterations. The station site lay in open fields and was reached from the west by a new road, Station Road. The original station building is depicted on a print commemorating its opening in 1844 (Fig 1, WRO PH 378/15). This shows a five-bay building with a canopy supported on cast-iron brackets over the platform flanked by lower flat-roofed extensions at either end.

3.4 By 1888 (Fig 4, Ordnance Survey 1888), however the station had been rebuilt on a much larger scale. At the south-east end of Station Road there was a gated forecourt running up to the main station building on the west side of the railway line. This consisted of a long range with a projecting central block with a large iron and glass canopy on its west side, and another iron and glass canopy over the platform extending to the footbridge which provided access to the eastern platform (Fig 3, WRO PH 367/19). The eastern platform had a shorter range of buildings to its east which also supported an iron and glass canopy over the platform. The platforms were 185m long, extending north and south of the buildings and lit by lines of lamp standards. To the north of the platform there was another footbridge taking an east to west public footpath across the railway.

3.5 On the western side of the station to the north and south of the forecourt there were sidings each with three tracks running into it. In the northern siding just to the north of the station building was a signal box (HER WA 6939), presumably the tall structure shown in later photographs, and visible on a c.1900 postcard (Fig 2, WRO PH 352/101/73). To the west of this the westernmost siding track ran through a building, presumably a goods or engine shed. On the track to the north of this there was a turntable. In the south-west corner of the siding there were two small buildings, one on the forecourt boundary probably the weighbridge office. At this time the land immediately to the west of the station was undeveloped, although housing had spread eastwards along the north side of Station Road and Priory Road had been laid out. To the north-east of the station there was the Whitemoor Brickworks (HER WA 3258), recorded from the 1870s, with a private branch siding, brick kilns and clay pits to the east.

3.6 By 1905 (Fig 5, Ordnance Survey 1905) the main station buildings were unchanged although the platform canopies had been extended north of the station footbridge. The signal box, southern siding and the northern footbridge were also unchanged. In the northern siding, now identifiable as the goods yard, the main building had been rebuilt as a goods shed with the western siding track running down its eastern side beneath the canopy shown on later photographs (Fig 10, WRO PH 366/5; Fig 11, WRO PH 417/54). Along the western boundary of the yard there was a new rectangular building with two small sheds to its south. The square building survives today, as do the entrance gate piers into the Goods Yard from the forecourt which are visible on the c.1900 postcard (Fig 2).

3.7 To the west of the station there were new houses along Priory Road, including nos 85-95 and nos 2-8 Station Road on the corner immediately west of the goods yard, and more along the newly laid out Waverley Road. The plot between 85 Priory Road and the public footpath was vacant. The map also shows the Priory Road Methodist Church (HER WA 3261) built in 1902-3. The kilns of the Whitemoor Brickworks had been rebuilt and a new clay pit lay to the south.
3.8 Although there was a serious fire in the station booking hall and parcels office in April 1923 (Clinker 1954, 59), the main station buildings appear unchanged on the 1925 mapping (Fig 6, Ordnance Survey 1925) as do the southern siding and northern footbridge. A fourth track had been laid across the goods yard and the turntable is no longer shown. The plot to the north of 85 Priory Road had a new building at its rear and had been amalgamated with land behind nos 85-95 Priory Road. To the west of the Station more housing had been built west of Waverley Road.

3.9 Between 1925 and 1938 (Fig 7, Ordnance Survey 1938) the area changed very little. The existing, rectangular factory building fronting Priory Road south of the public footpath had been built and the southern siding had acquired some bays for coal storage.

3.10 The general post-WWII decline of the railways was reflected in the Beeching Report recommendations (British Railways Board 1963, 114) which included the withdrawal of passenger services from the Leamington to Coventry Line and the closure of Kenilworth Station which took place in 1965. The 1969 Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig 8, Ordnance Survey 1969) shows the station buildings as disused and reduced in size. The southern siding remained a coal yard, but the former goods yard had become a builder’s yard. This was reached via an access between 85 Priory Road and the factory building which was then an engineering works with a new western façade onto the road. In the builder’s yard the former goods shed, the rectangular building and the weighbridge buildings remained and the existing sectional concrete building had been added on the southern boundary. The original public footpath footbridge had been replaced by the existing structure with right-angled steps on either side. On the east side of the railway the former Whitemoor Brickworks site had become a rubbish tip and Farmer Ward Road had been laid out parallel to the railway with industrial buildings to the north and housing to the south running up to the railway boundary.

3.11 The station buildings and platforms were demolished after 1972 (Ordnance Survey 1972) and the site and that of the former forecourt and coal yard were subsequently redeveloped for housing as Lockhart Close and Drew Crescent. In the builder’s yard the goods shed was demolished some time after 1988 (Ordnance Survey 1988).

4. Walkover Survey 2010

4.1 The proposal site was visited in September 2010. It consists of the former engineering works fronting Priory Road, no 85 Priory Road (Lighthouse building) and the former goods yard of the old Kenilworth Station which are together operated as a builders’ merchant by Bailey Buildbase Ltd; the public footpath along the north edge of the site; and land to the east either side of the railway tracks within the existing railway boundary.

4.2 The builders’ merchant is accessed off Priory Road, the entrance flanked by the late 19th-century brick house, 85 Priory Road to the south and the 1930s former engineering works to the north (Fig 11). 85 Priory Road (The Lighthouse building) has been converted to commercial use, with the addition of a modern shop front and a weighbridge on its north side. The building has been re-roofed and its windows have been replaced. The former engineering works is a rectangular brick building with a slate roof with long skylights on each side. It has also had a new frontage added in recent times.

4.3 Beyond the entrance from Priory Road the former goods yard which is used for the storage of building materials and parking is paved with modern grey brick
paviours (Fig 12). Around its perimeter there are four buildings. On the western boundary there is the surviving late 19th-century rectangular railway building. This is solidly built of purplish brick with a decorative dentil eaves cornice and a slate roof with two ventilators. However its front has been heavily altered by the insertion of a wide sliding doorway in place of two original windows flanking a central doorway, the tops of whose openings survive. Against the southern boundary of the yard there is the c.1960s sectional concrete building with a corrugated roof; against the eastern boundary is a late 20th-century, three-bay, brick building with large sliding doors and a flat corrugated roof; and against the northern boundary is a modern concrete building with a wide entrance and a low sectional aluminium roof.

4.4 The southern boundary of the site along Lockhart Close contains a surviving section of the late 19th-century brick boundary wall between the former station forecourt and the goods yard. This is pierced by two gateways one of which retains two substantial gate piers (Fig 14) which are visible on the c.1900 postcard (Fig 2).

4.5 Along the north edge of the site the public footpath is bounded by brick walls. It crosses the railway on a metal-panelled footbridge of mid 20th-century date. Within the railway boundary there is no surviving trace of the original station platforms or any other early feature.

5. Significance of sites and impact of proposals

5.1 The only designated cultural heritage site in the vicinity is the Kenilworth Conservation Area (Area 3 - Waverley Road and Station Road). Given that the traffic study predicts a slight increase in overall traffic by 2017/18 but a significant reduction in goods vehicle movements (although partly balanced by an increase in bus traffic) the impact of the proposals on the conservation area in terms of traffic noise and vibration would be broadly neutral. This would also apply to the Priory Road Methodist Chapel built in 1902-3, which is an unlisted building of minor local interest.

5.2 Although no early archaeological remains are known in the vicinity of the site it is possible that unknown prehistoric or Romano-British remains may have existed within it. Given the site’s location well to the east of Castle End it is unlikely that there was medieval settlement here, although remains of contemporary agricultural activity are possible. However, the extensive ground disturbance involved in the construction of the 19th-century railway siding and goods yard and their subsequent removal and resurfacing to make the builder’s yard will have destroyed any remains above the natural sandstone. It is therefore very unlikely that any putative early archaeological remains will have survived to be affected by the proposals.

5.3 The proposal site covers parts of the line of the mid 19th-century Coventry to Leamington Branch Railway and the former Kenilworth Station and its goods yard. The railway is an industrial monument of regional importance but no early railway features survive within the existing railway boundary and all trace of the former station platforms was removed following its closure.

5.4 On the west side of the former goods yard there is the surviving 19th-century railway building built between 1888 and 1905, and along the southern edge of the proposal site there is a section of the late 19th-century brick boundary wall of the goods yard with an original entrance flanked by gate piers. However, the front of the railway building has been mutilated by the later insertion of a sliding doorway, and the boundary wall is also considerably truncated. In this state these features are of limited significance and their proposed demolition represents a negligible impact.
5.5 The former goods yard may also contain the buried remains of the foundations of the goods yard buildings, the signal box and the weighbridge building. These may be revealed and/or damaged by the resurfacing of the proposed car park. However in their truncated state, and given the numbers of surviving standing railway buildings of these kinds elsewhere, these are also of limited significance and the impact of the proposals will again be negligible. Archaeological recording of these poorly preserved remains would not be justified and no other mitigation measures seem necessary.

5.6 The buildings on the Priory Road frontage, the 1930s factory building and 85 Priory Road and the other buildings around the builder’s yard are of no cultural heritage significance. The proposals involve the demolition of all these except for 85 Priory Road which will be converted to office use or flats. The impact will be nil.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The cultural heritage impact of the proposals would therefore be negligible. The only designated site in the area, the Kenilworth (Area 3 Waverley Road and Station Road) Conservation Area would be unaffected, as would the Priory Road Methodist Chapel, an unlisted building of minor local interest.

6.2 No early archaeological remains are recorded in the vicinity, and although it is possible that unknown remains may have existed within the site, given its subsequent development history it is very unlikely that anything significant will survive.

6.3 The impact on the surviving remains of the former Kenilworth Station would include the demolition of a late 19th-century goods yard building and a section of the late 19th-century goods yard boundary wall and entrance, and possible disturbance to the buried foundations of other former late 19th-century goods yard buildings and a signal box. However these features are too fragmentary and poorly preserved to be accorded any significance and the impact on them is also to be classed as negligible. No mitigation measures seem necessary.

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WRO CR 569/139   Kenilworth Tithe Map, 1840, Warwickshire County Record Office

WRO P35   Map of Bird Estate, Kenilworth, by Thomas Eagle, 1781, Warwickshire County Record Office

WRO PH 352/101/73   Photograph of Kenilworth Station, 1910s, Warwickshire County Record Office


WRO PH 367   Photographs in Warwickshire County Library 1984   *Picture Postcard Warwickshire, I*, Central Warwickshire (Warwickshire County Record Office)

WRO PH 378   Photographs from Drew, J H, 1980   *Yesterday’s Town, Kenilworth*, Barracuda Books, Buckingham (Warwickshire County Record Office)

WRO PH 417   Photographs of railway at Kenilworth, Warwickshire County Record Office
Fig 1: Opening of Kenilworth Station, December 1844
(WRO PH 378/15, courtesy of John Drew)

Fig 2: Kenilworth Station Forecourt, c.1900, showing main building, goods yard entrance, weighbridge building and signal box (Warwickshire County Record Office PH 352/101/73)

Fig 3: Kenilworth Station, c.1910, from south
(WRO PH 367/19, Warwickshire County Library)
Fig 8: Former Kenilworth Station 1969 (Ordnance Survey 1969)

Fig 9: Kenilworth Station, signal box and goods yard, 1920s (WRO PH 366/5, courtesy of Helen Scott)

Fig 10: Kenilworth Station, signal box and goods yard, 1960 (WRO PH 417/54, courtesy of Richard King)
Fig 11: Entrance to builders’ merchants from Priory Road (Sept 2010)

Fig 12: Builders’ merchant’s yard looking north (Sept 2010)

Fig 13: Late 19th-century railway goods yard building (Sept 2010)

Fig 14: Late 19th-century goods yard entrance gate piers (Sept 2010)