

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

EPWORTH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

ADOPTED DOCUMENT

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Map showing Conservation Area boundary; listed buildings and 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.

1. INTRODUCTION

Epworth is a small historic market town, famous for being the home of the Wesley family, the founders of Methodism. The conservation area covers the commercial historic core of the town which is centred on the medieval Market Place and High Street. The narrow streets are lined with small 18th and 19th century two storey shops, public houses, banks, offices and houses, which gives Epworth an intimate urban character. Public buildings such as the Old Manor Court House, St Andrew's Church, Kilham Memorial Methodist Chapel and the Wesley Memorial Church are the key architectural and historic landmark buildings. Tourism, encouraged by the Wesley connection, has contributed to the continued vitality of the town.

This appraisal will assess the special interest, both architectural and historical, of Epworth. The history of the area and 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.

Policies in a separate but allied booklet, *Epworth : Supplementary Planning Guidance*, will be a material consideration when determining applications for development, defending appeals or proposing works for the preservation or enhancement of the area. Both documents will therefore be useful sources of information for owners, agents, applicants and members of the public who live and work in Epworth.

2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The conservation area of Epworth was designated by the former Boothferry Borough Council in 1970, and is currently divided into two sections : St Andrews Church and Church Walk, and to the south, the historic nuclear core of the town. This is centred on the Market Place, and the eastern stretch of the High Street as far as the junction with Belton Road. The western section of the High Street has lost more of its historic fabric and is therefore excluded, as is the new development on the peripheries of the town.

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 fulfils 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). This appraisal seeks to identify the most important features within the conservation area, to guide future development, and to provide local people with more detailed information about their town, including its historic and architectural significance.

3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 Location and population

Epworth is situated on the A161, a major north-south route across the Isle of Axholme. The town is located on the southern section of the Isle between Belton and Haxey, with the River Trent to the east. The population of the town is about 3,300 and it is identified as a medium growth settlement in the Local Plan.

3.2 Landscape setting

The Isle of Axholme is a low lying, flat area enclosed by rivers. Epworth was surrounded by flooded marshland until the 17th century, when Cornelius Vermyden devised and built an extensive system of ditches and dykes to drain the area, and to create rich fertile agricultural land. The Isle of Axholme is designated in the Local Plan as an area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

Epworth is located on the slightly higher ground on the western flank of the Isle of Axholme ridge. To the north and south east of the settlement the ground rises to low rounded ridges, whereas to the south and west the ground level falls away to the valley floor. The landscape to the north is characterised by gently undulating farmland with wide open arable fields and a few remnant hedges and woods.

Two old windmills, Brook's Mill of c.1800 and Maw's Mill of c. 1820, and a modern water tower, are distinctive landmark features on the horizon to the north. To the west is low lying open farmland, including Belton Field, one of the best surviving examples of a medieval open field. To the south-west is Epworth Turbary, a small settlement established in early 19th century, when the land given to the community in compensation after the commons were enclosed by the local landowners. The settlers made a living from the extraction of peat and sand, but the land was so poor that over the years much of it has been recolonised by scrub and woodland, sections of which are now rich in flora and fauna and have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

3.3 Geology and building materials

The Isle of Axholme is a raised outcrop of Mercia Mudstone (formerly known as Keuper Marl), forming gently undulating land rising to 41m. OD at High Burnham, and extending in a low ridge to the Trent at Owston Ferry. It forms an enclave within part of a larger landscape characterisation area known as the Humberhead Levels. This area owes many of its characteristics to two main factors: firstly, to the geological conditions resulting from the last glacial period and subsequent sea-level rises, and secondly, to extensive modification by human activity.

Most of the area surrounding The Isle lies under 5m. OD and is crossed by a series of rivers, many now re-aligned and canalised. Here the bedrock is covered by glacial, lacustrine and alluvial sands, silts and gravels deposited during the last glacial and subsequent post-glacial Holocene phases.

Around c. 18,000 – 11,000 BP, during the last glacial period, ice sheets in the Vale of York and North Sea blocked drainage and created Lake Humber, which spread across the area of the Humberhead Levels. The lake finally silted up around 11,000 BP, leaving a broad plain across much of the study area, crossed by a series of meandering rivers and interrupted by the hills of the Isle of Axholme and low "islands" of glacial sand and gravel.

The earliest building within Epworth is St. Andrew's Church, which dates back to the 12th century and is constructed mainly from local limestone with mudstone rubble (sometimes rendered) in places. The medieval Market Cross is also limestone. A medieval clay tiled floor has been excavated in the ruins of the former manor house close to St. Andrew's Church, but before the 18th century, the minor buildings in the town would have been mud-and-stud and no examples of this friable material remain. After the 18th century, most of the buildings were built from brick with clay pantile roofs, although the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel is an example of stone being used for a more prestigious building.

4 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 History

The name Epworth comes from the Old English personal name 'Eoppa' coupled with the OE word 'worth', meaning an enclosure. In the Domesday Book of 1086 Epworth is referred to as *Epeurde* and was valued at 5 pounds, a fall from its 1066 value of 8 pounds. The Domesday records shows that there were 11 fisheries but that most of the income came from farming.

In the 12th and 13th centuries Lord Mowbray was the major local landowner. He developed Epworth into a market town and the first market charter was granted in 1380. The settlement depended on agriculture, particularly the growing of various crops, including hemp and flax cultivation, and the rearing of livestock. In 1305 Lord Mowbray granted the right to exploit the commons to the local peasantry providing peat, wood, fish and fowl.

Around 1620 the Isle of Axholme was extensively drained under the guidance of the Dutchman Cornelius Vermuyden. This had a major impact on the landscape, industry and communities of the area. Ownership of the drained land was given to Vermuyden, the Crown and existing local landowners, but as a consequence the rights to common land were reduced. Pre-drainage, the common land in Epworth totalled 14,000 acres, but after Vermuyden's work was completed, it was reduced to only 5,900 acres. However, the agricultural prosperity which followed the improvement of the land lead to a rapid growth of the main towns, and from 1590 to 1640 around a hundred new cottages were built in Epworth to accommodate the influx of new inhabitants.

During the 18th century Epworth's prosperity was based on the richness of the local soils and was further boosted by improvements to agricultural methods, transport and industry. Weekly markets were held in the town for the sale of local produce, including wheat, beans, turnips, flax and potatoes. By 1780 there were four factories in Epworth producing sacking. Further changes to the farming industry took place with the enclosure of the common lands between 1795 – 1803.

The 19th century saw the beginning of a decline in status of Epworth market, in favour of bigger centres such as Doncaster. The hemp and flax trade suffered due to competition from the Baltic, and the manufacture of new fabrics. The impact took time to filter through, and in 1856 there was still a significant number of linen, sacking and ropemakers, as well as flax merchants in Epworth. During this period new technologies lead to new industries becoming established such as milling, brewing, and malting. However, the development of the iron and steel industry in Scunthorpe, and brick making in Crowle, was the start of the shift away from an economy based almost totally on agriculture and its products.

Today, agriculture still plays a major role in the Epworth local economy, although increased mechanisation has resulted in fewer jobs in farming generally. However, improvements in transport, especially the building of the motorway, has lead to a

more recent expansion of Epworth as a dormitory town for the larger conurbations such as Scunthorpe and Hull.

Epworth has a special place in history as the birthplace of John and Charles Wesley, who started the Methodist movement. Their father Samuel Wesley moved to Epworth in 1696 to take up the position of rector. It is here that he raised his family of nineteen children. John Wesley went to Oxford to study, but became a deacon in 1725 and returned to Epworth to help his father. Three years later he returned to Oxford and became the leader of a religious study group called the Methodists which had been founded by his brother Charles. The two men later went to America but soon returned and John became an itinerant preacher. In 1784 the Methodists split from the Church of England to form a new religious order which still survives today.

4.2 Archaeology

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Epworth, although the whole of the town centre is archaeologically sensitive. During excavation work in the 1970's in Vinegarth Close near St Andrews Church some remains of the medieval manor house were unearthed. The works revealed that the house had a clay tiled floor and mudstone wall foundations.

5 CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

5.1 Plan Form

The 1907 OS map (Figure 1) shows Epworth as a nuclear settlement around the Market Place and extending in a linear form westwards along the High Street towards Sandtoft, and northwards towards St. Andrew's Church – a layout which remains largely intact today. At the heart of the conservation area is a triangular island of land lined by Church Street, The High Street and Market Place. The Market Place is located to the south east corner with Albion Hill rising to the south east and Queens Street leading southwards. The High Street emanates from the west side of the Market Place and runs westwards before bending north westwards towards Sandtoft. The properties in these streets are located on the back edge of the pavement, on narrow plots, giving the area a close-knit, urban townscape. On the north side behind the High Street the ground rises up to a low ridge. This area contains narrow strip fields, probably remnants of medieval burgage plots. St Andrew's Church is located on this elevated ground to the north with Church Walk forming the connection with the Market Place. The distance of the church from the Market Place confirms that the church pre-dates the setting out of the market in the 14th century.

5.1 Activity/uses

As the conservation area covers the commercial centre of Epworth the predominant use of the buildings is commercial with shops, restaurants, banks, and public houses all represented. Churches, chapels, and offices, with some residential uses at first floor level can also be identified. The shops are mainly small and family-run, rather than national chain stores. Most of the premises are occupied and the town centre has a vibrant atmosphere with a constant flow of customers and through traffic, most of which passes through the Market Place, which forms an obvious centre to the settlement.

5.2 Open spaces, trees and vistas

As previously noted, Epworth has a closely knit, urban townscape, and therefore there are few areas of open space within the town centre, although to the north of the High Street and Church Street are the long medieval plots, still used as gardens and small fields, which can be seen from the road.

By contrast, around the town are open fields and long vistas across the surrounding countryside much of which retains significant elements of its medieval form, an unusual and nationally important survival.

Although the market is no longer a central feature of community life, the open space of the Market Place still forms the physical focus of the town. It is a diamond-shaped space, enclosed by buildings with roads diverging from the apexes. Unfortunately, as a road junction, the constant flow of through traffic dominates the space. In front of the Old Manor Court House is a large area of York stone, on which is located the remains of the Market Cross. It was from here that John Wesley often preached to the assembled crowds. Work is in progress on improvements for pedestrians including widening the pavements and reducing carriageway widths. The most important view of the Market Place is from the higher ground of Albion Hill, across to the Market Cross and Old Manor Court House.

The churchyard of St Andrews Church is identified in the Local Plan as an "area of amenity importance". This designation also covers the area of land on either side of Church Walk which is not within the conservation area. It contains a number of mature trees, which provide a sense of enclosure, as well as framing views to the open countryside beyond. Church Walk is flanked by a row of mature lime trees which give a formal structure to the path and attractive setting to the church.

From the elevated position of the churchyard there are expansive views across the rest of the town centre and to the countryside beyond. The area to the west of the churchyard is partly given over to car parking and has some recreational equipment. This is outside the conservation area and the recent modifications to the car parking arrangements are regrettably poorly executed. Timber fencing and a modern garage, allied to modern boundary treatments, also add to the overall picture of neglect. Gardens and small fields run north from the rear of the buildings on the north side of the High Street, up to the footpath which provides access from Belton Road, and these landscaped areas are visible between the buildings.

The Wesley Memorial Chapel in the High Street is set within well maintained grounds; with areas of lawn crossed by linear paths, rose beds and trees. This area provides a visual break in the densely built form of the town centre and provides a tranquil public area of soft landscaping.

5.3 Architectural style and building materials

The majority of the buildings in the centre of Epworth are modest, two storey brick buildings dating from the late 18th or 19th century. These tend to be located at the back edge of the pavement, facing the street. A number of buildings have been either rendered or painted. Windows are usually timber double-hung sashes, with some good examples of plain, late-Georgian doorcases and some 19th century shopfronts. Roofs are pitched and covered in clay pantiles or Welsh slate.

Overall, the buildings have a very similar form with common materials and detailing, although displaying a number of local variations including window design and roof pitches. There are no formal terraces, rather a pleasing amalgam of similarly sized and decorated houses, arranged informally in groups.

Interspersed within these small groups of buildings are a number of large architectural set pieces such as the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, the Kilham Methodist Chapel (now the Youth Centre), Old Manor Court House and St Andrew's Church. These more prestigious buildings take their architectural cue from a more national style, including the Victorian Gothic details popular in the 19th century for ecclesiastical buildings of all types and used for the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.

5.4 Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit

There are a number of historic buildings in Epworth which are included in the Department of Culture, Media and Sports List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The Church of St Andrew and the Old rectory are the most important buildings being grade I while all the other listed properties are grade II. Samuel Wesley's tombstone is listed mainly for historical associations and another gravestone to Thomas Cutforth is included. There is a concentration of listed buildings in the Market Place; the Manor Court House, the K6 telephone box and Market Cross in front, 27 Queen Street, The Red Lion Inn and 4/6 Market Place opposite, plus Nos. 4 – 6 Albion Hill. Nos. 24, 26, 46, 48, 50, 52, 66, 68, 70, 11 and 13 The High Street are all grade II. The listed Kilham Memorial Methodist chapel and school, the Wesleyan Memorial Chapel, School, Manse and Warden's House, have significant historical as well as architectural interest. These buildings are described later in this document; a further brief description accompanying the listing can be obtained from North Lincolnshire Council. These buildings are not only important locally but they are also considered to be of national significance and there are policies in place to conserve these buildings for future generations.

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 Epworth Conservation Area. Included in this category are larger public buildings such as the late Victorian Temperance Hall to more modest 18th and 19th shops and houses built in the local vernacular style, as well as some later Edwardian houses.

The buildings are generally unaltered or, could with some restoration, be easily reinstated to their original appearance. Their age and architectural interest 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 are an important part of the character of the Conservation Area, the Council will pay special attention to applications for alterations and extensions.

6 DESCRIPTION OF EPWORTH BY AREA.

6.1 Market Place.

The Market Place is roughly square in shape, on a slight hill, and punctuated by the four roads which meet in the centre of Epworth. The buildings which surround it are either listed, or modern buildings of little merit. Important views can be seen from the Market Place towards St. Andrew's Church, some distance away, but otherwise the roads entering the square are relatively narrow and enclose the space quite noticeably.

All that remains of the Market Cross is the square stone plinth raised on three circular stone steps, but still provides Epworth with a notable feature and links to the past. The cross is now situated in an area of York stone outside the Old Manor Court House, along with a listed K6 telephone kiosk. It gives a sense of focus to the space which is now somewhat blighted by modern development. However, the character of the Market Place is currently being improved by the construction of new pavements, providing greater pedestrian priority.

The historic significance of the space is emphasised by the fact that most of the listed buildings enclosing it are larger and grander than those in the surrounding streets. These buildings occupy larger plots, being four or five bays wide, and although only two storeys have greater floor-to-ceiling heights. The Old Manor Court House, no. 27 Queen Street, the Red Lion Inn and no. 4 and 6 Market Place are the most notable buildings. The Old Manor Court House was built in 1802-03 as a courthouse, a use which continued throughout the 19th century. In 1949 it was purchased by the Mechanics' Institute, which had been established in Epworth by William Read in 1837. The building still houses the Mechanics' Institute Library on the first floor and the Epworth Civic Society have their offices on the ground floor. This two storey, five bay building originally had an open ground floor arcade which was infilled in the 19th century with brick panels containing tripartite windows. The

first floor has tall twelve pane sashes with delicate glazing bars, with rusticated stucco lintels. The slate roof slightly projects with a moulded eaves cornice.

On the other side of the Market Place is the Red Lion Public House, dating from the mid 18th century, and originally functioning as a coaching inn with stables to the rear. It occupies a substantial corner plot with small additions to the side along Albion Hill. The two storey building has a white stucco front with details such as quoins picked out in black paintwork. The windows are small paned, timber sashes and the roof has been reclad in natural slates.

Sited next to each of these corner properties are two very similar buildings, no. 27 Queen Street and no. 4 and 6 Market Place.

These were probably originally designed as town houses but the ground floors have been converted into a restaurant and shop respectively. These are built from brick, two storeys high, and date to the early to mid 18th century. Each is five bays wide, with elegant six-over-six timber sash windows with architraves set flush with the front elevation. Both the roofs overhang the front elevation and have a coved timber eaves cornice. The roof covering is natural slate, a 19th century alteration to what was originally clay pantiles.

The buildings which occupy the other two diagonal angles of the Market Place are less architecturally distinctive. The Co-operative Store on the Albion Hill/Queen Street corner is a two storey brick building, with two angled elevations to the Market Place. The elevations are dominated by the modern display windows which have oversized fascias, poor detailing and with the windows blanked out by film on the inside.

The final corner is occupied by the Halifax and HSBC bank. The Halifax is a late-18th to early 19th century, two storey building, with steeply pitched roof. The building was substantially altered in the early 20th century, when a roughcast render was added, windows altered, and the roof covered in concrete tiles. Its neighbour is of a similar age and was originally three storeys high. Truncated and much altered in the 1950's its form and materials attempt to reflect elements from the surrounding buildings but fails to provide a convincing elevation. Particularly, it has a greater floor to ceiling height and a different eaves level. Added to these differences are the large fascia, obtrusive signage and concrete roof tiles.

- Market Place forms centre of Epworth and its plan form, with its roughly square shape and radiating entry/exit roads, provides an important reminder of its medieval function
- Remains of medieval Market Cross provides notable feature
- Surrounded by listed buildings and a few modern buildings of negative quality
- Most important buildings are the Old Manor Court House, the K6 telephone box, no. 27 Queen Street, the Red Lion Inn and nos. 4 and 6 Market Place
- Mixture of materials – brick or painted render for the walls, clay pantiles or slate for the roofs

6.2 Albion Hill and Queen Street.

From the Market Place the conservation area extends a short distance along Market Place, Albion Hill and Queen Street. Rising up Albion Hill from the Market Place are nos. 4 – 10 Albion Hill, a cohesive group of listed mid-18th to early-19th century properties, with later 19th century shopfronts, all grade II listed.

Nos. 4 and 6 is located closest to the Market Place. This is a three storey property, the second storey being kept low in order that its overall ridge height does not exceed its neighbour No.8 located on higher ground. All these properties have brick colourwashed front elevations with high quality timber 19th century shopfronts, with particularly ornately carved console brackets supporting the cornice. The windows are all timber double hung sashes with flush architraves. Unfortunately the roofs are covered in concrete pantiles which lack the quality and colouring of clay.

Queen Street contains a number of smaller, 19th century cottages, most of which have been variously altered. The Queen's Head Public House probably dates from the early 19th century, but with later 19th century alterations such as the slate roof, windows and render. There are extensive low ranges of brick buildings with clay pantile roofs to the rear, facing Chapel Street, which are likely to have been the stables and other storage rooms when the pub was a coaching inn.

- Changes in level important in views along Albion Hill
- Nos. 4-10 Albion Hill are the best group (grade II) and date to the late 18th/E19th centuries
- Walls are painted render, with some good quality shopfronts
- Windows are timber, double-hung sash windows with flush architraves
- Queen Street contains smaller, 19th century cottages
- Queen's head P H the most important building

6.3 High Street.

The High Street runs westwards from the Market Place with a slight downhill gradient, linking the town centre with the A161, Belton Road. The eastern end, closest to the market Place, is lined with two storey buildings, many with ground floor shops. To the west, the buildings are more dispersed and the two chapels (the Wesleyan Memorial Chapel and the Kilham Memorial Chapel) and associated buildings, which lie on either side of the road, are the important townscape features. The gardens to the Wesleyan Memorial Chapel are a particular delight and provide a pleasant setting for the Gothic buildings, which are set back from the road.

At the junction of the High Street and Chapel Street the lack of frontage buildings creates a gap in the built-up townscape. A single storey shop is located to the rear of the site, with an open tarmac area used for parking fronting the highway. In urban design terms, in such a densely built up street, this gap contrasts unfavourably with the more densely built-up streetscape of the surrounding area. However, the beech tree in its stone planter provides some emphasis to the corner, and makes a vital contribution to the views along the High Street.

The eastern section of the High Street is relatively narrow, and is contained by the terraces of slightly varied properties which lie close to the pavement on either side. Nos. 1 – 7 and 8 – 20 are terraces of two storey, early 19th brick properties with pantile roofs and timber shopfronts. No.1 is specially designed to address its corner location with a hipped slate roof, chamfered corner entrance and display windows facing both the High Street and the Market Place. Glen House (no. 24) stands out from the rest of the group.

This is a more substantial building and dates to the late 18th century. It is built from brick and is double-fronted, with canted bays on either side of central entrance door and a pedimented doorcase. No.26 is similarly an individually designed 18th century house with a 19th century ground floor shop. This building is not as tall and grand as its neighbour.

A key position in the High Street, at the point where it splits into Church Street and High Street, is occupied by nos. 28 and 30. These buildings are a pair of two storey, early 19th century properties, with an 20th century shopfront. As there are significant views to these buildings from the central section of the High Street it is unfortunate that the front elevation and pavement of these buildings are cluttered by a proliferation of modern signs.

To the west of this junction the High Street is wider and has a more spacious quality. The properties located on the eastern end of this section of the High Street are more substantial and more varied in use. Nos. 32 – 38 is a three storey, late 19th century, red brick building of five bays. The tall ground floor of the block is occupied by one large single unit which at present is used as an estate agents' office. The shopfront is modern, but constructed in timber with traditional detailing. On the south side is no. 11 and 13, a listed 18th century house with a former shop on the corner. The house is two storeys high, three bays wide, and built from the local brick with large, double hung, sash windows.

The north side of the central section of the High Street contains a number of small 19th century buildings with ground floor shops. There are also some larger town houses, such as nos. 46 & 48 and nos. 50 & 52, which have had shops inserted into the ground floor. The most interesting building is the Post Office with its ornate Dutch gable facing the street, grade II listed and a rare survival.

It contains sections of original timber framing (the old "mud-and-stud" form of construction) which probably date from the 17th century. This earlier fabric was encased in a brick skin during the 18th century, and in the 19th century the Dutch gable was added. The list description suggests this is one of the earliest surviving vernacular buildings on the Isle of Axholme.

The south side of this part of the High Street is less architecturally distinguished as the main group of early 19th century buildings have been substantially altered. Nos. 19 – 31 all have had their windows changed and openings altered, and some have been rendered. The cumulative impact of these changes has harmed the appearance of the group and detracted from their architectural interest.

No. 17 is a relatively intact late 18th to early 19th century house, with well detailed modern timber shopfront which gives an indication of the former appearance of the rest of the group. An oddity within the High Street is no. 33, a detached late-Victorian house which is set back from the road and almost totally obscured by an ivy clad tree. The Temperance Hall, dated 1868, has now been converted to offices but retains its Classically-inspired frontage, applied to the front of a simple brown brick building to provide a more prestigious elevation to the High Street. The original front door, with moulded panels, sits centrally with round-headed windows on either side, with margin lights. Above the door is a smaller window, of similar design. The whole composition is enlivened by the use of red brick with yellow brick picking out the arches, quoins, cornice, and plinth.

The western end of the High Street is dominated by the two Methodist chapels, together forming a very important group within Epworth. On the north side of the street is the earlier of the two buildings, the Kilham Memorial Chapel of 1859-60, with an adjoining school. The architectural style is typically 19th century Gothic, but unusually the chapel is orientated north-south, rather than east-west, with the main gabled entrance facing southwards to the High Street. The front elevation is red brick, with ashlar limestone used for quoins and copings, and some blue bricks used for decorative detailing. Only the buttresses of the original entrance porch remain as the roof and arch have been removed. The tablet within the gable is inscribed : *Erected to the Memory of Alexander Kilham 1860*. This commemorates Alexander Kilham (1762 – 98), who founded the Methodist New Connexion in 1797. The immediate setting of the chapel is very poor. The front boundary is a low white boarded fence, and the tarmac car park to the side is enclosed by a crudely detailed brick wall with a metal tubular entrance barrier. A couple of holly bushes and conifer are the only elements of soft landscaping.

In contrast, the Wesleyan Memorial Chapel opposite sits within an attractive, well maintained garden, with front boundary walls built in the same style and materials as the buildings. This building was also erected in memory of John Wesley (1703 – 91) the founder of Methodism, who was brought up in Epworth and later preached in the Market Place. The chapel is the centrepiece of a complex of similarly-detailed buildings all erected between 1888-1889 to the designs of Charles Bell in the High Victorian Gothic style. On either side of the chapel are two small detached houses, The Manse and the Warden's House, with a school located to the rear of the site. All of the buildings are constructed of grey, rockfaced ashlar, with lighter limestone ashlar dressings and slate roofs. The prevailing architectural style is Victorian Gothic. The Chapel has a north-west orientation, with gable entrance to the street approached by a flight of steps. Its belfry has a tall spire which is a highly visible landmark in the Epworth Conservation Area.

- Eastern end of High Street is narrow with continuous terraces of varied, two or three storey houses positioned on the back of the pavements
- Most important buildings are nos. 1-7 and 8-20 High Street
- Pantiled roofs and timber shopfronts a feature
- Walls mainly brick, with sashed windows
- Some larger town houses (e.g. nos. 46 and 48)

- Most notable building is the Post Office , a rare survival of a “mud-and-stud” construction
- Western end of High Street is more spacious, with important religious buildings: Kilham Memorial Chapel and Wesleyan Memorial Chapel with its associated buildings all in the high Victorian Gothic style
- Large, open garden to Wesleyan Memorial Chapel especially important in streetscape

6.4 St. Andrew’s Church and Church Walk.

St Andrew’s Church appears to preside over the rest of the town from its detached elevated position on a ridge to the north of the Market Place. It is approached by a long straight path, lined with lime trees and daffodils in spring, providing a pleasant walkway from the town. On either side are gardens, fields and the churchyard, all contributing to the setting of this important medieval building. From the churchyard to the north are views over flattish fields, punctuated on the skyline by a distant water-tower.

The church dates mainly to the 14th and 15th centuries, with some earlier work as well as 18th and 19th century renovations. It has limestone walls and a prominent square west tower, with an embattled parapet surmounted by crocketed pinnacles. The tower stands silhouetted against the skyline, framed by mature trees, and is a significant landmark in the Epworth Conservation Area. Amongst the gravestones in the churchyard is the chest tomb to Samuel Wesley, John Wesley’s father. John Wesley famously used this tomb to preach from.

Church Walk is gravelled and enclosed by a row of trees and a low brick wall. At either end of the path are a pair of rendered gate piers, with recessed arched panels, flanked by railings. The gateway to the churchyard has a cast iron gate and overthrow. At its southern end Church Walk opens into a more open area of cobbles with a Yorkstone path leading diagonally across to join Church Street. This area is enclosed on the east by a row of three early 19th century brick houses, which run at a similar diagonal angle as the path. No. 2 is a three bay two storey house with timber sash windows set beneath rendered arched lintels. Nos. 4 and 6 are of a similar style and materials but are a two bay, semi-detached pair. The original timber sashes to no.4 have been replaced with modern plastic windows. On the opposite side of the path is The Limes, a south-facing, two storey house. This is either a totally new house or heavily reconstructed older property. The modern garage behind it is a detrimental feature, seen most unfortunately within the setting of St. Andrew’s Church when viewed from Church Street.

Just outside the present conservation area, Church Street and Market Place form the historic approach to St. Andrew’s Church but are architecturally undistinguished. Many of the buildings are modern or, if older, have been altered. Fortunately they are largely two storey and continue the historic building pattern. No. 13 Market Place has a plaque with the initials ICH and the date 1843. The important feature of this area is the view northwards to the church and the trees which surround it.

Otherwise, detrimental features include the untidy boundaries to the car parking area opposite, unsympathetic alterations to the 19th century houses, and the bland modern design of nos. 15-21 Market Place, on the corner with Church Street. However, the inclusion of this area into an enlarged Epworth Conservation Area is suggested later in this document for reasons of historical completeness.

- St. Andrew's Church is an important listed building dating in part to the 14th and 15th centuries
- Position on slight hill provides views around surrounding countryside and over Epworth
- Surrounded by attractive graveyard and approached by formal walk, lined with trees, from Epworth town centre

7 PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES

7.1 General

The historic core of Epworth has remained relatively well preserved, although there are some potential threats to the character and appearance of the conservation area. New development on the peripheries of the town has impacted on the setting of the conservation area and the structure of the town as a whole. Further development pressures will need to be controlled and managed in order not to compromise the character and appearance of historic Epworth. As some of the properties are dwelling houses there is the possibility that alterations, which are permitted development and therefore do not require planning permission, could harm the character and appearance of the area. Such as changes have already had some adverse impact on the conservation area and further alterations may have a more major cumulative negative impact. Plastic windows and doors, or poorly detailed modern timber replacements, are the most commonly-found detrimental features.

7.2 Buildings which have a negative impact on conservation area

On the Townscape Analysis Map (Figure 3) only two buildings which have a negative impact on the surrounding conservation area have been identified. The first is the HBSC Bank, which has a prominent location in the Market Place. Its tall floor-to-ceiling heights, overall height, materials, poor window detailing and large fascia sign make it a highly conspicuous discordant element in the townscape. The second is the shop on the eastern corner of Chapel Street and the High Street. This is a building of little architectural merit and its location behind the historic building line is particularly at odds with the context.

7.3 Sites which have a negative impact on conservation area

Four sites have been identified within the existing Epworth Conservation Area which have a negative impact. The worst is the area to the side and in front of the Kilham Memorial Chapel, which is particularly poorly detailed and provides a poor setting for the listed building. Improvements could include the reinstatement of the original

boundary to the front of the property, with a new central access, the introduction of some softer landscaping to the car park, and a new entrance gate.

Another site lies on the corner the High Street and Chapel Street, currently used as a car park. This area would benefit from redevelopment, with new building set on the back edge of pavement and providing a more cohesive townscape. No. 33 High Street is another example where the present building is set back from the clearly defined building line, and lack of demarcation between public and private land is regrettable, as is the car parking use of this space. An appropriate improvement would be the reinstatement of a landscaped front garden and a fence or wall to the front boundary. No. 62 High Street is also set back from the road and would benefit from a more appropriate landscaping scheme, and ideally the removal of the off-street car parking.

7.4 Buildings-at-risk.

Most of the buildings within the conservation area are occupied and reasonably well maintained, and therefore there are no properties which are immediately at risk. However, large buildings such as Kilham Memorial Chapel and the Old Manor Court House have a low level of use and should be monitored to ensure that their present level of care is maintained.

7.5 Alterations to existing historic buildings

Within the conservation area, a number of properties have suffered from the loss of original detailing and materials, such as the insertion of modern windows and doors using uPVC or a variety of stained hardwoods, usually changing the form and pattern of the originals. Another common alteration is the replacement of original clay pantiles with concrete tiles. Guidance to avoid such change, which is detrimental to the overall character of the conservation area, is included in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Epworth.

7.6 Traffic.

The general increase in car use puts pressure on the environment of small market towns with narrow streets, like Epworth. In particular the major junction and through traffic in the Market Place detracts from what was once a focal pedestrian area. Improvements are currently taking place to the Market Place area and it is hoped that these will reduce the impact of vehicular traffic in the town centre.

7.7 Environmental improvements.

Recent improvements to the Market Place include repaving and widening the footpaths, to create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians. Most pavements are black tarmac or concrete, although there is some York stone in the Market Place. Simple modern street lights are neutral in their effect, but could be improved by attaching lights to the houses and by using more traditional fittings.

7.8 Shopfronts

There are many good examples of historic shopfronts in Epworth, often in unlisted 19th century buildings. These should be preserved or enhanced.

7.9 Summary.

- Alterations to unlisted houses already detracting from character of the conservation area ; windows, doors and roofs are particularly vulnerable
- Negative buildings : HBSC Bank in the Market Place; shop on the corner of Chapel Street and the High Street
- Negative sites: Kilham Memorial Chapel front and side area; car park on corner of High Street and Chapel Street; area in front of no. 33 High Street; and the area in front of no. 62 High Street
- Some potential Buildings-at-Risk
- Busy vehicular traffic through town centre detracts from character of the conservation area
- Poor quality paving and modern street lights detrimental to the conservation area
- Shopfronts – gradual loss of historic details, especially in unlisted 19th century buildings

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 General

This section contains a number of recommendations in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Epworth 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 the reinstatement of original features where they have been removed.
- Agree list of Buildings of Townscape Merit shown on Map 3
- Encourage the retention or enhancement of historic shopfronts

8.3 Environmental and street improvements

- Encourage improvements to the four sites identified as having a negative impact : area in front and to side of the Kilham Memorial Chapel; area in front of no. 33 High Street; Area in front of no. 62 High Street; and area on corner of Chapel Street and High Street
- Consider improvements to paving and street surfaces
- Consider improvements to street lighting

8.4 Conservation Area boundary review

Following a careful survey of the existing conservation area and its immediate environs, the following changes (Map 5) are recommended to the existing boundaries:

Additions:

- (i) *Add Area A* – This area is composed of long strips of land to the rear of the north side of the High Street, with Church Street and the northern section of the Market Place. Included also are two properties in Belton Road. The suggested changes to the boundary in this area would also result in the uniting of the two separate sections of the present conservation area.
- (ii) *Add Area B* - This extension is to include the rear plots associated with the Queen Street buildings, in particular the stables and cart sheds associated with the Queen's Head Public House, 19th century buildings in Chapel Street (such as the late Victorian Hall), Jasmine House to the rear, and the historic alleyway to Burnham Road.
- (iii) *Add Area C* – It is considered that no. 20 is a mid 19th century house of architectural interest and should be included.
- (iv) *Add Area D* – The main properties of interest in this area are no. 1 and no. 9 Albion Hill. No. 1 is a 19th century house with a later timber shopfront. No. 9 is a brick, two storey, double fronted house, dating to the early 19th century.
- (v) *Add Area E* – This an open area, part of which is the graveyard, and the other section is an area of open amenity space containing clumps of trees to the east of Church Walk. It appears appropriate to include the whole churchyard as this is part of the setting of the listed building, as well as an integral part of the history of the town.

8.5 Article 4 Direction

The cumulative loss of historic character of buildings within the Epworth Conservation Area has already been noted, particularly alterations to windows, doors, roofs and shopfronts. Most of these can already be controlled under existing planning legislation as they largely affect listed buildings, commercial properties or those in mixed uses (such as a shop with a residential flat above) which have fewer permitted development rights than family dwelling houses. However, it is the alterations to such properties, all currently beyond planning control, which are adversely affecting the character of the Epworth Conservation Area.

To control alterations to the front elevations of dwelling houses, it is therefore suggested that the Council serves an Article 4(2) Direction. This would control such changes as the insertion of new windows and doors, painting previously unpainted surfaces, and alterations to roof materials and profiles.

For information on the Epworth Conservation Area, contact Edward Rychlak in the Environment Team, telephone: 01723 297396, or write to:

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

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 a “Care of Victorian Houses” leaflet, contact:

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

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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