

The Landscape Research Centre

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**In support of proposal for a landscape art installation on Knapton Wold.
(NGR SE 8910/7437)**



Archaeological context and Statement of Significance

The Landscape Research Centre (LRC) enthusiastically supports the proposal to create an art installation adjacent to the Wolds Way long distance footpath and the scheduled ridge dykes which cross the western end of Knapton Wold. We believe that public engagement if the landscape and its past can be greatly enhanced by landscape art installations which encourage those using the Wolds Way to go beyond simply looking at the view.

The ridge dykes which here cut across a westward projecting promontory on the northern edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, are part of a widespread network of linear earthworks found extensively on the Wolds where many sections survive as earthworks and in the Vale of Pickering and generically termed the Wold Entrenchments. Archaeological excavation in West Heslerton and elsewhere indicate that these structures originate in the Neolithic period and represent the

first phase of defined land division in the region. The ridge dykes are considered to provide some level of control for populations moving stock along the prehistoric Ridgeway which follows the northern edge of the Wolds. In its present form the present monument is likely to represent a Late Bronze Age or Iron Age development of a potentially early phase of boundary. It could be argued that the Wold Entrenchments and associated features identified primarily from air-photography form the skeleton of the later prehistoric landscape and as such have a fundamental role in interpreting human activity in the landscape for more than three millennia, as such it is gratifying that some sections have been afforded some protection through designation as scheduled monuments. It should be appreciated that as landscape archaeology, as a branch of our subject, has developed these monuments have been identified collectively as of European importance rather than simply of regional value. The level of detailed archaeological investigation which has been focussed upon these monuments is limited this does not diminish their value and by the process of designation they have been identified as features that should be saved and managed to enhance understanding of the past both now and in the future.

A key role of designation which tends for historic reasons to protect the obvious rather than the context is to protect the monuments from damage and to secure the long term context of the monuments by restricting development that might restrict people's ability to appreciate the monument in context. The geophysical surveys undertaken by the LRC have revealed some of this context in the form of the ploughed out and buried remains of prehistoric burial monuments which had not been previously recorded. In addition a ploughed out linear earthwork, which runs to the west of the ridge dykes here, appears to stop adjacent to the monument, where a broader and less obvious feature which extends to the east of the monument may indicate that a break or reduction in the earthworks may represent a hollow way related to an original entrance through the entrenchments.

No obvious features have been identified within the scheduled area between the upstanding banks and the western boundary. Some very slight anomalies in the south-east corner of the original survey may indicate buried features but they compare poorly with the well identified ring ditches in the field beyond.

We would argue that the final positioning of the artwork should be constrained so as to limit activity within the central part of the scheduled area to Posts set up at the southern boundary of the scheduled monument where the current fence and gate are in need of replacement. We do not see that the monument would be impacted by further posts and surface mounted rammed chalk constructions restricted to an area beyond a 5m buffer from the base of the eastern rampart. Allowing for these restrictions we would be happy to support a planning application allowing the detailed positioning of the construction to be determined by agreement with English Heritage once the final design has been completed.

We would propose that signage is provided at the gateway which explains the artwork and the archaeological context. We would also like to see the level of vegetation and scrub, which encourages damage to the monument by rabbits in particular be reduced over time; some damage to the upstanding earthworks results from walkers going around the trees and bushes which causes erosion of the banks.

we view the proposal with enthusiasm as it will focus attention on the landscape and the monumental context rather than detract from it as it provides an opportunity to articulate the relationship between the Wolds Way and its prehistoric predecessors in a physical rather than simply documentary way.

Prof Dominic Powlesland FSA