

My name is Helen Hood. This is my opinion based on 35 years specialising in the conservation of heritage buildings. I live in Rodbourne, described by Sir David Puttnam as “the most beautiful corner of the largely rural county of Wiltshire”¹.

I cite Rodbourne, but similar factors exist across all five site areas:

Rodbourne has evidence of Bronze Age² and Roman occupation³, through to early Christian, in the late 6th century this land was gifted by Royal Charter⁴ to Aldhelm at Malmesbury Abbey⁵, Aldhelm pioneered a “new” farming technique - ridge and furrow⁶, which he employed extensively in Rodbourne and beyond - as shown on IGP’s own maps. Yet their desk based Lidar report⁷ claims the land has “recently been used for arable cultivation”⁸. I wouldn’t describe over 1300 years as recent, and like much of IGP’s reports and “evidence” it appears light on reality⁹ and knowledge.

¹ Punter V, Whitsundays Child, East Hants Publishing, 1993, Foreword. Pittman was formerly the President of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), and his published work on the subject, Sir David Puttnam has often spoken about the need to protect the traditional English countryside.

² Lime Down Environmental Statement Vol 3 Lidar & Aerial photography Mapping V2 “Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age and Roman enclosures, at least one of which is likely to represent a settlement”.

³ Rodbourne has many finds in the Wiltshire Museum, many not mentioned in the HER including neolithic and Roman. There is no mention of the remains of the Roman brick works sited at the corner of the track they propose to tarmac.

⁴ Scholarship by Tony McAleavy and other on the two Royal Charters gifting Aldhelm the land at Rodbourne by King One in 701, prior to Mercian invasion and afterward in 980 the land was returned by King Aethelred the unready

⁵ Historic England web listing: Abbey church St Mary & St Aldhelm Grade 1 listed 1269316 (18 Jan 1949) And Scheduled Monument 1010136 (18 May 1951)

⁶ Lime Down Environmental Statement Vol 3 Lidar & Aerial photography Mapping V2 4.1.2 incorrect information given within the report and contradicted by their own mapping of ridge and furrow “There is crop mark and soil mark evidence of Iron Age / Roman Activity on all sites except in Lime Down E”. The ridge and furrow is also listed in the lidar report in E15/16/18/22/25/26/29/30/32/33/34. They failed to address the ancient trackway and Holloway the want to tarmac over.

⁷ Lime Down Environmental Statement Vol 3 Lidar & Aerial photography Mapping V2 Does not address the advice (referenced in other IGP material) given by North Wiltshire Council that “Geophys often does not give good results in the north of the county “alluvium near water course masks magnetic responses”

⁸ Lime Down Environmental Statement Vol 3 Lidar & Aerial photography Mapping V2 1.2.2 - 1.2.6 “IN recent years the site has been under arable cultivation”

⁹ Within their document it states at 3.3.2 that there is “no material evidence of the original road” this refers to the Fosseway, yet another of their documents states: “Preliminary geo pys suggests significant pre history and Romano British activity, partially along the Fosseway which may be of national significance”

IGP's heritage report misrepresents by omission¹⁰ - Rodbourne's 10th century GII* listed church (connected to the Abbey) is excluded from the scoping, as are listed buildings from which the proposed solar site would be clearly visible, also excluded is the Abbey despite IGP's own maps showing that much of the site will be visible from the Abbey, conservation areas and Cotswold National Landscape.

IGP's selective scoping and attribution of harms should be investigated **independently**¹¹ and the harms realistically **quantified**. The Abbey (a scheduled monument) must be considered in the scoping.

Despite government and Heritage England guidelines IGP's Heritage Report appears to have entirely ignored the importance and context of unique villages¹² such as Alderton, Rodbourne and Grittleton. These are early 19th century model villages, built by owners demonstrating that their estates were well and responsibly run, with their tenants wellbeing in mind. These each have a unique architectural language, and many buildings in these villages are listed¹³ because of the importance of their vernacular, grouping and the architects involved.

Places like Rodbourne, aren't just agricultural communities - they have religious significance. The entire area is crossed by an important 8th century pilgrimage route¹⁴ to Malmesbury Abbey, in 709

¹⁰ There are a huge number of omissions from the Lime Down scoping - for example in Rodbourne there are seven listed buildings, but only Trinity Farm is mentioned in their report. This ignores a 7th century pilgrim cross, a G2* church linked to the Abbey (all part of the original Aldhelm Abbey estate - this was the farmland supplying the Abbey until its dissolution in the Tudor period. It also excludes the Old School - from which the proposed site would be clearly visible from the ground floor windows and exterior.

¹¹ Lime Down heritage Report - The sensitivity of a heritage asset and the harms and mitigations are attributed by them not a third party such as Heritage England

¹² Wiltshire Council core strategy "designated heritage assets and their settings WILL be conserved & where appropriate enhanced" this includes landscape and townscapes

¹³ Government stipulations for listing - "careful selection is required" "Aesthetic merits, intrinsic and as group value" "social and economic history" "The secretary of State's policy is to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type" "state of repair is not a relevant consideration"

¹⁴ Email Conversation with historian Tony MacAleavy "there seems no reason to doubt William of Malmesbury knew a series of stone crosses standing along the Fosse way at intervals of several miles. "Your research and observations common features at likely wayside points sound very convincing, and it would appear no-one has put much effort into trying to identify cross sites before now". Route also backed by early Christian scholar Dr Margaret Barker.

Rodbourne was the final resting place¹⁵ for Aldhelm before his burial in the Abbey; a pilgrimage route still in use today¹⁶.

Official guidance¹⁷ advises that stripping heritage assets of their original context and landscape setting is harmful¹⁸, the site's deep connection to agriculture and faith will be destroyed if this egregious plan is approved. Devastating historic communities into an industrial landscape, not just for my grandchildren's lifetime, but potentially forever. The people who live in these villages still farm productively, maintain these heritage assets for the nation at their own cost, and more than **ever** need the unspoilt peace of this countryside for their wellbeing. Please can the examiners consider this carefully.

¹⁵ Scholarship by Prof Barbara Yorke, Aldhelm expert, with supporting data from William of Malmesbury "...Rodbourne was such an important estate for Malmesbury, that was claimed to be one of the earliest grants of land from the Kings of Wessex". The last stop at Rodbourne, close enough to allow a ceremonial homecoming for Aldhelm" discussion 30/10/25

¹⁶ Following my research, Tony MacAleavy's research, and that of others, Malmesbury Abbey plan to officially reopen the route in Summer 2026, starting with the crosses at Upper Wraxall and Rodbourne being blessed by Rev Oliver Ross of Malmesbury Abbey. This will join their existing Athelstan pilgrimage route which links churches in the Benefice.

¹⁷ Government stipulations for listing - "careful selection is required" "Aesthetic merits, intrinsic and as group value" "social and economic history" "The secretary of State's policy is to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type" "state of repair is not a relevant consideration" . Also the UK government is a signatory of the UNESCO convention on the protection of world, cultural and national heritage

¹⁸ Historic England "change is only considered harmful if it erodes an asset significantly" - NPS EN1, this includes it's context and understanding. IGP describe high impact is "change that the asset is totally destroyed or change to setting, ability to understand context." Which it would be, yet they designate the impact as low or medium. Noise should also be considered as the existing baseline levels are bird song.