

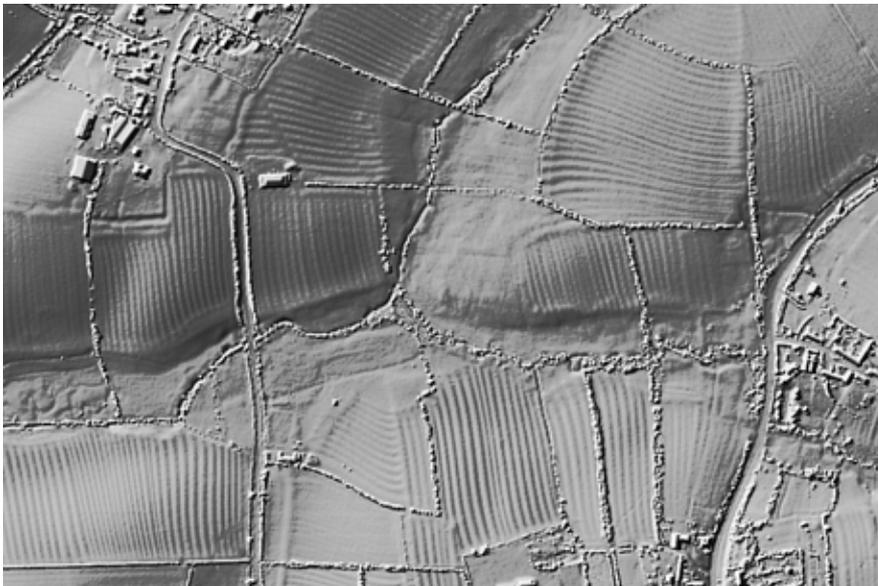
The Expressway and the “Arc”: the threat to our heritage

“The English landscape itself, to those who know how to read it aright, is the richest historical record we possess.” (W. E. Hoskins *The Making of the English Landscape*, 1955).

The proposed Expressway and the “growth Arc” (one million houses) will no doubt be carefully designed to avoid the most important historic features – scheduled monuments and listed buildings and the like. The road will go around these designated dots, and the million houses will leave them as islands, all the while obliterating the richest historical record we possess: the English landscape.

The landscape of North Buckinghamshire is the result of generations of people arranging fields and woods and hedges so they could farm the land and feed themselves and their fellow villagers. All of the landscape tells their story.

This is a Lidar image of a random section of the landscape that is threatened by the Expressway and the houses. It is not special, or protected; it is ordinary Buckinghamshire countryside that tells of ways of life long gone.



The ridges and furrows in the image are the surviving remains of medieval fields, where every family had a few strips in each field. Farming like this goes back to Anglo-Saxon times, around a thousand years ago. Centuries later, the fields were enclosed – some of the hedges in the image follow the line of the strips, probably where a farmer had managed to get hold of a group of them together. Some of the straighter boundaries were laid out by surveyors; the Age of Reason had arrived. There is meadow either side of the little stream – vital grazing where there were so many open fields. The bumps and hollows next to the village at the top are the remains of medieval settlement, which may have included a chapel here in the fifteenth century.

Our landscape is a record of change, and it will be said that all change is inevitable. But the change in previous centuries was gradual, and left traces of what went before. A motorway and a million houses will obliterate large parts of this record for ever, like ripping the pages out of an old and rare book. Which pages of this unique ‘richest historic record’, here or somewhere else in the Arc, will be ripped out?

Link to Lidar: <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map>