

## Introduction

This aim of this technical paper is to provide a response to issues raised by Historic England (HE) with regard to Ring Holt Barrow Scheduled Monument.

For ease of cross reference, all assets discussed in the current document are referred to with their official name as well as the project ID assigned to them in earlier Viking Link Environmental Impact Assessment (NGVL 2017) Scheduled Monuments/designated assets and previously recorded assets on the Historic Environment Record are also given their official designation number for ease of cross reference.

## Ring Holt Barrow

The Ring Holt Bowl Barrow (Project ID SM3) is a Scheduled Monument (Historic England Scheduled Monument number 1017466) located in the East Lindsey District of Lincolnshire between the settlements of Langton and Dalby. It lies within Route Section 2 of the UK Onshore Scheme, although it has been excluded from the Planning Application Boundary through the adoption of a 50m buffer, and falls within the southern limit of the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. Surviving as a substantial earthwork approximately 30m in diameter and up to 1.5m high at its highest point, the barrow commands views to the west and south as a result of its positioning on a ridge. Although the barrow has suffered from limited animal/livestock erosion (NGVL 2017a, 29), it does not appear to have been the focus of any antiquarian or archaeological excavations. This lack of intrusive excavation means that a date for the asset is not certain, although its form would suggest it dates to the Bronze Age.

## Archaeological Background and Potential

Although the Ring Holt Barrow appears to survive in isolation, a number of other prehistoric burial mounds have been recorded in the wider area. The most significant of these are the Spellow Hills group of Long Barrows located approximately 1km to the north of the Ring Hold Barrow. This cluster of long barrows, one of which falls within the original study area, or Zone of Influence (Project ID SM5, Scheduled Monument Number 1015770), are thought to date to the Neolithic period rather than the Bronze Age, and also survive as earthworks, albeit degraded due to ploughing.

The prevalence of burial monuments in the Lincolnshire Wolds landscape has been highlighted as a result of studies in the wider area over the last 30 years (see Phillips 1989 for a review of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites in the north Lincolnshire Wolds landscape). Although archaeological work in the Wolds has, historically, been limited, studies have identified a large number of long barrows within the Wolds landscape, with at least 56 Neolithic long barrows or mortuary enclosures recorded to date (Bennet 2009, 20). This work has also identified a large number of possible round barrows, similar to the Ring Holt example, dating to the Bronze Age, with over 350 recorded as earthworks, cropmarks and through geophysical survey (*ibid* 2009, 23). These include one example recorded as a cropmark on aerial photographs approximately 330m to the north of the Ring Holt example (Project ID 120, HER Ref. MLI82327). As a result of this high concentration of barrows within the wider landscape, it seems possible that a ring ditch identified as part of the initial tranche of geophysical survey undertaken as part of the current scheme is also possibly a barrow (NGVL 2017a, Appendix 12.3, Fig 16). This asset (Project ID 397) lies on slightly higher level ground some 240m to the north east of the Ring Holt Barrow,

and although appearing smaller in size, its form would suggest it also represents a Bronze Age barrow.

The positive results experienced with geophysical survey in the area around the Ring Holt Scheduled Monument allows one to place some trust in the survey results obtained to date. A second tranche of geophysical survey has been undertaken since the original planning application was submitted in August 2017, and this survey data has been submitted as part of the Supplementary Environmental Information Report submitted by NGVL in November 2017 (NGVL 2017b). Results obtained from this survey include clear evidence of extensive enclosures with associated settlement activity to the south of the Ring Holt Barrow, and these results seem to confirm the presence of archaeology previously identified through aerial photography (Project ID 146 & 147, HER Ref MLI85369 and MLI85370). However, although undated, the form of this settlement activity would suggest a late prehistoric date rather than a Bronze Age date suggesting that the settlement activity identified through geophysical survey and aerial photography is not contemporary with the Ring Holt Barrow.

Although there is always the potential for unidentified archaeological remains to survive undetected, aerial photography and geophysical survey have both yielded successful results in the area around the Ring Holt Barrow. The additional geophysical survey undertaken since the submission of the original planning application in August 2017 provides a relatively detailed picture of the buried archaeology surviving in the area, and this suggests a landscape in which later prehistoric settlement activity dominated the land on the lower slopes and to the south and west, of the earlier Bronze Age Ring Holt Barrow. Clear evidence for other monuments contemporary with the Ring Holt Barrow are limited to two potential barrows on the higher ground to the north (Project ID 120, HER Ref. MLI82327) and northeast (Project ID 397) of the Ring Holt earthwork. Both of these assets survive as sub-surface features identified through geophysical survey and aerial photography rather than as earthworks, and both are located on the higher ground. The preference for barrow builders to construct burial mounds on higher ground or ridges (for general discussion see Woodward 2000) would also suggest that the potential for further Bronze Age barrows to survive undetected within the area of the Planning Application Boundary is low to moderate.

## **Setting Assessment**

The Ring Holt Bowl Barrow represents a well preserved Bronze Age burial mound surviving as an earthwork in the southern limit of the Lincolnshire Wolds landscape. Located at the point where the higher ground drops down to a tributary of the River Lymm the barrow, like other monuments of this form, was constructed at the location to take advantage of the higher ground. Discussions on the positioning and distribution of Bronze Age barrows have long argued that the barrows were positioned on high ground so that they could be seen in the landscape, while their location also afford outward views across the surrounding landscape. Barrows are also generally found in groupings or clusters, and as a result they are assumed to have been intervisible with one another, although it is not certain if this intervisibility is deliberate, or a result of their construction in clusters.

Due to the location of the Ring Holt Barrow (SM3), it can be assumed that the asset would have had clear views over the lower lying ground to the south and west, where the aerial photographs and geophysical survey have revealed possible later prehistoric settlement activity (Project ID 146 & 147, HER Ref MLI85369 and MLI85370). Although unexcavated, the cropmark sites

appear to date to the later prehistoric period rather than the Bronze Age, although they may have been located in the area because of the earlier Ring Holt Barrow. Their positioning away from the barrow would suggest the population 'respected' the asset and its place in the landscape. Furthermore, the Ring Holt Barrow would also appear to have been intervisible with two possible barrows surviving as cropmarks (Project ID 120, HER Ref. MLI82327 and ID 397), both of which are assumed to date to the Bronze Age.

In its basic form, the Scheduled Monument known as the Ring Holt Barrow is a Bronze Age burial mound which survives as a well preserved earthwork. It has archaeological significance as archaeological investigation could provide further information linked to its date and use, as well as the treatment of the dead in the Bronze Age. This archaeological significance is potentially higher as this barrow, unlike many others, does not appear to have been excavated by antiquarians. It also has historical significance as a result of its prominent place in the landscape, and through the way later prehistoric settlers respected the monument and built their structures around it. The setting of the barrow comprises agricultural land broken by a band of woodland, known as Callow Carr, to the north. It is clear that the positioning of the barrow on the edge of an area of high ground was deliberate to exploit views across the land to the south and east, as well as increase the prominence of the asset in the landscape. As a result of this, its setting contributes to its significance.

The barrow is located within the development of the landscape located within the proposed cable corridor, although a 50m buffer has been placed around the asset removing the potential for direct physical impacts on the asset. There will be clear views of the proposed cable route during construction as it passes from the north east of the barrow, along its eastern flank, and then down to the south. This will include severing, albeit on a temporary basis, views from the Ring Holt Barrow from the potential barrow surviving as a cropmark to the north east (ID 397).

As a result, any construction works around the Ring Holt Barrow have the potential to result in a temporary adverse impact on the setting of the asset. However, as the proposed cable route will be below ground, and will not include any permanent above ground elements, any setting impacts will be temporary, and last the duration of construction. Furthermore, the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the assets archaeological and historic significance.

## **Mitigation**

The positive results from the geophysical survey and aerial photography suggest that the area around the Ring Holt Barrow has been used from at least the Neolithic period, with Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments followed by later prehistoric settlement activity. This is a pattern that is followed throughout the Lincolnshire Wolds landscape, with field walking also yielding positive results (Everson *et al* 1991, 6-7).

Due to the sensitive nature of this area, and the potential for further archaeological remains to survive, the working width in the vicinity of Ring Holt barrow will be minimised as far as possible. This will be informed by a combination of further detailed design refined on contractor appointment and additional archaeological and ground investigation surveys.

As previously highlighted the area covered by the Ring Holt Barrow scheduling is excluded from the Planning Application Boundary, and a minimum 50m buffer will be maintained around the asset to ensure there is no damage during construction (NGVL 2017). A revised mitigation

strategy will also be developed for this area with Lincolnshire County Council and Historic England, and this will include a programme of Strip, Map and Record, followed by full archaeological excavation of any remains located. NGVL is happy to work with all parties to agree appropriate condition wording on grant of any planning permission.

## **Bibliography**

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