

South Gloucestershire Council

Council Offices, Badminton Road, Yate, South Gloucestershire, BS37 5AF

Memorandum to: Charmain Eyre-Walker
Major Sites Team,
Council Offices,
Badminton Road,
Yate.

From: Paul Driscoll
Date: 27/04/2023
Your Ref: P22/01300/O
Telephone: 01454 862175
Fax: 01454 863545

Site: *Land At Sodbury Road Wickwar South Gloucestershire GL12 8PG.*

Proposal: Erection of up to 180 dwellings, a local shop and associated infrastructure (Outline) with access to be determined; all other matters reserved.

Policy Context: *NPPF; South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (Adopted December 2013) Policy CS9; SG Policies Sites and Places Plan (adopted November 17) Policy PSP17*

I have reviewed the archaeological desk-based provided in support of this application, but I have reservations about progressing to approval without further work undertaken.

Whilst there is nothing wrong with the archaeological assessment, DBAs like this are inherently limited by available evidence and rarely can make firm assertions on the presence or absence of archaeology. They rely heavily on the absence of records in the HER (as in there is nothing logged on the site and therefore no archaeology) when it should be noted that no investigation has taken place on the application site to determine whether archaeology exists.

I note that LiDAR was assessed as part of the DBA, but I cannot see any images showing the results of this. The text implies that there was only limited coverage but I have DSM data covering the entirety of the site and upon processing with a simple hillshade model, does show features in the central field as well as possible further feature to the south. Some of these must relate to historic field boundaries as set out in the DBA, but there is a clear eastward linear in the central field that cannot be matched against historic mapping. Admittedly this was only a basic modelling but does highlight potential features on the site.

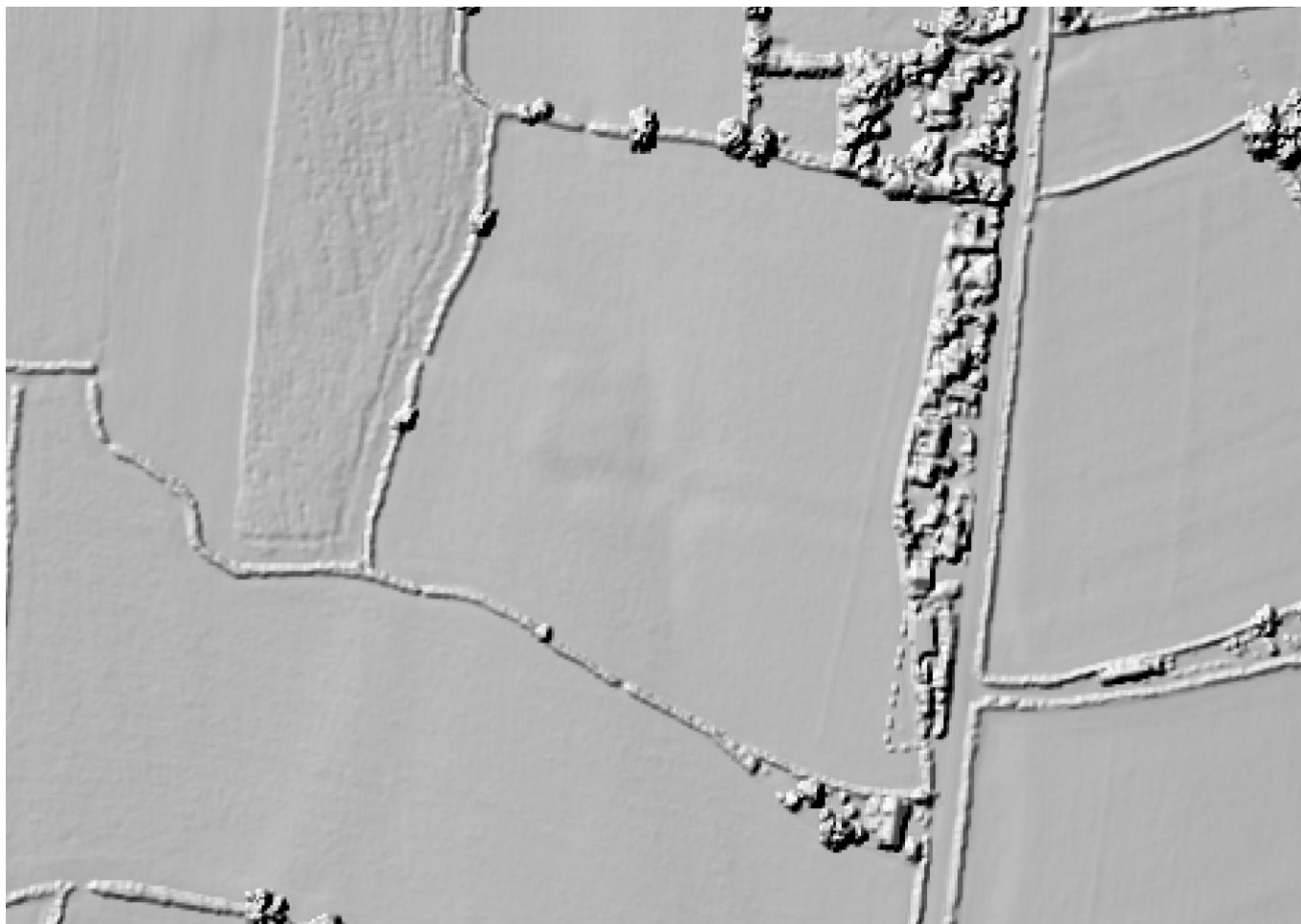


Figure 1: Hillshade model of 1m DSM LiDAR data showing linear features in the central field. A fainter, but wide, linear is also noted in the southern field.

There are features in the surrounding landscape that are of note. I would agree that the putative Neolithic barrow is not the most convincing asset. Nevertheless, it can't be entirely discounted and if it were to be Bronze Age then there is the potential that other, similar, barrows could occur in the landscape including on the Project Site.

Also, whilst I recognise that only limited archaeology was found on the two developments east of Sodbury Road (i.e. directly across the road from the current application) it cannot always be said that the same would be true of the application site. Indeed, the application site directly abuts the known extent of the historic settlement of Wickwar, whereas the other two sites did not.

Furthermore, the two sites to the east of the current application were both subject to work prior to determination. This took the form of geophysical survey and then evaluation (the latter under condition). I do not see a reason why we should depart from that approach here.

For the scale of the site, the lack of previous disturbance, the proximity to other known archaeology of varying dates, the possible features identified on LiDAR and in accordance with para 199 of NPPF, I recommend that field evaluation in the form of geophysics be undertaken before the application is determined.

I am fairly confident about geophysical surveys in this location and should it demonstrate limited archaeological potential then other archaeological matters could probably be dealt with under condition.

Paul Driscoll
Archaeology and Historic Environment Record Officer
Environment and Community Services