



# Ancaster Conservation Area

Designated July 1982  
Appraisal & Boundary Amendment June 2010

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**South Kesteven District Council**

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# ANCASTER CONSERVATION AREA

## Character Appraisal

### Location and Context

Ancaster is a small village located 6 miles west of Sleaford and 8 miles north of Grantham on the north side of the A153.

It lies in the Ancaster Gap, one of the few breaks in the limestone escarpment of the Southern Lincolnshire Edge that extends northwards from Grantham to the Humber Estuary. The landscape is characterised by open areas of arable upland with dry valleys and a sparse settlement pattern on the lower lying ground.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the village and surrounding area has a long history of settlement. Mesolithic worked flints from nomadic hunter-gatherers have been uncovered around the parish, together with Bronze Age flints and Middle Bronze Age cinerary urns. There is little evidence dating from the Neolithic and Stone Age periods, although this may be due to a lack of investigation rather than a paucity of remains.

Early settlers were attracted to Ancaster due to its natural resources, including natural springs and fertile soil, and its strategic position at the junction of a number of ancient trackways including the corridor formed by the Ancaster Gap. The location of Honington Fort, one of Lincolnshire's most significant Iron Age monuments situated two miles south west of Ancaster overlooking the gap, reflects its strategic importance.

A permanent settlement was established during the Iron Age (700BC- 43AD). The remains of a Middle Iron Age settlement (400-100BC) were found during excavations of the Castle Quarry in the 1960s; finds included the remains of a circular hut and 75 pits of varying shapes and sizes associated with lime burning, water and grain storage. A Late Iron Age site (100-50BC) was discovered during excavations of the cemetery; finds included the remains of a hearth, ditches, gullies, pottery and metalwork. The high quality Gallo-Belgic pottery originated from south east England or the Continent which indicates the presence of a wide-ranging trading network. The metal brooches and silver coins indicate that the inhabitants were part of the Corieltavi, or Coritani, Iron Age tribe which inhabited Lincolnshire.

The Romans would have encountered a high status settlement of strategic importance following the invasion of 43AD; hence they established an early military stronghold. A temporary Marching Camp was constructed to the west of Ermine Street on high ground to the north of the Ancaster Gap to control the passing traffic. Ermine Street was laid out at an early stage of the occupation as the main thoroughfare between London and the main centres of military occupation at Lincoln and York and a number of temporary camps were built along its length. The remains of the camp lie under arable fields to the southwest of Pottergate Pit and are no longer visible in the landscape. The site is a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument and has been included on the English Heritage "Heritage at Risk Register" as part of the site has collapsed due to ploughing and is in a poor condition.

A permanent fort was established on the site of the modern cemetery. The remains of two defensive ditches and a gravelled causeway, thought to be the remnants of a gateway, were excavated during the 1960s. The evidence indicates that the fort was constructed of earth and timber with a number of internal timber buildings. It was abandoned in the early part of the 1st century AD and no trace remains above ground but the site is a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Roman town grew up alongside the fort as an open settlement with buildings fronting onto Ermine Street. The defensive stone walls were constructed 225-280AD across earlier buildings and covered an area of 3.5 hectares. The defences were bolstered in the 4th century with the addition of fan shaped external towers at the north west and south west corners of the walls. The antiquarian William Stukeley reported that remains of the defensive walls were visible above ground in 1750. The



stone was probably used for buildings around the village and the defences survive as a series of earthworks to the south of the village on the on the east side of Ermine Street. The position of the western defences is visible as a marked change in the level of the churchyard. The site of the settlement and defences are designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The exact extent of the town is unknown as only limited excavation work has been undertaken inside the defences. However evidence of settlement beyond the defences has been discovered during construction work in the village. The remains of two Roman houses were discovered in the 1980s during the construction of a bungalow on Roman Way. In 1996 the remains of a votive stone inscribed with Minerva, the Goddess of Arts & Crafts, was discovered in Angel Court. The remains of a Roman defensive ditch and a limestone building with fragments of tesserae, pottery and painted wall plaster were discovered in 2004 during trial trenching at 5 Paddock Close.

A pagan shrine stood on the site of St Martin's Church and the site represents a continuity of spiritual significance within the village. A sculpture of the Romanised Celtic deity of fertility and prosperity, the Deae Matres or the Mother-Goddess, was discovered in the churchyard in 1831 on a stone slab with a small altar at its southern end. It is believed to be the remains of a public shrine or temple and is on display in the Grantham Museum whilst a replica stands on the churchyard wall. In the 1960s a limestone slab covering a medieval grave was discovered to have a Roman inscription to the God Viridio, which may have been an important local deity as there are no references to this god elsewhere in Romano Britain.

The post Roman history of the village is less well documented. No settlement remains have been discovered from the Anglo Saxon period, although there is a Saxon cemetery located to the south east corner of the crossroads where forty cremations were discovered in the mid 19th century. This may due to a general lack of archaeological research within the region and a research bias towards cemeteries rather than settlements. Kesteven was part of the Outer Mercia Anglo Saxon kingdom and there is evidence of continued Saxon settlement alongside Roman towns. Therefore the existence of the 5th century Anglo Saxon cemetery may indicate some form of continued settlement close to, if not on, the site of the Roman town.

Ancaster is not listed in the Domesday Book of 1085 although the neighbouring hamlet of West Willoughby is recorded as having two churches and a small hermit chapel. The first mention of the medieval town, known as Anecastre, was in 1196 in a charter issued by Henry II. The name Ancaster is derived from the Old English "Anna caester", or "Roman fort of a man called Anna".

The Church of St Martin dates from the Norman period. It was named after a former Roman soldier and Christian convert who, as the Bishop of Tours, encouraged the destruction of pagan temples and the construction of churches. The church was largely rebuilt in the 14th century; however there remnants of the Norman chancel and nave survive.

The prosperity of the village was based on agriculture and stone quarrying. Quarrying dates to the prehistoric period; quern stones for grinding grain were produced in the Iron Age but it was not until the Roman period that it became an organised industry. Ancaster Freestone is a fine oolitic limestone of an even texture which is blue-grey when first quarried and weathers to a buff-yellow. The quality of the stone meant that it was in high demand and was transported around the Midlands; it was used to build Newark Castle and Woollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire and Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire.

The open fields around the village were enclosed in 1773 which improved the efficiency of agriculture. The enclosures transformed the barren heath which surrounded the village into a fertile and wooded landscape. It was an important commercial centre for the rural hinterland and supported a market and a number of trades, including blacksmiths and saddlers, until the 19th century. In the 1850s its strategic importance was reinforced by the opening of a railway station on the Nottingham-Skegness line. A Public Elementary School was built in 1862 and subsequently enlarged in 1883 to seat 145 children and the Primitive Methodists had a small chapel in the village.

The character of the village began to change in the second half of the 20th century as private housing estates were developed during the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate the expanding population. The modern estates were mainly concentrated to the north of Ermine Street although there has been limited development to the east and west. Today the village is a thriving community which supports a local primary school, shops and public houses and has a population of 1317 (2001 Census). Quarrying is still an important industry and Ancaster stone was recently used in the construction of the new Lincolnshire Museum at Lincoln.

## **Planning Policy Context**

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It is the quality and interest of an area, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are designated as conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

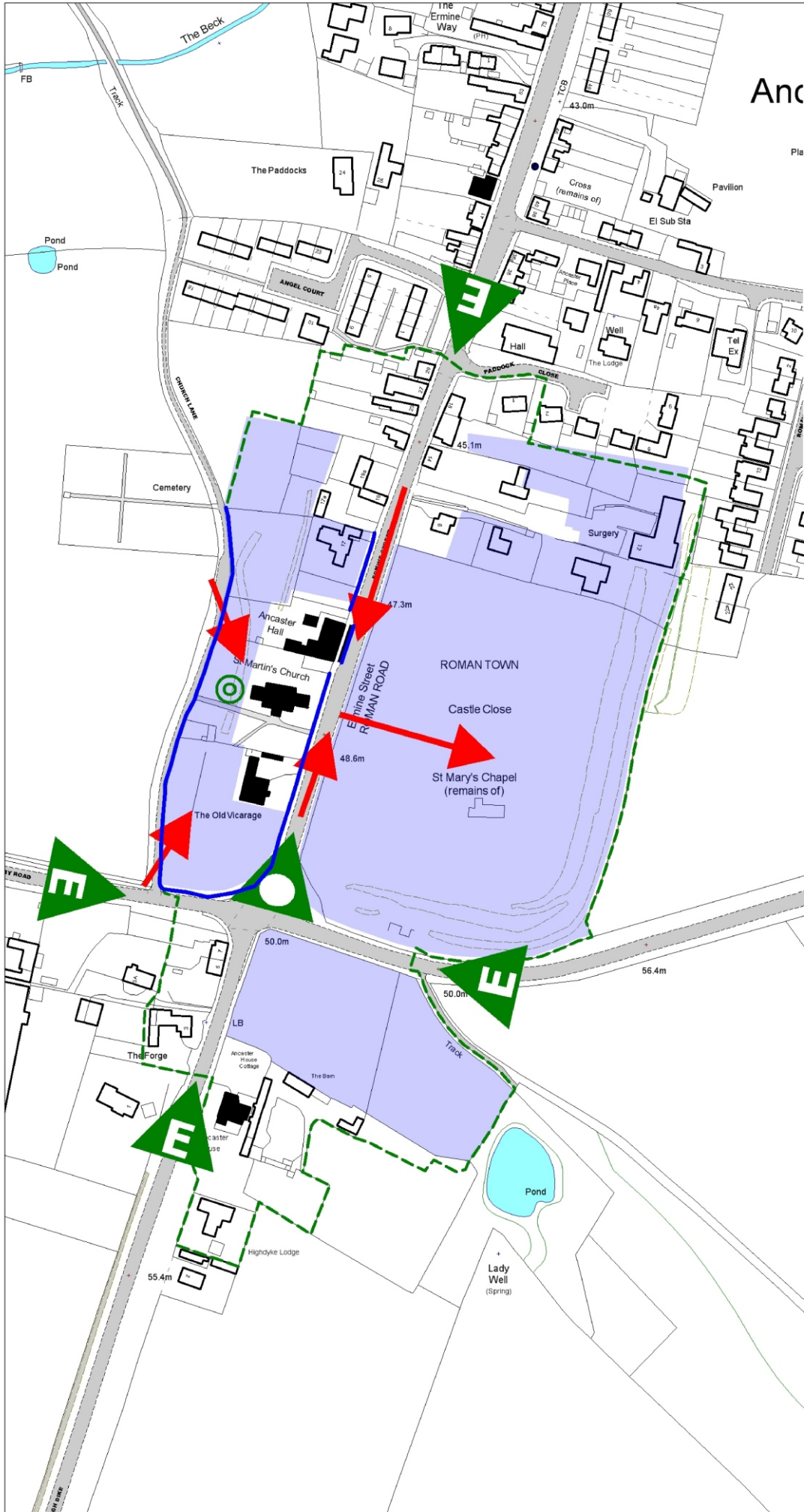
This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) – Planning for the Historic Environment and the accompanying Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in conjunction with English Heritage.

## **Listed Buildings**









A listed building is one that is included on the government’s Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The interiors and exteriors of these buildings are protected by law and consent is required from South Kesteven District Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out.

## **Conservation Area Boundary**

The Conservation Area is centred on Ermine Street and incorporates the historic core of the village and the Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The boundary extends northwards from Highdyke Lodge and The Forge to the south of the crossroads and terminates at the junction with Paddock Close on the east side and Angel Court on the west.



### Symbol Key

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Important View
-  Enclosed Approach
-  Open Approach
-  Important Enclosing Feature
-  Listed Building
-  Important Group of Trees

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## Ancaster Conservation Area

## **Spatial Character and Townscape Quality**

The Conservation Area can be approached from four principal directions; from the east and west along the A153, southwards along High Dike and northwards along Ermine Street. The approaches along the A153 and High Dike are rural in character; the roads are bounded by open fields which can be glimpsed between the trees which partially screen the roads from view. The approach from the west is compromised by the Lincolnshire County Council Highways Depot as the large scale building is incongruous within the rural context although the impact is partially mitigated by the trees. The northern approach along Ermine Street has a more urban character as the road is enclosed by post war housing estates.

Ermine Street is characterised by a linear plan form and the buildings are generally aligned to the rear of the footways which creates a well defined building line along the street. The presence of boundary walls has a visually unifying effect as they form a link between buildings and maintain the continuity of the building line where the buildings are set back from the footway.

The southern end of Ermine Street has an open character which is derived from the location of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the low density of development. There are open views eastwards across the earthwork remains of the Roman town with the trees adjacent to the A153 forming a backdrop whilst the modern estates to the rear of Ermine Street form the background to northern views. The site of the Anglo Saxon cemetery can be glimpsed in the southern view along the street between the trees with a wooded hillside forming the backdrop.

The buildings to the south of the street are detached with wide edifices and occupy large plots. The detached plan form continues as far as the junction with Angel Court however the buildings and plot sizes diminish in scale. The three listed buildings, The Old Rectory, St Martins Church and Ancaster Hall, form a distinctive historic edge to the settlement. The curtilage stone boundary walls are an intrinsic part of their setting and an important feature which contributes to the delineation of the historic edge of the village.

The linear alignment of the road creates long vistas along its length which are constrained to the east and west by the building frontages. There are glimpses of the distant countryside and trees northwards whilst the southern view terminates with the trees alongside the A153. The spire of St Martins Church is a prominent landmark within the village and can be viewed from within and outside of the boundary of the Conservation Area.

Church Lane runs to the rear of the properties fronting Ermine Street and forms a defined edge to the west of the settlement which is reinforced by the stone boundary wall on the east side. The lane is not included within the boundary of the Conservation Area but there are attractive views of the rear elevation of the Old Rectory and St Martin's Church and northwards across the Moor Closes Nature Reserve to the open countryside beyond.

The linear plan form has been compromised by development to the rear of Ermine Street, particularly on the east side, which is at variance with the traditional form of development and vernacular characteristics of the historic core.

## **Quality and Character of Buildings**

There are four listed buildings within the Conservation Area. These include the 11<sup>th</sup> century St Martins Church (Grade I) with 12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> century alterations and additions and a 14<sup>th</sup> century Sheila-na-gig carving on the west face of the tower; Ancaster Hall (Grade II\*) 17<sup>th</sup> century with 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century additions and alterations which has since been converted into flats. The detached 17<sup>th</sup> century Kitchen at Ancaster Hall and the Rectory which dates from 1842 are both Grade II.

The buildings mainly date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are built of the local grey Ancaster stone with blue slate or clay pantile roofs and are mainly two storeys in height which contributes to a uniformity of character.

## Management Opportunities and Constraints

- \* Any new development, including extensions and replacement buildings, should have regard to the historic context in terms of scale, height, form, historic alignment, style, design and materials.
- \* Alterations or extensions to existing buildings should be carried out in natural materials appropriate to the location, should be subordinate to the main building and reflect its character in terms of scale, appearance and detailing.
- \* The village is of high archaeological significance and much remains to be excavated, therefore it is crucial that any development or building work should be subject to archaeological investigation.
- \* The integrity of the Roman remains to the east of Ermine Street has been compromised by modern developments. No further development should be permitted on the site in order to protect the highly significant archaeological deposits.
- \* The stone walls which enclose the Roman Camp Ancient Monument are in a poor state of repair and detract from the southern approach to the village. If the opportunity arose the walls should be repaired to enhance the setting of the monument and of the Conservation Area as a whole.
- \* Stone boundary walls are a key feature of the Conservation Area and where they are maintained they provide an attractive asset to the village and their upkeep should be encouraged.
- \* Important trees and open green spaces which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area, highlighted on the map, should be retained.

Please note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

## Effects of designation

The designation of a conservation area does not prevent change from occurring altogether. Instead, designation seeks to manage change in order to enhance conservation areas and ensure that new developments do not harm the existing character.

Below are some of the key requirements for conservation areas.

- \* Six weeks written notice is required prior to any work being carried out to prune or fell a tree in a conservation area.
- \* Conservation area consent is required to demolish a building in a conservation area. There is a general presumption in favour of keeping all buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area. It is a criminal offence to demolish a building without first obtaining consent.
- \* Applicants will need to demonstrate that any development proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of a conservation area. The council has greater control over building work in conservation areas, including materials and detailed design. New buildings within a conservation area do not necessarily need to directly imitate earlier styles; however they should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well-established character and appearance of its own.



- \* Extra publicity is given on planning applications affecting the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Within conservation areas permitted development rights are restricted compared to those not in conservation areas. Planning permission is required for the following alterations:

- \* Extensions over 50 cubic metres
- \* Cladding of any part of the exterior with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles
- \* Building within the curtilage of the dwelling house any structure over 10 cubic metres, this includes garden sheds, greenhouses etc.
- \* Dormer windows
- \* The installation of satellite antenna on a chimney, on a building that exceeds 15 metres in height or on a wall which fronts a highway
- \* The installation of micro generation equipment.

*For further help and advice please contact:*

Planning Policy  
Council Offices, St Peter's Hill, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6PZ

Telephone: (01476) 406080  
E-mail: [planningpolicy@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@southkesteven.gov.uk)

### **Alternative formats and languages**

South Kesteven has a rich and diverse culture – a community made up of people from different cultures, with differing backgrounds, beliefs or experiences. This diversity is one of the things that make South Kesteven such a great place to live and work.

To ensure all residents of South Kesteven have access to our information material, our information is available in a range of different languages and formats, including large print, Braille, audio tape/CD and computer disc. To request a document in a specific language or format, you can ring us on: 01476 40 61 27, or email: [communications@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:communications@southkesteven.gov.uk)