

COWLE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL : ADOPTED BY NORTH
LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL AS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON
17TH SEPTEMBER 2004.

CROWLE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL DOCUMENT

ADOPTED

North Lincolnshire Council 2004

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CROWLE CONSERVATION AREA

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Map showing Conservation Area boundary; Listed Buildings; Buildings of Townscape Merit; buildings which make a neutral or negative contribution to the character of the conservation area; important views; important public open space; important trees or tree groups and sites which have a negative effect on the character of the conservation area; sites for enhancement, and; street improvements.

1 INTRODUCTION

Crowle is a market town situated at the northern end of the Isle of Axholme, the flat flood plain to the west of the River Trent valley. The layout and market status of the town dates back to the medieval period.

Crowle became and remained a major centre for trade throughout the subsequent centuries, particularly in the 18th and 19th century when most of the buildings which exist in the town today were constructed. These small, two storey shops and houses are located on narrow, medieval, burgage plots which front the High Street, and these give Crowle a close-knit townscape with an intimate character.

A rectangular Market Place with its decorative Victorian Gothic former Market Hall is the central focus of the commercial centre.

Church Street and Cross Street combined with a network of small lanes lead to the Norman Church of St Oswald. This area was once the historic village core and has a more open, rural character, with some large 18th and 19th century houses as well as smaller cottages and shops.

The agricultural setting and past industrial base of Crowle is also still evident with a number of early 19th century barns and outbuildings tucked away at the rear of houses. Another major influence on the character and appearance of Crowle are the many Non-Conformist chapels, which can be found throughout the town.

Although the physical fabric still largely survives from the more prosperous 19th century, the High Street and Market Place is no longer the hub of thriving activity, and the town has suffered from a decline, which is reflected in the high proportion of vacant and neglected buildings.

However, despite this, the town still retains a strong community identity. There are a number of local community facilities and groups including the Resource Centre, Library, Youth Club, Legion Club and a number of churches and chapels covering a range of denominations. The residential element of the town continues to expand with new housing on the peripheries.

This appraisal will assess the special interest, both architectural and historical, of Crowle. The history of the area, its present appearance and character will be described, its problems analysed, and a number of recommendations put forward which will be considered by North Lincolnshire Council for implementation after full public consultation.

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Policies within the final section of this appraisal will upon adoption by the Council for part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for the conservation area, and they will therefore be a material consideration when determining applications for development, defending appeals or proposing works for the preservation or enhancement of the area. This document will therefore be a useful source of information for owners, agents, applicants and members of the public who live and work in Crowle.

2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The conservation area was designated by the former Boothferry Borough Council on 20 March 1989 and covers the historic town centre, but excludes the newer developments on the periphery. This appraisal includes a proposal to alter the conservation area boundary to exclude recent housing developments at the southern end of the area.

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The Council is obliged by section 71 of the same Act *to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area, which are conservation areas*, and this appraisal fulfills this statutory duty. In making decisions on future development within a conservation area, the Council must *pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area* (section 72 of the Act).

Government policy is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.15 (PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment). On demolition, this states, *'The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.'* This appraisal identifies the buildings that make a positive contribution as Buildings of Townscape Merit on the Townscape Analysis map at Figure 3.

3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location and Population

Crowle is situated on A161, the major north-south route across the Isle of Axholme. The town is located on the northern half of the Isle, west of the river Trent and north of the Stainforth and Keadby Canal and the M180. It is identified in the Local Plan as a medium growth settlement, the population of the town being 3,688 in 1991.

3.2 Landscape setting

The Isle of Axholme is formed by a series of hills, encircled by rivers which in the past resulted in the surrounding marshland being almost permanently flooded. In the 17th century Cornelius Vermyden devised and built an extensive system of ditches and dykes to drain the area, and to create rich and very fertile agricultural land. Around Crowle, the landscape is therefore made up from flat, open fields, which are crossed by canals and ditches, giving the landscape a very Dutch character.

The settlement of Crowle is located on slightly higher ground at the base of the western flank of a local high point, Crowle Hill, which is separated from the "Isle" proper by a narrow strip of low lying land. The ground within the town slopes westwards towards the Old River Don. In the vicinity of Crowle there are other features which add to the appearance of the setting of the town. Crowle Waste or Moors provides a substantial woodland to the west, giving a sense of enclosure to the very open flat landscape. To the south, the former clay pits have been turned into large lakes for recreational use.

The influence of man-made structures such as transport routes has also shaped the character of the area. The Stainforth and Keadby Canal, the railway, and more recently the M180 located to the south of Crowle, have all made a notable impact on the landscape of the region.

3.3 Geology and building materials

The geology of Lincolnshire provides a number of different stones and clays suitable for building stone and making bricks. The Lincolnshire Edge running through the centre of North Lincolnshire is composed of Inferior Oolite or Lincolnshire Limestone, which is variable in quality, but used in some areas for building stone. The western scarp of the Lincolnshire Edge is capped by ironstone, a rough rubble stone usually only suitable for lower class buildings such as cottages and boundary walls, but sometimes producing finer ashlar blocks, such as those used in St. John's Church in Scunthorpe. As Crowle was located some distance from these sources of stone it has only been employed for the oldest and one of the most important buildings, St. Oswald's Church. Bricks started being made in Lincolnshire in the medieval period but were generally too expensive for the more vernacular buildings. However, at the beginning of the 18th century Brigg and Barton grew to be the main brick making centres in North Lincolnshire, and in the mid-19th century Crowle became a major brick manufacturer, with the brickworks located close to the railway and canal for easy transport.

Prior to the 18th century, buildings in North Lincolnshire therefore tended to be either constructed of stone or for the more modest, lower-class buildings, mud-and-stud was used. Regrettably, few buildings using this latter material survive, although in Crowle the White Hart Inn is such a building although it has been encased in brick. More generally, in Crowle, many of the 18th and 19th century buildings are therefore built from the local brick, with orange clay pantile roofs.

4 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 History and archaeology.

The place name of Crowle originates from the Old English river-name *crull*, a word related to the Middle Dutch *krul* or 'curled hair', and meaning a winding river or stream.

The development of a nucleated settlement at Crowle probably took place during the Anglo-Saxon period, before that the archaeological evidence suggests that occupation sites were widely scattered across the parish throughout the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. Finds of prehistoric stone axes, arrowheads and other flint implements and tool-making waste indicate that the conditions in the area were favourable to the earliest Neolithic settlers. Early Bronze Age pottery shards and a hoard of bronze rapiers and spearheads found on Crowle Moor in 1747 suggest continued settlement between the third and first millennium BC. Scatters of Romano-British pottery at several sites around the parish probably represent the settlements of a number of individual family farmsteads, similar to the site partially excavated at Sandtoft ahead of the M180 construction.

Crowle certainly existed by the Late Saxon period, and at Domesday the manor of Crule was held by the Abbot of Selby and was the most populous and valuable manor in the Isle of Axholme with a church, woodland and 31 fisheries recorded in 1086. The church of St Oswald contains Norman fabric from this period as well as a reused 10th century Anglo-Scandinavian cross shaft or monument bearing carved figures, interlaced animals and a runic inscription.

In the 12th and 13th century Crowle was further developed in a planned way into a market town, under the auspices of the Abbot of Selby. It was granted its first market charter in 1305. Crowle was well placed for trade, being close to the River Don which provided transport links to the Trent. During the reign of Henry VIII, the traveler John Leland described the area as "*full of good fish and fowl – soil by the water is fenny, and marshy and full of carrs*".

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Although some drainage and navigational schemes had been undertaken by Selby Abbey in the medieval period, it was not until 1620 that the Isle of Axholme was extensively drained under the guidance of the Dutchman Cornelius Vermuyden. The drainage of the Isle had a major impact on both the landscape, agriculture, and the communities of the area, with the loss of livelihoods for many. The drained land was owned by Vermuyden, the Crown and existing local landowners, but as a consequence the rights to common land were reduced. In the period before the drainage system Crowle had between 3, 000 and 4,000 acres of common land, but this was reduced to only 1,814 acres after the works were complete. Some of the inhabitants were eventually compensated for their losses by the grant of land, known as the fishing grounds, which lay to the north of the Crowle.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Crowle developed as a prosperous market town. The fecundity of the surrounding area supported a variety of different industries; fishing, farming, peat extraction, the cultivation of hemp and flax and manufacture of sackcloth. New residents were attracted to the town as new freehold property became available. During the fifty year period between 1590 and 1640, it is recorded that forty new houses were constructed in the town. In the mid 18th century Crowle held weekly markets and hosted an annual fair for the dealing of hemp and flax. The Stainforth and Keadby Canal was constructed to the south of Crowle between 1792 – 1802, providing a new transport route connecting the Trent and Don rivers.

The 19th century saw the continued expansion of existing industries with new technology creating opportunities for diversification. The sackcloth industry became more mechanised, and new industries based on agricultural production were created such as milling, brewing, and agricultural engineering. A brick and tile works was also established to the south of the town centre. The development of the railways contributed to the prosperity of Crowle as a centre for trade. The 1907 OS map shows the Ancholme joint railway on the east side of the town. A measure of the success of Crowle in the 19th century is the elaborately detailed Victorian Market Hall.

Crowle's success throughout this period was based on agriculture and an efficient transport system. In the second half of the 20th century the decline of farming, combined with the success of new industries elsewhere, has resulted in a drop in the town's economy. The good transport connections which once brought trade to the town has now contributed to taking it away. Despite the decline of the economic base of Crowle, the town as a whole continues to expand with construction of new houses to meet the national housing demand. The M180 is just south of the town , and this provides new residents with easy access to larger centres for employment and shopping.

4.2 Effect of historical development on the plan form of Crowle.

The plan form of Crowle was established during the early history of the settlement. There are two main elements of the layout; firstly, the more nucleated and spacious settlement around the church of St Oswald, and secondly the more compact linear High Street development. These two areas are interlinked by Cross and Church Street and a network of small lanes.

The Norman settlement of Crowle was likely to have been a small agricultural and fishing village centred on the church of St Oswald. The layout of properties would have been a sparsely spaced cluster of buildings with the church as the focus. Today the area around the Church retains its open character. The changes made by the Abbot of Selby in the 12th century to turn Crowle into a market town, have had a long lasting impact on the development and history of the town. The High Street subsequently became the focus of development in the village, with a north-south orientation and a typical medieval layout, with properties occupying narrow plots fronting the street, with long burgage plots extending back to Fieldside.

The prosperity of the town in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries resulted in an expansion of the centre and the construction of more substantially built properties including many shops with residential accommodation above. A measure of the success of Crowle in the 19th century is the elaborately detailed Victorian Market Hall and Assembly Room. The power, wealth and numbers of the non-conformist congregations is evident in the number, size and architectural detail of Victorian and Edwardian chapels.

The 1907 OS map shows that by the beginning of the 20th century the centre of Crowle had been intensively developed, leaving few gaps in the urban fabric. Later, new development was concentrated on the outskirts of the settlement where land was more abundant for housing. The construction of the M180 motorway in the 1980's was a catalyst to the housing growth in Crowle, as it provided easy access to the larger towns nearby, and as a result of 20th century housing expansion the historic core has now become enveloped within a much larger residential community.

5 CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

5.1 General.

The Crowle Conservation Area is composed of a number of elements which combine to give the area its unique and varied character. For the purposes of this appraisal the conservation area has been divided into three sub-areas each of which has a slightly different character and appearance.

1. The High Street and Market Place are the commercial core of the town, and the street has a tight knit urban form with mainly small, two storey, 19th century shops with residential accommodation above.
2. The area to the west of the High Street is based around St Oswald's Church, Church Street and Cross Street. This area contains a number of 18th and 19th century houses, and it has a more open residential character, although part of Cross Street is an extension of commercial High Street.
3. Fieldside runs parallel to the High Street and has a more informal and secondary nature. The west side of the street is mainly composed of the back of the High Street burgage plots, whereas the east side has greater importance and contains a number of 19th century churches and chapels, of some architectural distinction.

5.2 Relationship to setting.

The conservation area covers the central more historic part of Crowle, with later residential suburbs surrounding this core. The immediate setting of the study area is therefore modern housing development. There are some areas with a more open aspect, for example Fieldside, which, as the name suggests, was until recently largely bordered on the east by open fields. Development in this area is less intensive and between the buildings can be glimpsed the surrounding open farmland.

5.3 Activity and uses.

Crowle is primarily now a residential community with residents commuting to work in the surrounding larger towns. The town centre has a number of local shops, including the Post Office, a small grocery store, the pharmacy, a butchers and some more specialist retail outlets. However, there are many vacant shops within the High Street, and if the commercial and economic basis of the town can be re-established these could be brought back into use. In the area of the Market Place and the High Street are a number of public houses.

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A particular striking feature of Crowle is the large number of churches, chapels and community facilities within the town. There is St Oswald's Church, the Catholic Church of St. Norbert, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Chapel, and the Primitive Methodist Chapel, as well as a number of other chapels which have been converted to alternative uses. The community facilities include the Youth Centre, the Library, a Community Resource Centre, a Hall, and the British Legion Club.

The low level of commercial activity within the heart of the town means that pedestrian activity is low. Regrettably, there is a continuous stream of vehicular traffic travelling through the town along the High Street, including heavy lorries. This large volume of traffic negotiating the narrow winding High Street is a highly intrusive element on the local environment.

5.4 Open spaces, trees and vistas

The Crowle Conservation Area includes several areas of open space, which provide a physical break in the tight urban form as well as public amenity space.

The most formal of these spaces is the Market Place, which is the physical focus of the commercial centre. This rectangular space is enclosed on all sides by buildings, with a section of the High Street forming the eastern boundary. The Market Place is paved with modern grey setts and paviers with black and gold bollards and red and grey paviers are used to demarcate parking bays and the bus route. Two trees at the southern end soften the otherwise hard landscaping. The Market Place provides a central focus to Crowle, but would benefit from a more naturalistic landscaping scheme.

The churchyard of St Oswald's Church is less immediately visible, being situated on the edge of the conservation area. It provides an attractively green and tranquil space, contrasting with the busy traffic along the High Street. A brick wall encloses the grounds and the gravestones have been removed to provide a grassed area which in springtime provides an impressive array of daffodils. Mature trees to the north and west provide a shelterbelt.

The Bowling Green in Church Walk and the school playing fields in Fieldside are both identified and protected in the Local Plan as *recreational open space*.

Another landscaped space at the north end of the High Street is identified in the Local Plan as important *open amenity space*. This is located on the bend of the road and is composed of an open area of grass and plant beds, dominated by a mature willow with two benches underneath.

As most of the houses in the central part of the conservation area sit on the back edge of the pavement, gardens tend to be located at the rear of the properties and hidden from view. Although these gardens are not visible they give the area, especially to the west of the High Street, a spacious quality and provide valuable private amenity space for residents.

There are only a few trees within the town centre and therefore they do not play a significant role in the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, some individual trees are important as they occupy particular prominent locations. These include, for example, the two trees in the Market Place, the willow tree in the open space at the north end of the High Street, and the large and particularly prominent tree in the churchyard of the Baptist Chapel. Elsewhere some small groups of trees provide a backdrop to buildings and landscape. Of particular note are the trees around the War Memorial and those in St Oswald's churchyard.

5.5 Architectural style and building materials

St. Oswald's Church and the White Hart Inn are the most important buildings which predate 1700. The majority of the remaining buildings in the conservation area date to the 19th and early 20th centuries with a few 18th century survivals.

These buildings are generally two storey shops and houses, built in the local vernacular style, with simple dark red brick elevations, in some cases rendered, with timber vertically-sliding sash or casement windows and clay pantiled roofs. Of note are the brick gables, often protected by stone copings supported on stone kneelers. Some of the shops have high quality Victorian and Edwardian timber shopfronts.

Unfortunately, many of the original windows to the upper floors have been lost and replaced with modern plastic versions. In Cross Street and Church Street there are some more substantial 18th and 19th century houses, built of similar materials, but with wider frontages and more generous proportions. A number have Georgian timber doorcases, which add attractive detail to the front elevations.

Interspersed within vernacular houses and shops, are some larger public and religious buildings of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. These buildings, which include the Market Hall and Non-Conformist Chapels, were designed to impress, and many were built in the High Victorian Gothic style, employing a combination of moulded and coloured bricks to create decorative elevations.

A number of 18th and 19th century barns, stables and agricultural outbuildings are scattered throughout the backlands of the houses, a physical reminder of the agricultural origins and base of Crowle. These are mainly built from brick, forming long, low ranges or barns, with large timber boarded doors and clay pantiled roofs.

5.6 Listed Buildings

A number of the properties in the Crowle are included in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The most important is St. Oswald's Church which is listed grade I. Other buildings within the conservation area are grade II listed, including perhaps most notably the White Hart Inn, which has 16th century origins.

Several of the 19th century properties in the High Street are also listed, including nos. 1 – 11, no. 49 the diminutive shop at No. 47, and no. 84. No. 1 Church Street is a mid 18th century house which occupies a prominent position at the junction with the High Street. The Old Vicarage next to the church is also included.

The greatest concentration of listed buildings is in Cross Street with a particular group formed by nos. 1 – 9 (even), 2/4 Woodland Avenue, and no. 2. In the Market Place, the Cross Keys Inn on the north side, and 1 –3 on the south side are included, as is no.6 Woodlands Avenue. These buildings are marked on the map at Figure 1 and are described in greater detail in the text below.

Further information and a brief description accompanying the listing can be obtained from the council. These buildings are already important locally, but their listing provides them with a national significance and there are policies in place in the Local Plan to conserve these buildings for future generations.

5.7 Buildings of Townscape Merit

This appraisal has identified a large number of Buildings of Townscape Merit all of which are marked on the Townscape Analysis Map. These are unlisted buildings which it is considered contribute positively to the character of the Crowle Conservation Area. They largely date from the 19th century and are either shops with accommodation above, small two storey houses or larger religious architectural set pieces.

These buildings are generally unaltered or, could with some restoration, be easily reinstated to their original appearance. Unfortunately due to the economic decline of the town a number of these buildings that form an important part of the evolution and appearance of Crowle are vacant and in some cases, are in a poor state of repair. The contribution of these buildings to the appearance of the town is temporarily diminished therefore.

The age and architectural interest of these buildings however, is considered to provide justification for them to be given special protection, and the Council will resist their demolition unless the applicant can prove the building is beyond the point of economic repair. Additionally, because these buildings make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Crowle Conservation Area, the Council will pay special attention to planning applications to alter or extend them.

5.8 Shopfronts

Although the commercial downturn of the town means that many shops remain empty, and their long term future is in the balance, a short term benefit is that many of the Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts survive. However, with the lack of demand for shop premises, some of the shops are being converted into residential uses and this often results in physical changes to the shopfronts. One example is no.1 High Street, a listed building which until recently had an Art Nouveau shopfront, noted in some detail in the list description, but removed as a result of residential conversion. Where possible, such shopfronts should be retained.

6 AREA ANALYSIS.

6.1 General.

This section seeks to describe in greater detail the buildings and spaces within the Crowle Conservation Area. The aim is to identify the special character of the area which provides Crowle with its particular "sense of place". Building materials and details will also be included and any unusual features identified.

The most architecturally and historically interesting sections of townscape remain at the northern end of the High Street, and in parts of Church Street and Cross Street. Otherwise, there are groups and terraces of buildings, many of which have been adversely affected by unsympathetic alterations including the insertion of modern windows or doors, the application of textured external renders, and the replacement of clay with concrete roof tiles.

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Stricter development control and the provision of design and technical advice to local residents could result in improvements over a period of time. As stated above the conservation area has been divided into three character areas, High Street and Market Place, Cross Street and Church Street, and Fieldside, and a summary of the special characteristics of each is included at the end of each section.

6.2 Area 1 - High Street and Market Place.

The High Street is part of the A161, a main route through the town which and connects the north and south of the Isle of Axholme. In the centre of Crowle the narrow, winding road is lined with mainly 18th and 19th century two storey vernacular buildings, located on the back edge of the pavement. The buildings have ground floor shops, many of which have original timber 19th century shopfronts, with residential accommodation above. These buildings have narrow frontages with narrow long plots to the rear, this layout originating with the medieval burgage plots. The small scale and close knit nature of the development gives the High Street an enclosed and intimate character.

At the southern end of the High Street the buildings have a uniform building line and consistent height, and although designed as individual properties they form a coherent group. Unfortunately recent alterations to the elevations, such as insertion of modern plastic windows, new shopfronts and the rendering of the brickwork has diminished some of the architectural quality and appearance of these properties. Several later buildings, such as the Edwardian Post Office, have particularly high quality, decorated timber shopfronts. The earliest building in this section of the High Street is the White Hart Inn. At the core of the building is a 16th century timber frame, which has subsequently been encased in brick and had a rough cast render applied. The roof is now covered in clay pantiles but it was probably originally thatched.

The High Street then opens onto the western side into the Market Place, a rectangular space, with a modern shelter forming the central feature. The eastern side of the Market Place is a continuation of the High Street, with a series of two storey rendered properties, covered in clay pantiles with modern shopfronts to the ground floor. No. 84 is a taller, three storey 19th century listed house, with a 20th century ground floor shop. The building on the south side is a listed, two storey rendered building with pantile roof, dating to the 18th century or possibly earlier. It is now divided into four properties including no. 49 the High Street. On the ground floor facing the Market Place is an early 20th century projecting shopfront bay, and two smaller, 19th century canted bays, with sash windows to match those at first floor level. The most prominent building in the Market Place is the Market Hall and Assembly Rooms of 1870, which occupies a central position on the west side although regrettably it is now vacant. The front elevation of this large Gothic building has ornate polychromatic brickwork, with

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yellow bricks walls and red bricks detailing. The poor condition of this important local building is evident from the outside, with leaking roofs and subsequent damage to the interior. Furthermore, the sandblasting used on the brickwork to the front has eroded the face of the bricks, causing irredeemable damage. Two modest houses with little architectural detailing which therefore appear dwarfed and incongruous next to their more prestigious neighbour flank the building. On the north side of the Market Place, the Cross Keys Public House is a three storey brick building with timber sash windows. This inn has 18th century origins, but a plaque on the front elevation states it was rebuilt in 1832.

North of the Market Square, the High Street narrows and there is only a pavement on the eastern side. On the west side, behind the Cross Keys Public House, the layout is more informal with spaces between properties. No.47 is a tiny early 19th century shop, with just one room below a hipped pantile roof, and contemporary timber shopfront including its original external shutters. As it is such an unusual survival it is listed grade II although unfortunately has been vacant for at least 15 years. The 19th century cottage on the bend of the road has been altered by the addition of false timberwork to the front elevation. Continuing along the bend, the George and Dragon Public House follows the curve of the road, creating a pleasing piece of townscape. However, the building has lost some of its architectural detail, and the render and concrete tiles detract from its appearance.

The eastern side of this section of road is a continuation of the close knit pattern of development in the High Street, although the building line is set slightly back from the line along the Market Place to provide a wider pavement. This is protected from the traffic by a raised concrete kerb line. The buildings are two storey 19th century properties, although much altered with a variety of modern windows, newer shopfronts, inappropriate signage, rendered brickwork, and concrete-tiled roofs. A number of these buildings are vacant. The larger vehicles passing through the town have particular difficulties negotiating this narrow section of the High Street, and this heavy traffic passing so close to pedestrians and buildings provides the most important detrimental feature within the conservation area.

West Terrace runs eastwards from the High Street, providing views of the Wesleyan Sunday School, the Methodist Chapel, and trees and open space beyond. No.64 High Street, just beyond West Terrace, is located at the outside corner of the bend and is therefore highly visible in views from the south. This is a two storey property with a ground floor shop. At present it appears to be in the process of being repaired, and the render is unpainted. Next door, a late-19th century building with a fading ironmongers' sign is more industrial in character, with large timber boarded doors. On the upper floors there are sash windows with stone lintels and keystones carrying a moulded shield detail.

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At the junction of the High Street and Chancery Lane the historic townscape begins to fragment. Chancery Lane is flanked by the newly constructed Community Resource Centre and the 1970's library. Rather than taking its cue from the historic townscape the Resource Centre follows the form, bulk and building line of the library. On the opposite side of the road at the junction with Church Lane the historic townscape is more intact. The War Memorial occupies the southern corner. It is built from a pink polished granite, and set within an area of paving, with a backdrop of trees and enclosed by low iron railings. On the opposing corner is no. 1 Church Street, a mid-Georgian townhouse. Its front elevation faces Church Street, with the gable end facing the High Street being enlivened by original sash windows. By contrast, the rear extension presents a bland rendered wall to the High Street.

Just north of this junction the High Street loses its sense of enclosure and much of its architectural and historic character. On both sides of the road are low bungalows, set back from the street behind front gardens which ignore the historic building line. The garage workshop on the corner of Printing Office Lane has a large front forecourt parking area giving this area an unstructured urban form. The Regal Cinema now used as a retail outlet, and its many signs and the car parking which front it are a negative element within the townscape. Fortunately there is a reversion to the historic building line on the eastern side of the road, with the 19th century group of buildings (Nos.10 – 40). These are modest two storey properties some of which, such as no. 14, have particularly well detailed shopfronts. As these buildings are more remote from the heart of the High Street the vacancy levels are higher. The final group of historic shops on the High Street are nos. 1 –11. These are a listed grade II, with a number of well detailed shopfronts (including an Art Nouveau shopfront at no.5) below residential flats.

As the High Street curves eastwards it becomes Woodland Avenue, and takes on a more residential character. The corner is marked by an area of open space described previously. On the north side the conservation area extends as far as Fernlea. This is a modest two storey brick listed detached house built for the Brunyee family in 1830. The front elevation is symmetrical, with three bays, a central entrance door and six-over-six double hung sashes.

The conservation area boundary continues on the south side to the corner junction with Fieldside and Mill Lane, in order to include the two Edwardian houses on the corner and the Baptist Chapel. The two Edwardian houses are set at right angles to each other with a front garden area. Originally they were built to the same design, but modern rendering and new windows to no.25 have altered its appearance and symmetry with its neighbour. The small Baptist Chapel and Sunday School is a modest single storey rendered building with elegant arched windows with stained glass margin lights. A red brick wall encloses the small churchyard which contains a mature tree. The location of this tree at this pivotal junction gives it a particular prominence within the townscape.

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The geography means that two bungalows and a small supermarket are also included within the boundary, but they have little merit and in urban design terms at odds with the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Area Summary.

- High Street and Market Place form the central core of Crowle
- High Street is narrow and is lined with mainly 18th and 19th century houses
- Some buildings have ground floor shops, with some good examples of historic shopfronts
- Most of the buildings are small scale and lie on the back edge of the pavement
- Some plots retain their medieval boundaries
- Market Place is the most important public open space in Crowle
- The most notable buildings are the White Hart Inn (16th century and partly timber-framed), the Market Hall and Assembly Rooms (1870), and the Cross Keys Public House (1832)
- The townscape fragments beyond Chancery Lane
- Baptist Chapel and School marks the end of the conservation area

6.3 Area 2 - Cross Street and Church Street

The buildings flanking the junction of the High Street with Cross Street are specially designed for this corner location. They have an L-shaped plan with formal frontages to both elevations, and the transition between the streets is made by subtly curving the corners of the buildings and hipping the roofs. Cross Street a wide gently curving street, which slopes downwards to the west. No. 1 – 3 Cross Street (including 2/4 Woodland Avenue) are listed two storey houses dating from c.1830. These buildings have a slightly raised ground floor with a short flight of steps. The elevations are brick with modern timber windows replacing the original sashes, and a projecting Edwardian bay window to no.1. The building on the opposite corner is also listed but is slightly later in date, originating from the mid- to late-19th century. It is three storeys in height, the roof is slate rather than clay pantiles, and the windows have larger paned two over two light sashes on the first floor.

The other buildings on the north side of Cross Street date from c.1830 and are all listed grade II. They contain an interesting collection of Georgian shopfronts, doorcases and windows, providing some of the best-detailed group of buildings in Crowle. Instead of stepping down in height as the ground level drops away, no.5 is an additional storey higher than its neighbours. This building was clearly designed as an individual house and not as part of the group. It has a symmetrical elevation with a bay on either side of the central entrance door, and a hipped pantiled roof. The central doorcase has an unusual design with twisted

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pilasters and a star detail on the corbels supporting the door hood. The windows on the upper floors are double-hung timber sashes, above which are stone lintels with a decorative design on the raised keystones. The ground floor has later, four-light, casement windows. There is a drop in height to no. 7 and 9, a matching pair of houses designed with integral ground floor shops, whose original shopfronts remain. The front elevations have distinctive diaper brick patterning, with contrasting red and yellow bricks. Each shopfront has a multi-paned bow window, and a timber door are set within a timber surround with ribbed pilasters carrying an entablature. The doors to the entrance corridors of the houses are double leaf beaded panelled doors, set within a reveal and surrounded by an elliptical arch with raised key and imposts. Despite the variety in details and form these listed buildings form a coherent group of early 19th century buildings, although by contrast no.11 is totally different with its peddledashed elevation, concrete tiled roof and modern plastic casement windows.

Returning to the south side of Cross Street there is the Lock, Stock and Barrel Public House. This is a rendered building with pantiled roof, set end on to the street. The brick building running parallel to it is now part of the pub premises and was built in 1832. It was used as the assembly rooms until 1870 when they moved to the newly constructed Market Hall.

The most prominent building in Cross Street is the Primitive Methodist Connexion Chapel dated 1862 on the corner with North Street. This is a large, imposing, two storey Victorian Gothic building, with gabled entrance façade flanked by two single storey gabled side wings. Unfortunately this building has been vacant for a considerable time. Decorate detailing such as the forecourt railings have long since disappeared, and the building continues to decay. The conservation area boundary encapsulates a number of properties in North Street to the rear of the chapel, the street widening and providing further views of the chapel and its rather derelict rear elevations. This area includes a pair of 19th century brick cottage and the whitewashed Red Lion Public House. Tucked away behind the houses fronting the street are 19th century stables, outbuildings and barns, remnants of the farming industry of Crowle. There is a particularly intact group of farm buildings attached to the public house and no.28. North Street contains a number of 19th century cottages, with modern rendering and inappropriate replacement windows and doors.

The southern section of Cross Street is largely made up by 19th century two storey terraced cottages. Unlike most of the other properties in the street, no.25 is a two storey cottage located at right angles to the street. Its gable has tumbled brickwork, reflecting local vernacular detailing. The adjacent terrace (nos.27 – 31) are modest two storey brick cottages with surprisingly elaborate entrances. The front doors are set within timber panelled reveals, with decorative pilasters and entablatures to the surrounds.

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No. 33 stands out as an individual building within the street. It is a three storey detached house, set back from the pavement edge within an enclosed front garden. Its front elevation is painted white with the quoins, lintels and cills picked out in black.

The conservation area extends down the slope to include Axholme Cottages. This is a small unaltered brick terrace of four houses built in 1896. All the properties have simple timber four panelled doors with fanlights, painted green, with timber sashed windows.

Running southwards from Cross Street is Church Lane, a narrow pedestrian street leading to Church Street. On the west side of the path entrance is no.20 Cross Street. This is a long, low, two storey building with a small timber shopfront on the Cross Street frontage. To the rear of the building are a pair of cottages. The roof is covered in clay pantiles and the gable ends are protected by stone copings supported by stone kneelers.

The surface material in Church Lane, for the most part, is a patched tarmac path with a few old Yorkstone slabs. It is enclosed on the eastern side by two groups of houses, but on the west side the aspect is more open with views over a low brick wall to bowling green and area of scrub. The buildings accessed from the path are modest two storey brick and rendered houses with pantiled roofs. No.3 is a larger mid-19th century house with a timber doorcase and moulded architraves to the windows. This house also has a large garden to the side, and the rear garden is enclosed by a high brick wall. The beautifully kept lawn of the Bowls Club makes a stark contrast to an overgrown area of scrub next door. This piece of land is sandwiched between the bowling green and the churchyard, and contributes to the spacious rural qualities of the area. It is presently rather unsightly, but could with some restoration be turned into a pleasing wilderness garden.

Branching northwards from Church Lane is Printing Office Lane which connects with the High Street. This is an informal back route, containing few buildings. At the western end are a couple of modern two storey houses flanking a narrow Yorkstone path. The path then widens, providing room for vehicular access, and it is bordered by a building plot for sale, some garages, and the back entrance to the Youth Club playground.

At the end of Church Lane a metal gate and turnstile mark the entrance to the churchyard. The gravestones have now been removed and the area grassed over. St. Oswald's Church, listed grade 1, is built of limestone and a substantial part of the nave is Norman. Various additions and alterations were made in the subsequent centuries, particularly in the 19th century when the church was extensively restored. Of note is the rather squat tower with its over-large but impressive clock face.

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A track runs along the southern embankment wall of the churchyard to the Manor House. This is a modern building built in the grounds of an older house, and the only remains of the earlier property are the red brick barns on the garden boundary which may date from the 18th century. Unfortunately these barns are in a very poor condition, and most of the roofs have collapsed. On the other side of this track is an open area of land with no particular function. The more open nature of this area gives this part of the conservation area a more rural character compared to the High Street, with its tightly-knit urban form.

This more open form continues up Church Street until it joins the High Street. On the south side of the street there are only two properties which both have long street frontages. The Old Vicarage is set behind brick wall with a small front garden, with shrubs and small trees providing some screening of the building from the street. The house has two main blocks, with the earlier early 18th century house to the west set further back from the street than the later 19th century addition to the east. Between the two Vicarages is a long, two storey workshop-type building which from its form suggests it was originally a barn. The elevation to the street is quite bland with grey render and several small openings including two porthole-style windows and a sliding timber door.

The north side of the street has a more formal urban character. No. 1 is a substantial town house, two storeys high and five bays wide. The centre of the elevation is dominated by a tall pedimented Doric doorcase, surrounding the panelled door with Gothic overlight. The windows were refenestrated in the 19th century with four paned sashes, although the architraves are earlier and sit flush with the brickwork. The lintels are flat brick arches with raised ashlar keystones. Later alterations include the application of render to the ground floor below cill level and to the side elevations, as well as a concrete tiled roof. No.3 next door is a more modest, mid-19th century detached house, with projecting chamfered ground floor bay. The adjoining Youth Club is an unfortunate intrusion in the historic townscape with its bland front elevation and staggered floor plan, which disregards the established building line. A terrace of three cottages (nos.7-11) follow the curve of the street. These are a typical early 19th century group with later alterations to the windows, and modern render and roof tiles.

Area Summary.

- Cross Street contains a number of attractive, grade II listed Georgian houses
- The most important buildings are the Primitive Methodist Connexion Chapel (1862) and St. Oswald's Church (12th century and later)
- Church Lane is a narrow, pedestrian-only link to the church
- Church graveyard, bowling green and adjacent open field are the notable open spaces
- Church Street also contains a number of listed buildings

6.4 Area 3 - Fieldside

In townscape terms Fieldside has a more informal urban design, with a variety of buildings of different sizes, uses and architectural styles. It has a more rural character due to the more sparsely spaced properties. The density of built form is greater at the northern end of the street, around the town centre, and more disparate towards the south. Part of the east side of Fieldside is not included in the conservation area as until the mid 20th century this was still fields, although it has now been built over with new housing. The area is in very mixed uses with workshops, clubs, chapels, and schools, a fire station and some housing.

The western side of the street is formed by the rear boundaries of the High Street plots, some of which have a medieval origin although today there is little visual evidence for these historic divisions. Many of the plots on this side remain as open yards, especially south of Chancery Lane, although in the 20th century some detached and semi-detached houses of little architectural merit have been erected on a number of these older plots. At the northern end of Fieldside the infilling is less recent, with some late 19th century houses including Zilpher Terrace of 1863 and Abbeydale of 1896.

The eastern side of the road has a more formal character with a series of individually designed churches and chapels. These include St. Norbert's Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Chapel, a Wesleyan Sunday School and two other chapels converted for alternative uses.

St. Norbert's Roman Catholic Church and Priory were designed by M.E. Hadfield and Sons and were built between 1871 – 2. The group provides a distinctive presence in the street, with special features including the decorative gable end of the west end of the church, with its Gothic tracery window and tumbled brickwork facing the road. The bell turret with its green copper spire forms a bold skyline feature and is an important local landmark. Despite the grand architectural statements this complex of buildings has a somewhat inward looking, private character. The entrances are set within a front garden area which is screened from the road by a low wall and hedge.

Due to its overall mass and bulk the Methodist Chapel of 1904 has a dominant street presence. It is a two storey brick chapel, with a gabled front elevation which combines a number of architectural elements. A swept stone pediment containing a plaque with the name and the date of construction surmounts the paired entrance doors with decorative keystones. On the upper storey the central bay has a Venetian window with tall central arched window and stone detailing. On each corner are octagonal brick turrets, each with a small lead cupola.

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The Wesleyan Sunday School is a single storey brick building occupying a corner site, with the entrance set on the chamfered corner elevation. The polychromatic brick lintels, brick cornice and decorative ridge tiles enrich the appearance of this building.

There are two smaller converted chapels in Fieldside - one is now furniture workshop and the other a care home. These are both built in the Gothic style although the later building has been more dramatically altered because of its current use.

There are a number of spaces between the buildings which harm the appearance of the conservation area, such as the liquidation centre car park. Chancery Lane connects Fieldside with the High Street, and is a short narrow street containing remains of some of the larger warehouses of the 19th century. One such building can be seen at the rear of no. 14, and part of the old access road survives with setts and Yorkstone slabs next to no. 10. On the south side of the street is a vacant area with scrubby vegetation where a building has been demolished and only the 19th century entrance piers survive. This plot would benefit from sensitive redevelopment.

Area Summary.

- More rural character than rest of the conservation area
- Buildings more dispersed, with very mixed uses
- Most important buildings are St. Norbert's R C Church (1871-2), the Methodist Chapel (1904), and the Wesleyan Sunday School.

7 PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES

7.1 General

The character and appearance of the Crowle Area is under pressure from a number of threats. Economic decline which has already led to high vacancy rates and a general lack of maintenance of the historic fabric. Crowle has a large number of 18th and 19th century traditional buildings. Unfortunately many of these buildings have been altered with modern pebbledash render, uPVC windows or doors, unsuitable new shopfronts, and concrete roof tiles. This has caused a cumulative loss of character to the area and such alterations should be avoided in the future. Most noticeably, the heavy traffic passing through the High Street creates a poor pedestrian environment, with street clutter (poor signage, differing fitments, and badly maintained seating) adding to the air of neglect.

This appraisal document shows the contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area made by those traditional buildings which have not been altered by unsympathetic modern development. The “Supplementary Planning Guidance for Crowle” provides guidance on the protection and enhancement of these buildings.

7.2 Buildings or structures which have a negative impact on conservation area.

On the Townscape Analysis Map, building or structures which it is considered have a negative impact on the surrounding conservation area have been identified. These include the garage workshop on the High Street, a functional building of no merit, and two bungalows which are alien buildings within the historic streetscape. The cinema, which has been built in a restrained modern style, does not relate to the historic setting in terms of its height, bulk, building line, and materials. Overall, these buildings break with the tightly-knit pattern of buildings of the High Street, having a negative effect on the townscape. Whilst these buildings do not contribute as much to the area character as buildings of townscape merit they can be renovated sympathetically incorporating traditional designs and materials appropriate to the conservation area

Additionally, other buildings which make a “neutral” contribution to the character of the conservation area have been identified and are also marked on the Townscape Analysis Map. These include historic buildings which have been so substantially altered that it would be difficult to reinstate their architectural quality, or modern buildings whose design is considered to be reasonably in keeping with the surrounding area.

7.3 Sites which have a negative impact on conservation area

The Townscape Analysis Map identifies sites which have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area. Most notable are the car park on the corner of Potts Lane and the High Street, the forecourt area to the garage workshop, the car park next to the former cinema, and some vacant sites used for car parking in Fieldside. The derelict site in Chancery Lane is also included, and this is a piece of land which would benefit from careful redevelopment.

7.4 Buildings at risk

This appraisal has not included a detailed survey for buildings-at-risk but within the town centre a number of both unlisted and listed buildings were noted as being potentially “at risk”. The high level of vacancy of properties, especially shop units, makes the physical historic fabric vulnerable and also creates a poor image for the town as a whole.

7.5 Alterations to existing historic buildings

The appearance of a large number of historic properties within the conservation area has changed due to modern alterations. Many of the original features such as windows and doors have been lost and a number have had their brickwork rendered. Guidance to avoid such unsympathetic changes is included in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Crowle.

7.6 Traffic Management

Through traffic along the narrow High Street creates a poor environment and is a negative factor in any attempts to regenerate the town centre. There is a need to introduce a comprehensive traffic management scheme which may involve physical works. These must be designed with consideration to the historic environment in Crowle, including the careful specification of materials and details.

7.7 Summary

- Economic decline has led to vacant buildings, and a general lack of maintenance
- Many buildings have been adversely affected by the installation of uPVC windows or doors, the use of pebble-dash, and reroofing with concrete tiles
- Some modern buildings distract from the historic environment
- Negative sites include car park on the corner of Potts Lane and High Street; the forecourt area to the garage workshop, the car park next to the former cinema, and the derelict site in Chancery Lane
- High level of “Buildings-at-Risk”
- Heavy traffic along High Street a particular problem
- Traffic management scheme urgently needed

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 General

This section contains a number of recommendations in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Crowle in the future. These proposals will be subject to public comment prior to being formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Further recommendations may be added, or existing ones deleted, as part of the public consultation exercise.

8.2 Preservation, enhancement and re-instatement of architectural quality

- Encourage reinstatement of original features where they have been removed.
- Encourage the use of traditional materials and details, including the retention of original sash or casement timber windows.
- Discourage the use of modern windows and doors (such as aluminium, uPVC or stained timber)
- Agree a list of Buildings of Townscape Merit shown at Figure 3.
- The Council should use its powers to ensure that owners of important historic buildings in the conservation area keep their buildings weather-tight and in reasonable condition.
- Make an Article 4(2) Direction to control minor works to residential properties visible within the public realm within the conservation area as amended.
- The Local Planning Authority to review its approach to the determination of whether changes in the external appearance of buildings not in residential use are assessed as to the need for planning permission.

8.3 Environmental and street improvements

Street furniture.

The removal of “street clutter” (differing signage, varied seating, odd waste bins) and the agreement of a “pallet” of products and materials would be advantageous, so that as funds permit, improvements to an agreed design and specification can be carried out. For instance, a number of modern street nameplates, using cast aluminium, are available which would enhance the character and appearance of the Crowle Conservation Area and provide a consistency of appearance throughout the town centre. Similarly, cast iron waste bins and the provision of simple, modern seating would enhance the Market Square area and other parts of the conservation area.

Street lighting.

Street lighting within Crowle is provided by a variety of modern fittings, including wall-fixed lighting along the High Street. The design of the fittings, many of which are located on older buildings, is not attractive, and the heavy wiring which is pinned to the wall to supply power is also detrimental. A comprehensive scheme to replace and improve the street lighting in Crowle, using simple modern fittings with concealed wiring, would be welcome.

Telephone wires and telegraph poles.

Within Crowle, many of the streets are adversely affected by overhead telephone wires and power cables, and by prominent telegraph poles. The long-term strategy of the Council is to underground all such wires within the conservation area.

Improvements to the Market Place.

This area has been repaved using concrete paviors and other modern materials. It contains a variety of other materials, including tarmac and concrete kerbs, and some "heritage" items such as black-painted cast iron bollards. The central part of it is used as a car park, with somewhat "untidy" parking bays. Better quality, more traditional materials such as granite setts and York stone, would improve the street surface. Additional tree planting, and the removal of some of the car parking, would also be advantageous.

Improvements to the carriageways.

Within Crowle, the pavements are largely black tarmac with concrete kerbs. It is probably unrealistic, and indeed historically inappropriate, to consider wholesale replacement with more expensive materials such as York stone, but in some locations (such as Church Lane) the removal of the current patchwork of tarmac, and its replacement with one consistent surface (such as gravelled tarmac) would be welcome.

8.3 Buildings-at-Risk Survey

The town contains a number of buildings at risk from lack of maintenance or from wholesale neglect because the property is currently vacant. In some cases the buildings are actually roofless and clearly will be lost before long. Unfortunately this area was not surveyed in the late 1980's as part of the English Heritage "Buildings at Risk" programme, and there are now a large number of buildings in a critical condition. To assess the condition of these buildings a detailed Building-at-Risk survey should be carried out using English Heritage guidance

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notes. The results of this survey can be used to monitor the condition of the town centre historic fabric and as a basis for concentrating resources such as grant aid. In conjunction with this survey immediate action should be taken to make the historic buildings weather-tight, and legislation exists to allow the Council to insist that owners of both listed and unlisted buildings of townscape merit within the conservation area maintain their buildings to a reasonable structural standard.

8.4 Grant aid.

The poor condition of some of buildings has already been recorded and this is linked with a general decline in the economy of the town centre. The physical and economic problems need to be addressed in tandem to ensure that any works will result in the sustainable regeneration of Crowle.

A Buildings-at-Risk survey will identify the buildings most in need of grant aid and such a survey can be used to back-up a bid for grant aid. A number of sources for such grant aid are available including English Heritage (Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme – HERS); the Heritage Lottery Fund (Townscape Heritage Initiative – THI); and central government, including Single Regeneration Budget – SRB funds and the relatively new Market Towns Initiative (details of the last two can be obtained from the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber in Leeds).

Realistically the optimum way of restoring the character of the Crowle Conservation Area is to combine an extensive area based regeneration programme with a grant scheme aimed at repairing the and reinstating lost architectural features on the traditional buildings in Crowle.

8.6 Boundary review

Following a careful survey of the existing conservation area and its immediate environs, the following changes are recommended to the existing boundaries:

Deletions:

- (i) *Delete* The area of Potts Lane containing modern late 20th century housing and the car park on the south side of the street. These areas have no special architectural or historic interest and should therefore be excluded. The car park site has an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and any proposals to improve the visual appearance of the site and the setting of the conservation area will be encouraged.

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Additions:

- (i) *Add* No 37 North Street to the conservation area as it forms part of a group which is already included.

8.7 Traffic Management

The heavy traffic passing through the centre of Crowle is having an adverse impact on the environment. The Council is currently carrying out a study of options to improve the traffic environment in the centre of Crowle. Any physical works involved in new traffic management schemes should be carefully designed to have a minimum impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

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The Environment and Public Protection Department,
North Lincolnshire Council
Church Square House
PO Box 42
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6XQ
Telephone

**For further general information relating to listed buildings and
conservation areas, contact:**

English Heritage
23 Savile Row
London
W1S 2ET
General telephone enquiries: 020 7973 3000
Customer Services: 020 7973 4916

For detailed advice on repairing and restoring Georgian houses, contact:

The Georgian Group
6 Fitzroy Square
London
W1T 5DX
Telephone: 020 7387 1720

For “Care of Victorian Houses” leaflet, contact:

The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
Bedford Park
London
W4 1TT
Telephone: 020 8994 1019

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For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets, contact:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
37 Spital Square
London
E1 6DY
Telephone: 020 7377 1644

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