



**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
REPRESENTATION IN  
RESPECT TO RIDGE AND  
FURROW ON LAND OFF  
MELTON ROAD, WALTHAM  
ON THE WOLDS**

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Heritage report in respect to the  
ridge and furrow on land at Melton  
Road, Waltham on the Wolds,  
Leicestershire

Ref: Waltham on the Wolds and  
Thorpe Arnold Neighbourhood Plan  
(Pre-submission Version) 2017  
Policy ENV 11: Ridge and Furrow  
Fields

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## **CONTENTS**

### **1.0 Introduction**

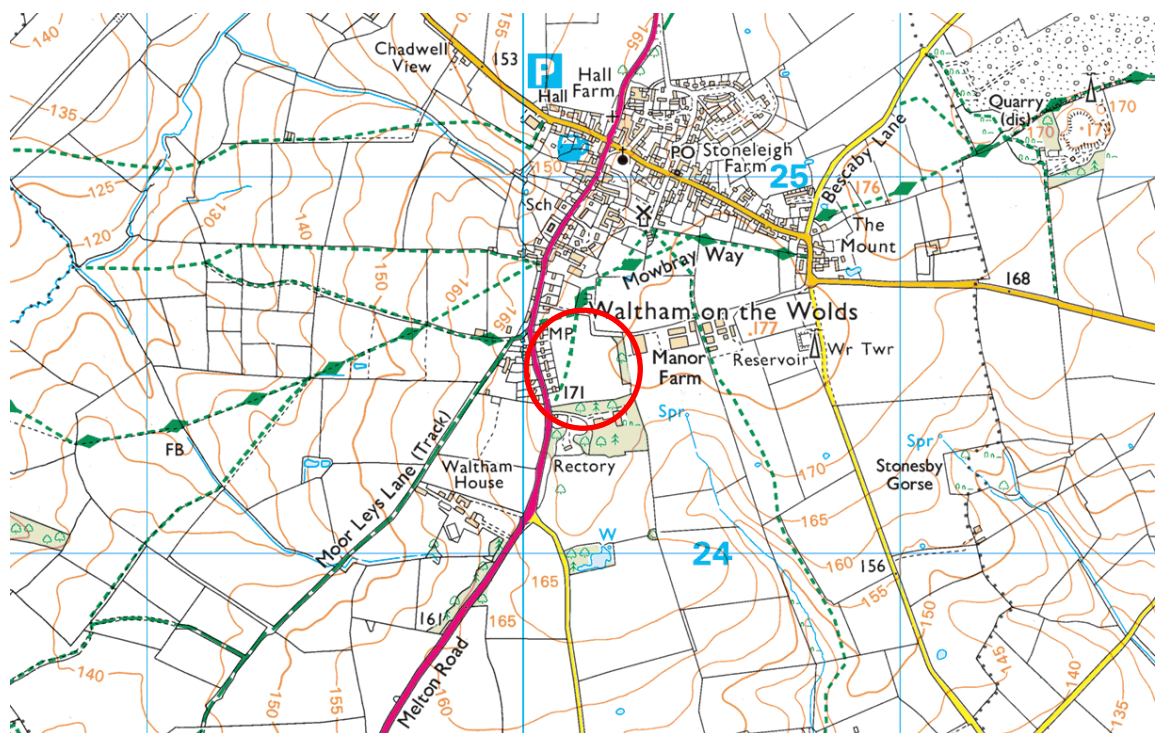
### **2.0 Legislative & Policy Framework**

### **3.0 Ridge and Furrow**

### **4.0 Summary and Conclusions**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage report has been prepared by Michael Dawson, Director at CgMs Ltd, in respect to the inclusion of land at Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds, within Policy ENV 11: Ridge and Furrow Fields, due to the stated presence of ‘well – preserved ridge and furrow’.
- 1.2 The report assesses the status of the ridge and furrow as ‘non-designated heritage asset’ and as ‘well preserved ridge and furrow’. It argues that the ridge and furrow does not meet accepted criteria to describe it either as a ‘non-designated asset’ or as ‘well preserved’. The report considers the ridge and furrow within the context of the Neighbourhood Plan, Melton Borough’s Local Plan, emerging Local Plan policies and Historic England guidance.
- 1.3 The report has been prepared on behalf of K & A Watchorn and Sons, Fair Farm, Waltham on the Wolds, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE14 4AJ and Pegasus Planning.



*Land off Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds*

## 2.0 RIDGE AND FURROW - LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

- 2.1 The Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-submission Version) 2017 includes Policy ENV 11: Ridge and Furrow Fields which states:
- 2.2 *“The areas of well-preserved ridge and furrow earthworks (see Figure 14) are non- designated heritage assets, and any harm arising from a development proposal, or a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be balanced against their significance as heritage assets”.*
- 2.3 The Ridge and Furrow, which is subject to the policy, is described as *well preserved*, a *non-designated heritage asset* and that *any harm arising from a development proposal, or a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be balanced against their significance as heritage assets*.
- 2.4 DCMS Guidance on *Neighbourhood Planning* (2012) describes how:
- 2.5 *Neighbourhood planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work. They will be able to:*
- *choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built*
  - *have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided*
  - *grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead*
- 2.6 The Guidance goes on to note that:
- the plan must follow some ground rules, they must generally be in line with local and national planning policies and they must be in line with other laws.*

2.7 The following, therefore, sets out the legislative and policy framework to which the Neighbourhood Plan should conform, together with the appropriate guidance relevant to assessing the significance of ridge and furrow

## **2.8 National Legislation**

2.9 Where development may have a direct or indirect effect on designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure the proposals are considered with due regard for their impact on the historic environment. Legislation regarding buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest is contained in the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act).

## **2.10 Local Development Plan**

2.11 **Melton Borough Emerging Local Plan 2017:** The Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan which will sit alongside national guidance as contained in the NPPF and NPPG and Neighbourhood Plans created by communities within the Borough to form the development plan. The Council has considered all the comments made to the consultation on the Emerging Options Draft Plan on 27th July 2016 and has produce a further version of the plan, revised to take account of the comments received and additional information, *Pre Submission Draft Melton Local Plan 2016*.

2.12 The principal heritage related policy in the emerging plan is:

2.13 **Policy EN13 – Heritage Assets** *The NPPF provides national policy for considering proposals which affect a heritage asset. This includes the need to assess the effect of a proposal on the significance of an asset and the need for a balanced judgment about the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

*Melton Borough has a number of important historic assets. These include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments (SMs) and non-designated heritage assets (ranging from nationally to locally important heritage features).*

*The Borough of Melton contains heritage assets that are at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. These will be conserved, protected and where possible enhanced.*

*The Council will take a positive approach to the conservation of heritage assets and the wider historic environment through:*

*A) seeking to ensure the protection and enhancement of Heritage Assets including non-designated heritage assets when considering proposals for development affecting their significance and setting. Proposed development should avoid harm to the significance of historic sites, buildings or areas, including their setting.*

*B) seeking new developments to make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the local area.*

*C) ensuring that new developments in conservation areas are consistent with the identified special character of those areas, and seeking to identify new conservation areas, where appropriate;*

*D) seeking to secure the viable and sustainable future of heritage assets through uses that are consistent with the heritage asset and its conservation;*

*E) allowing sustainable tourism opportunities in Heritage Assets in the Borough where the uses are appropriate and would not undermine the integrity or significance of the heritage asset: and*

*F) the use of Article 4 directions where appropriate.*

2.14 In the meantime the *Melton Local Plan* which was adopted on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1999 provides the local planning framework for the Borough. As local plans became outdated and replaced, the Government has considered which parts of an authority's local plan should continue to apply. This is called the 'saving' process and policies which are considered to be up to date and appropriate under the guidance provided at the national and regional levels are 'saved' by the Secretary of State. Since the *Melton Local Plan* was prepared a planning system based upon the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. As a

result the Melton Local Plan is becoming out of date and is being replaced with a new local plan. In the meantime the Core Strategy, which was found to be unsound was withdrawn on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Consequently the following represent the relevant 'saved' policies of the 1999 Local Plan.<sup>1</sup>

2.15 **BE10** *Development will not be permitted if it fails to preserve the archaeological value and interest of nationally important archaeological remains or their settings, whether scheduled or not.*

2.16 **BE11** *Planning permission will only be granted for development which would have a detrimental effect on archaeological remains of county or district significance if the importance of the development outweighs the local value of the remains. If planning permission is given for development which would affect remains of county or district significance, conditions will be imposed to ensure that the remains are properly recorded and evaluated and, where practicable, preserved.*

## **2.17 National Planning Policy and Guidance**

### **2.18 National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)**

2.19 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which promotes sustainable development.

2.20 The guidance that relates to the historic environment and developments is contained in Section 12, 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. Heritage Assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: *a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) and assets identified by the local planning authority.*

2.21 Significance is defined as: *The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological,*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.melton.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/planning\\_policy/melton\\_core\\_strategy.aspx](http://www.melton.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy/melton_core_strategy.aspx)  
accessed 18/10/16

*architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*

- 2.22 In paragraph 128, the NPPF states that when determining applications, LPAs *should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on this significance.*
- 2.23 Paragraph 131 emphasises that local planning authorities should take account of *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*
- 2.24 Paragraph 132 states that *when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.* It emphasises that the weight given to an asset's conservation should be proportionate to its significance, and that *clear and convincing justification* will be required for loss and harm to heritage assets.
- 2.25 Paragraph 135 states that: *"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."*
- 2.26 The framework expressly requires that, where harm is identified, the local authority should take into account the benefits of a proposed scheme in determining the application.
- 2.27 In paragraph 214 and 215 the NPPF refers to the relationship between the Framework and Local Plan Policy.

## **2.28 The National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014)**



2.29 The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which is an on-line resource, updated on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014. In relation to “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”, paragraph 001 states that:

2.30 *Protecting and enhancing the ‘historic environment’ is an important component of the National Planning Policy Framework’s drive to achieve sustainable development (as defined in Paragraphs 6-10). The appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the ‘Core Planning Principles’.*

### **2.31 Ridge and Furrow:**

2.32 In determining the significance of heritage assets the NPPF has set out four criteria archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Historic England in the Glossary to the National Heritage list described ridge and furrow as:

2.33 *“Ridges and furrows are undulating (corrugated) earthworks. They are created when using an ox-driven plough. They are most easily seen on aerial photographs. They usually show areas of medieval field systems.”*

2.34 **Significance:** The land use and resources available to a mediaeval township comprise four main types, arable, meadow, woodland and waste (often referred to as heath or moor, fen). In the Midlands many townships were characterised by having some 90% arable land. This was divided into open fields and subject to crop rotation, often referred to as the three field system. Ridge and furrow represents a cultivated ridge of land, a strip field or furlong, flanked by furrows for ease of identification and drainage. In the 1990s English Heritage<sup>2</sup> undertook a survey of ridge and furrow in 9 counties including Leicestershire. Of 140 sites initially appraised 40 sites were identified as priority townships. In Leicestershire these included Belton in Rutland, Braunston in Rutland, Gumley, Hallaton, Hungarton, Mowsley, Owston and Newbold, Saddington, Thorpe Langton, Welham. The priority townships were identified based on scheduling criteria: group value, survival (extent), potential, documentation and condition.

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<sup>2</sup> English Heritage 2001 *Turning the Plough Midland open fields: landscape character and proposals for management*, Hall D (referred to as Hall 2001)

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- 2.35 *Turning the Plough* was part of the Monuments Protection Programme undertaken in 1995-1998 and published in 2001. It led to proposals for scheduling and that some areas should be considered for World Heritage status. Although the latter was not carried through, some scheduling took place for example Clipston in Northamptonshire. This township scored 35 out of a possible 45 against 5 criteria where it was assessed to have: Group Value (association) - High, Survival Medium, Potential - High, Documentation (archaeological) - Medium, Documentation (historic) high.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.36 As Fairclough noted in the introduction to *Turning the Plough* "outside the 43 priority townships, which needed a sophisticated and integrated approach to the protection of wide scale ridge and furrow, there are well-tested and tried precedents for dealing with smaller areas ranging from scheduling, to management agreements for stewardship".<sup>4</sup>
- 2.37 In 2012 *Turning the Plough* was reviewed on behalf of English Heritage (today Historic England) by Gloucestershire County Council. In summary the report described how:
- 2.38 "During the 1990s a number of projects undertaken through the English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme investigated survival and loss of medieval and post-medieval agricultural earthworks in the English Midlands. The combined results of these projects were published as 'Turning the Plough' (Hall 2001). This included a gazetteer of 40 parishes (relating to 43 'townships') where the most significant surviving earthworks were located. The project included an assessment of the extent of survival in the priority townships based on aerial photographs taken in 1999.
- 2.39 Only a relatively small amount (4.24%) of the ridge and furrow recorded in 1999 has been entirely lost but a larger amount (12%) has been lost or badly damaged. The total area of ridge and furrow recorded in 2012 was, however, significantly larger than in 1999, as the earlier project had only recorded high quality ridge and furrow whereas the current project recorded all visible ridge and furrow, irrespective of condition. Despite this, 76.6% of all ridge and furrow

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<sup>3</sup> Historic documents include: Map with field book, terriers, court rolls, accounts, estate records and medieval information

<sup>4</sup> In Hall 2001, 9

*recorded in 2012 is in good (well preserved and slightly degraded) condition and thus worthy of consideration for preservation.”*

#### 2.40 **Conclusion**

2.41 In considering any proposal to include ridge and furrow as a constraint to development the ridge and furrow should be assessed against established criteria to determine its significance. Any proposal for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan should include an assessment against these criteria and in terms set out by the NPPF.

### 3.0 **RIDGE AND FURROW**

#### 3.1 **Introduction**

3.2 Ridge and furrow has been briefly described above quoting from Historic England's Glossary to the National Heritage list,<sup>5</sup> and in assessing the significance of the earthwork remains the criteria of the NPPF have been noted as well as the more detailed criteria for assessing archaeological significance in the context of scheduling.<sup>6</sup>

3.3 The following, therefore, briefly describes the ridge and furrow within the land off Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds, reviews the earthworks in the context of established criteria and considers the proposals put forward in the Neighbourhood Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/glossary/R/Ridge-and-Furrow> accessed 22/5/17

<sup>6</sup> Formally the criteria for scheduling are Secretary of State's criteria: The Secretary of State has regard to the following principles to help select nationally important ancient monuments for designation as Scheduled Monuments: **Period** All classes of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation. **Rarity** There are some classes of monuments that are so scarce that all surviving examples that still retain some significance should be preserved; in general, however, a selection must be made of those monuments which best portray the typical and commonplace as well as the rare; this process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of particular classes of monument, both in a national and a regional context. **Documentation/finds** The significance of monuments may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigations or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary records or representations; conversely, the absence of documentation contemporary to a monument can make its potential more important as the only means of developing our understanding. Similarly, their significance can be enhanced by the existence of related artefacts or ecofacts, such as those held in museums or other public depositories. Department for Culture, Media & Sport **Group value** The significance of a single monument may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments and / or those of different periods; in such cases it is sometimes preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group. **Survival / condition** The survival of a monument's significance, both above and below ground or underwater, is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition plus its surviving features. **Fragility/vulnerability** The significance of some monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment, while there are standing structures of particular form or complexity whose significance can be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature could particularly benefit from the legal protection that scheduling confers. **Diversity** Some monuments may be selected for designation because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute. **Potential** On occasion, the nature of the archaeological interest of a monument cannot be specified precisely, but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating the existence and importance of such evidence, and so to demonstrate the justification for designation; the greater the likelihood that such evidence would be revealed through expert investigation, the stronger will be the justification for designation. These principles should not be considered definitive, but as indicators that contribute to a broader judgment based on individual circumstances. Other factors, such as the contribution of monuments to the character of today's landscape or the historic landscape, can also be important considerations. (DCMS 2013)

### 3.4 The Ridge and Furrow on land off Melton Road Waltham on the Wolds



*The ridge and furrow on land off Melton Road, in 201 (©GoogleEarth)*

- 3.5 The **ridge and furrow** on land off Melton Road can be formally described as comprising ridges and furrows within an area to the south west of the historic core of the village. The principal orientation of the ridge and furrow is north to south and the both ridges and furrows have the characteristic S-shaped form which is caused by the action of the oxen pulling the plough. Where the boundary of the open field occurs to the south a low headland bank has been created as the ox team turn and the plough throws soil outwards. A second enclosure is evident to the south east of the land parcel where the ridge and furrow runs east to west in a narrow triangular area to the rear of houses along Melton Road. Here a second headland bank is visible. Along the southern boundary of the site are the remnants of two furrows which may once have formed part of a larger land parcel with ridge and furrow to the south of the Rectory. Along the eastern north eastern boundary of the land parcel the ridge and furrow has been eroded and no longer survives as an earthwork along the trackway to the farm in the east.



*Ridge and furrow looking northwards across the land parcel. The headland can be made out in the centre foreground.*

- 3.6 The **condition** of the ridge and furrow can be judged from photographs on the ground in May 2017 which shows the low ridges surviving in the field and from the aerial photograph above. The ridges are just visible against the field boundary whilst the headland and trackway on the ground can be seen but only as an area of almost level ground.





*The ridge and furrow from the north looking south towards the Rectory and Melton Road. The ridges are just visible in the central ground.*

- 3.7 **The significance of the ridge and furrow:** To assess the significance of the ridge and furrow a two staged approach has been used. The first is to apply the criteria used by Hall for the MPP survey *Turning the Plough* to identify priority townships. This assigned values to the ridge and furrow in terms of a four point system: 1 Poor, little or no ridge and furrow; 2 Fair, some ridge and furrow, with little association; 3 Good, fair quantity of ridge and furrow with vill and other associations and 4 Outstanding, a large area of ridge and furrow. From this it can be seen that the ridge and furrow in the land parcel would be considered at best fair and when assessed in the context of the whole township as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan would also be considered fair. No evidence has been advanced to suggest that the ridge and furrow survives in association with any medieval earthworks (see below).
- 3.8 Refining the assessment further using the criteria in *Turning the Plough* confirms the status of the ridge and furrow in terms of the whole vill or township: Group Value is (Low) as the ridge and furrow is not associated specifically with earlier

monuments though it does appear to overly, perhaps, Romano-British remains. Survival is low, at less than 10% of the parish area, described by the Neighbourhood Plan "*Of the c.150 agricultural fields in the Plan Area, c.38 (25%) still retain traces of ridge and furrow (roughly 105 hectares of the c.2000 hectares of open land, 5.25% by area)*". No information beyond a geophysical survey<sup>7</sup> in 2015 is available regarding the potential of the ridge and furrow to mask earlier deposits. The low profile of the ridge and furrow suggests that it has been ploughed at least once, if only to re-seed the pasture and this suggests the condition of the ridge and furrow is not '*very high*' according to Hall's criteria<sup>8</sup> and the potential to yield information about the creation of ridge and furrow is low. Similarly the absence of detailed documentation related to the ridge and furrow of the township, both historic and archaeological, indicates that ridge and furrow is at best of low to medium significance.

3.9 Turning to the ridge and furrow of the land parcel itself, there are two guidance documents which are relevant. The first is comprises the Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling. Although the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose scheduling the criteria provide a firm basis for assessing the archaeological significance of smaller areas of ridge and furrow. The second guidance is that issued by Historic England '*Introductions to Heritage Assets, Field Systems*'(2011).

3.10 ***Applying the scheduling criteria:***

3.11 **Period:** whilst the ridge and furrow is characteristic of a period of medieval agriculture this single field does not characterise the period.

3.12 **Rarity:** The ridge and furrow in Waltham on the Wolds is not an example of a scarce class of monument and although it portrays the typical and commonplace, it is not rare.

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<sup>7</sup> Richardson T 2015 Waltham on the Wolds, Leicestershire, May 2015, Report J8318, (Stratascan)

<sup>8</sup> Hall 2001, 53



**3.13 Documentation/finds:** The significance of the ridge and furrow is enhanced only by the record of geophysical survey undertaken in 2015.<sup>9</sup> The report described the ridge and furrow but made no value judgment.

**3.14 Group value:** The significance of a single monument may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments and in the case of the ridge and furrow at Waltham on the Wolds it has group value with the surviving ridge and furrow identified by the Neighbourhood Plan.

**3.15 Survival/condition:** The survival of a monument's significance, both above and below ground, is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition plus its surviving features. The level of survival has been noted above as fair. To judge the quality of survival see the comparison with the scheduled suite at Nobold, Northants., below.



Fig 5. Medieval and later ridge and furrow at Nobold (Northamptonshire). To the right, ridging stops at the edge of the settlement remains, suggesting cultivation while the village remained occupied. Left of the hollow way, however, remains are overlain by ridges, post-

dating settlement desertion (which occurred by the 1670s). Settlement and ridge and furrow are scheduled. Modern ploughing has eradicated surrounding ridge and furrow beyond the scheduled area.

*Ridge and furrow and village remains from Designation Scheduling Selection Guide Agriculture (English heritage 2012).*

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<sup>9</sup> Richardson T 2015 Waltham on the Wolds, Leicestershire, May 2015, Report J8318, (Stratascan)

- 3.16 **Fragility/vulnerability:** The significance of some monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment, and this is the case with the ridge and furrow at Waltham on the Wolds.
- 3.17 **Diversity** Some monuments may be selected for designation because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute. In the case of the ridge and furrow at Waltham on the Wolds the earthwork remains illustrate the final phase of open field cultivation in the parish at the time of enclosure in 1766.
- 3.18 **Potential:** The potential of the ridge and furrow has been set out above in terms of the parish, and the detailed potential of the ridge and furrow to mask earlier deposits, in the land parcel, has been set out in the geophysical survey. The potential of the ridge and furrow, itself, is limited to fragments of fields and does not include a relationship to any earthwork remains related to settlement.
- 3.19 Applying the scheduling criteria as a guide to the significance of the ridge and furrow at Waltham on the Wolds indicates how little the earthworks contribute to the historic environment. The comparison with Nobold indicates the extent to which the ridge and furrow falls short of what is considered good survival.

### **3.20 Assessment of Significance**

- 3.21 The NPPF, Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (HEPPG) and Conservation Principles (English Heritage 2008) provide the framework for assessing the significance of heritage assets. In particular, Annex 2 to the NPPF defines 'Significance' as:
- 3.22 The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 3.23 Ridge and furrow as a class of archaeological asset does not have any architectural or artistic interest, and therefore the significance of this undesignated heritage asset lies in its archaeological and historic interest:

- 3.24 'Archaeological interest' is defined in Annex 2 as: There will be an archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
- 3.25 English Heritage guidance in *Conservation Principles* identifies a staged approach to understanding the significance of heritage assets, in this case the earthwork ridge and furrow within the land parcel in Waltham on the Wolds. In short, this approach aims to:
- Understand the heritage value of the asset
  - Understand the fabric and evolution of the place
  - Understand the evolution of the site
  - Identify who values the site and why, and
- 3.26 These stages are considered, where relevant, below:
- 3.27 Within the historic parish of Waltham on the Wolds, there is no documented evidence to suggest that the form of ridge and furrow has 'evolved'; the current earthworks appear to perpetuate the original layout of furlongs and headlands which presumably date back to at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.28 The asset within the land parcel appears relatively little valued by local residents and walkers since there is only a footpath across the land parcel. The topography of the land parcel does not particularly lend itself to an easy appreciation of the plan form of the asset, and the ridge and furrow is not visible in longer views which might give it some visual interest.
- 3.29 **Evidential value** – Earthwork ridge and furrow is a particularly recognisable feature of the English historic landscape, particularly in the Midlands. It marks the remains of Medieval strip fields that were once under the plough. Although ridge and furrow is generally regarded as Medieval, the age of surviving remnants is strictly the date when they were last ploughed, that is when a township was enclosed. In the case of Waltham on the Wolds, the site was enclosed in 1766.

- 3.30 The evidential value of earthwork ridge and furrow is considered good as it provides evidence of earlier agricultural practices. However, in its physical form, the ridge and furrow is the result of the latest ploughing and, therefore, its origin and detailed chronology is difficult to date. Any datable artefacts or environmental material within the ridge and furrow are residual - as a result of manuring or from the plough disturbing earlier features beneath the subsoil.
- 3.31 Typically, information for historic documents (where they survive) contribute as much to an understanding of the development and use of Medieval open fields as the physical remains do.
- 3.32 **Historic value** – The historic value of earthwork ridge and furrow relates to the evidence it provides for the Medieval open field system of Waltham on the Wolds. The extent of Medieval settlement within the parish is undocumented in detail.<sup>10</sup> The ridge and furrow within the land parcel is contiguous with the modern settlement of Waltham on the Wolds, but its relationship to Medieval settlement is unclear.
- 3.33 In short, the significance of the ridge and furrow within the land parcel lies in its value as part of the Medieval Open Field system of Waltham on the Wolds, to an understanding of Medieval farming practice generally, the organisation of agriculture within the parish and an overview of Medieval land-use.

### **3.34 The Neighbourhood Plan**

- 3.35 The Neighbourhood Plan has described the ridge and furrow as part of the *"the well-preserved groups, especially those close to the settlements and therefore of community and educational value, are an important part of the distinctive character of the parish and provide a link to its historic past. The local community values them and any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. This policy not only seeks to protect the best of remaining ridge and furrow fields from development, but highlights their importance to the community, especially bearing in mind that many of the threats to ridge and furrow fields often involve types of development, changes of land use and farming practices that do not require planning approval. Involvement with local farmers and agricultural*

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<sup>10</sup> Hartley RF 1984 *The medieval earthworks of North East Leicestershire*, Leicester Museums

*landowners on a case-by-case basis will be necessary to achieve a sustainable balance between heritage and viable agriculture."*

- 3.36 The Neighbourhood Plan suggests that the ridge and furrow has important and community value, but as the analysis above demonstrates the ridge and furrow is difficult to appreciate and has limited public access. There is no record of local research beyond that of Hartley in the 1980s, and, with the exception of the Neighbourhood Plan, of any community activity associated with the earthworks which would suggest they have community value.
- 3.37 The Plan description goes on to observe that the loss of the ridge and furrow would be '*irreversibly detrimental*' which in the context of the NPPF implies substantial harm due to the loss of significance by the ridge and furrow in the parish. Proportionately this overstates the impact of removing a single field of ridge and furrow in a parish with some 105ha of ridge and furrow.
- 3.38 The value that the Neighbourhood Plan assigns to the ridge and furrow is based on a '*survey in 2016 which has confirmed the extant distribution of ridge and furrow by comparison with Google Earth photography dating from 2011*'. From this survey the area with the land parcel off Melton Road is assigned a value 'Well Preserved compared to other ridge and furrow which is 'feint part ploughed out'. No criteria are assigned to this value, there is no indication of a site inspection and no assessment of any change or lack of changed in the 6 years since 2011.
- 3.39 Lastly the explanation of the policy notes in some detail how the policy "*not only seeks to protect the best of remaining ridge and furrow fields from development, but highlights their importance to the community, especially bearing in mind that many of the threats to ridge and furrow fields often involve types of development, changes of land use and farming practices that do not require planning approval. Involvement with local farmers and agricultural landowners on a case-by-case basis will be necessary to achieve a sustainable balance between heritage and viable agriculture.*" This explanation of the policy goes beyond the remit of Neighbourhood Planning into agricultural policy and as justification for the inclusion of the ridge and furrow of land off Melton Road, is not appropriate. On this basis the policy should be specifically focused on development and expressed in terms which relate to the heritage importance of the earthworks, rather than their amenity value expressed as 'community' and 'education'.

- 3.40 Lastly the ridge and furrow has been described as a non-designated heritage asset, yet the absence of clear criteria for such a description, its absence from the county HER and the nature of the earthworks suggest that unless further survey is forthcoming the earthworks description as non-designated heritage assets should be removed from the plan.
- 3.41 In conclusion the value assigned to the ridge and furrow when assessed in terms of the NPPF and allied guidance on scheduling, the designation of field systems and agricultural heritage assets suggest that the ridge and furrow does not survive at a higher level than fair.
- 3.42 In terms of the NPPF and the significance of the earthworks the Neighbourhood Plan has not expressed its value in terms of the NPPF, but in terms of community and education potential. The Plan has not provided a clear justification for describing the earthwork as '*well preserved*' and, in terms of justifying the policy on ridge and furrow, has gone beyond the remit of neighbourhood planning into areas of agricultural policy.
- 3.43 For these reasons the ridge and furrow on land off Melton Road should be removed from the Neighbourhood Plan and the rationale for the policy revised to demonstrate its consistency with the NPPF and local plan policy.

## **4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **4.1 Summary**

- 4.2 This assessment has reviewed the *Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-submission Version) 2017 Policy ENV 11: Ridge and Furrow Fields* with respect to the ridge and furrow on land off Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds. The report has described the Neighbourhood Plan in the context of DCMS Guidance, the Melton Local and emerging Local Plans and has described the NPPF's approach to heritage significance together with Historic England's Guidance on designation and related survey work from the 1990s. Using a range of criteria the assessment has reviewed the significance of the ridge and furrow, judged its survival and concluded that its value lies in its archaeological potential possibly masking earlier activity, now below ground. It has almost no potential to increase our knowledge of medieval farming or to increased knowledge of the interrelationship between the medieval village core of Waltham on the Wolds and its agricultural hinterland.
- 4.3 In the third stage of the assessment the report has looked at the approach of the Neighbourhood Plan. By definition the plan's objective are to help *choose where a community wants new homes, shops and offices to be built, what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. In this respect the significance assigned to ridge and furrow should be in accordance with the NPPF. In the text the value assigned is both educational and communal and the explanation for the policy on ridge and furrow goes beyond the remit of the Localism Act.*
- 4.4 In conclusion the ridge and furrow identified in the Plan is ill defined, assigned an inappropriate level of communal and educational value and has not been properly assessed. The policy on ridge and furrow (Policy ENV 11) has been justified in terms wider than those assigned to the Neighbourhood Plan process by the Localism Act and has strayed into areas of agricultural policy and land use.
- 4.5 For these reasons the ridge and furrow in land off Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds should be removed from the policy map and the policy ENV 11 reviewed

to ensure compliance with planning legislation, National Planning Practice (NPPF) and accepted heritage guidance.





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