

Project Documentation - Initial Project Proposal Document

Project: Investigation of Roman buildings in Priory Park

Author: James Kenny, Archaeology Officer, Conservation and Design

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1. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to justify the undertaking of the project based on the estimated cost of delivery and the anticipated benefits to be gained. The proposal outlined in this document will be used as part of the process for prioritising future projects.

2. Project Description

The project aims to investigate through archaeological excavation a series of Roman buildings recently identified by geophysical survey in Priory Park. The project will be undertaken in two phases: Phase one - an initial excavation of modest scale using volunteers from Chichester and District Archaeology Society (CDAS), in order to evaluate the archaeology and to encourage community engagement. Phase two - a bid for external funding to secure a further series of community excavations on a larger scale.

In scope:

- Initial exploratory excavation using community archaeology volunteers.
- The compilation of a high quality record of the remains in order to ensure suitable public interpretation.
- Opportunities for engagement of general public through site tours, displays of finds, including associated commercial opportunities etc.
- Events/display programme in collaboration with The Novium Museum, to coincide with Roman week.
- The formulation of funding proposals for further investigation of the area, culminating in a bid to HLF *Our Heritage* programme.

Out of scope:

- Permanent display of the in-situ remains. This would be too onerous.
- Any excavations beyond the proposed study area. The excavation would take place in the area immediately south of the Guildhall, which is not an area that is used for specific activities.

3. Background

In 2015 a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey was undertaken in Priory Park by an amateur archaeologist, which revealed a number of significant features in the Park including, in the triangular area to the south of the Guildhall, a complex of what appear to be three separate buildings.

In 2016 a further GPR survey and a small trial trench located a portion of one of the buildings and revealed, at a depth of about 45cm, a series of masonry walls and a mortar floor, all of Roman date.

Further archaeological investigation would be necessary to establish the exact date and purpose of the buildings and to evaluate their importance. This provides a unique opportunity to establish a community archaeology project to investigate the site further and to engage the community in exploring and understanding the heritage of their city.

This project proposal will expand on the investigative work that has already been undertaken involving the excavation of a further trial trench. The excavation would be undertaken by the local volunteer archaeology group, Chichester and District Archaeology Society, who have been excavating a Roman villa site near Emsworth.

The excavation could be coordinated with the Chichester Roman Week organised by The Novium Museum, in order to maximise public interest and awareness of this unique discovery. There is good potential to involve the general public, including both residents and visitors, in site tours and displays of finds possibly at the Novium Museum or The Guildhall.

Should the results be favourable, a bid for external funding (probably from HLF Our Heritage Programme) will be made. If successful this will secure a further series of larger community excavations and a temporary exhibition at The Novium Museum. The first of the larger digs could coincide with the centenary of Priory Park in 2018.

The site lies in a part of the park that is not regularly used for any specific purpose; therefore potential disruption to park users would be minimal. However, careful liaison would take place with users to ensure that any negative impacts are mitigated.

Link to Corporate Plan objectives

- Contributes to effective management of the historic built environment.
- Contribute to the objectives of the Chichester Vision Project
- Promotes better community engagement with the historic environment, which can have mental and physical health benefits

Consequences of not doing it

- The loss of the opportunity to understand the resource, to engage the community and to secure proper management of it.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

The project will help contribute to our understanding of the City's history and has potential to raise its profile and it should achieve the following outcomes

1. The engagement of the community of Chichester and beyond in exploring the archaeology of the Roman town.
2. Increased visitor numbers to the City, including The Novium Museum.
3. Local and national PR potential.
4. Engagement with organisations, such as universities and schools.

5. Timescales

Stage in process	Date
Set up a Project Steering Group	March 2017
Preparations for initial excavations, including access arrangements/equipment hire agreements/health and safety and agreement with CDAS	April 2017
Excavation to coincide with Chichester Roman Week.	May/June 2017
Report on excavations, including specialist consultant reports into pottery, animal bones, etc.	End July 2017
Meeting of Steering Group to review of outcomes and agree options for phase 2 including potential for an HLF Bid	July/August 2017
Head of Service and Cabinet Member for Planning to approve Phase 2 HLF Bid (PID required if significant)	August 2017
Bid preparation for submission to HLF in September 2017 in order to secure funding for a three-year programme of further excavations.	5th September 2017
HLF Decision on Bid	December 2017

6. Project Costs and Resources

Costs (£)		Source
One-Off	Temporary fencing; machine hire; Specialist reports; sundry expenses and consumables and contingency £2500	Existing resources
Revenue	Unknown at this stage	
Savings	Not applicable although there might be income from tours etc.	
Services to be involved in the project delivery	Chichester Parks staff to help with access and to ensure proper reinstatement of the ground after excavation. Staff members of Project Steering Group (Planning, Novium Museum and Parks). Councillor membership of Project Steering Group	

7. Benefits vs. Cost

To be established at the Phase Two Stage in relation to the preparation of the HLF Funding Bid.

8. Identify Risks

Heritage crime; Loss of personnel; Significant weather event; Potential health and safety issues and a significant discovery. Appropriate mitigation will be put in place including risk assessments for the proposed dig.