

ALKBOROUGH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL ADOPTED BY NORTH
LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL AS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON 29TH
SEPTEMBER 2004.

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**ALKBOROUGH CONSERVATION
AREA APPRAISAL**

ADOPTED DOCUMENT 2004.

**TONY LYMAN
HEAD OF PLANNING AND
REGENERATION**

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1 Introduction

Alkborough is a small village in a strategic position overlooking the River Trent where it joins the Ouse to discharge into the Humber. Once the settlement was more accessible by river than by road, an historical fact that is still reflected in the settlements relative isolation on the road network.

The village has Saxon origins that are evident in the Church of St John the Baptist, much of the existing fabric of the building however, mostly dates from the enclosures of the late 18th century when Alkborough was developed as the estate village for the Goulton family of Walcot Hall.

The conservation area includes the planned core of the village immediately south of the church, an area of lower density building to the north, and the hamlet of Walcot to the south. This is North Lincolnshire's largest conservation area by area, including, as it does, the emparked landscape laid out for Walcot Old and New Halls.

Also included within the area are two nationally important ancient monuments; a turf maze, known as Julian's Bower, and; an extensive earthwork (thought at the time of writing to be of medieval origins), known as Countess Close.

The modest buildings within the planned core of the estate village share a common use of limestone and red brick with pantiled roofs. A typical form is the single storey cottage with a window to either side of a central door, though several have since been raised or extended. Links with the countryside are ever present in the form of green verges in the streets, mature trees and farmyards contained within the fabric of the wider village.

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

This document and Policies included within a separate document will upon adoption by the Council form part of the Supplementary Planning

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Guidance for the conservation area. 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. Both documents will therefore be a useful source of information for owners, agents, applicants and members of the public who live or work in Alkborough.

2 Legislative background.

The former Glanford Borough Council designated a conservation area for Alkborough in 1970. The boundary was tightly drawn to cover just the historic village centre from the church to Countess Close. In 1980 it was extended to include properties to the north of the church and southwards to include the neighboring settlement of Walcot. There are only two minor proposals in this appraisal for further alteration of the conservation area boundary to take account of changes to the curtilage of Prospect Farm and to rationalise the conservation area boundary line behind Holme Farm and Spring Gate Farm.

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 should ensure that harmful change is not allowed, but some changes, normally not requiring planning permission (known as permitted development rights) can continue to erode the special interest of the conservation area. These rights, which apply to single-family houses, can be controlled by the serving of an Article 4 Direction, enabling the Council to require a planning application for minor alterations such as replacement windows and doors. A Direction already exists for the area covered by the original designation and this appraisal includes a recommendation to extend this control to the whole of the existing conservation area.

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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 (see Map.).

3 Location and Landscape Setting

3.1 Location

Alkborough is a small village, with a population of less than 600, situated some 7 miles north of Scunthorpe. It occupies a commanding position on the western escarpment overlooking the Trent Falls where the River Trent and the River Ouse combine and discharge into the Humber. Several settlements in this area were once more accessible by river than by road and Alkborough now shares a remoteness on the existing road network with other riverside settlements, such as Whitton and Winteringham to the east and Burton-upon-Stather to the south.

3.2 Landscape Setting.

The area north of Scunthorpe, in the angle of the Trent and Humber, is characterised by two ridges running from north to south, each with a steep scarp to the west and a gentle dip slope to the east. Alkborough and Burton-upon-Stather are the main settlements on the western ridge. Between them, the scarp is a cliff-like drop of 60 metres to the River Trent. Northwest of Alkborough, there is a large triangular apron of low-lying farmland, known as The Flats, below the scarp at the junction of the Trent and the Humber.

To the west, the fields are largely arable, divided by hedges and dry-stone walls. There are occasional woods, but trees tend to be concentrated in the settlements providing shelter and privacy. The hilltop location provides spectacular views to the west across the Trent to the landscapes of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, where power stations are notable landmarks. Views to the east are of the next scarp before Winterton and Winteringham. The whole of the scarp slope and the parkland of Walcot are designated in the North Lincolnshire Local Plan as an area of High Landscape Value and a substantial part of this is also a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

3.3 Geology and Building Materials.

The two escarpments are made of Oolitic limestone. This is often stained with iron salts, being close to the Frodingham ironstone, giving a rusty brown colour. The local limestone was generally used in varying qualities as squared rubble, rubblestone walling and for drystone walls. For prestigious work, on the church for example, materials were often imported.

This simple geology is complicated by overlays of glacial boulder clays and alluvial silts from the river estuaries, which provided the materials for brick and tile making. Bricks started to be commonly used and made in Lincolnshire at the beginning of the 18th century and buildings before this time were either stone or timber, though little evidence of any timber building survives. There is however, good evidence for brick manufacture and usage in areas adjacent or associated with the Humber and trade inland by water much earlier than the 1700s.

The use of local stone persisted, with the gradual introduction of brick dressings to strengthen openings and corners, until industrial production and improved transport made brick more universal from the mid-19th century onwards.

Water reed and long straw would have been mainly used for roofing until the 18th century when clay pantiles became available, although again there is good evidence for the use of clay pantiles in the early 17th Century. Clay for roofs, either as plain tiles or pantiles, is now the established tradition although some buildings have blue slate, which became fashionable with the railway age after the 1840s.

4 History and Development.

4.1 History

The village of Alkborough lies in a strategic position above the confluence of the Rivers Ouse and Trent, and a settlement has existed here since at least late Saxon times, as fabric in the base of the church tower attests. There was also a separate settlement at Walcot from the Middle Ages.

Two early surviving features of Alkborough – Countess Close and Julian’s Bower – have given rise to speculation about the origins of the village. In the 18th century, William Stukeley considered the earthworks of Countess Close to be a Roman entrenchment, although it is now considered to have been a fortified medieval steading. An archaeological investigation of the Close is underway at the time of writing (January 2004). The turf maze, Julian’s Bower, has also been described as a ‘Roman labyrinth’ until more recent historical research has ascribed it to the early 13th century.

Alkborough developed an agricultural economy, which, by the 17th century, had generated sufficient wealth to justify the building of Walcot Old Hall. Enclosure in the 1760s established the existing pattern of the village with several farms, such as College Farm, Holme Farm and Spring Gate Farm, fronting the main streets rather than being isolated on their holdings.

Enclosure also coincided with the building of Walcot Hall by Thomas Goulton who, with his successors, was a significant patron of the village. The Goultons provided an infants’ school, later succeeded by their gift of the existing village school of 1874. They also provided a Reading Room in 1882 and the land for the 1905 Burial Ground.

In addition to the Church of St John the Baptist, Alkborough also supported a Primitive Methodist Chapel, built in 1827, and a Wesleyan Chapel of 1840. This is despite the population reaching a peak of 468 in 1851, which was not significantly exceeded until the late 20th century.

Until the late 19th century, Alkborough was connected as much by water as it was by road, with regular steam packets to Goole, Hull and Gainsborough. Since then, relative isolation on the road network has meant that there has been little change. The modernisation and intensification of farming has led to the addition of more recent buildings to the existing farmyards and the demise of local services, such as the wheelwright, and newer housing has infilled gaps in the village streets. Local authority housing from the early 20th century has developed to the east of the village, while further housing later in the century has extended the village to the north.

4.2 Archaeology.

Countess Close and Julian's Bower are afforded legal protection as scheduled ancient monuments. Pre-dating the Countess Close earthwork, finds from the adjacent field of a large quantity of pottery sherds dating from the 1st to 4th centuries AD indicate that a Romano-British settlement occupied this area. In 1931, a pot containing a small hoard of Roman coins was dug up just to the south at Walcot Hall.

There is evidence for several other settlements dating to the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods (100BC- 409AD) dotted along the high ground overlooking the Rivers Trent and Ouse. Evidence for earlier prehistoric occupation was uncovered when a new drive from Walcot Hall was being constructed in 1920 and an Early Bronze Age (2350BC- 1501BC) beaker vessel was found together with a boar's tusk and burnt bone.

At Kell Well just outside the conservation area at Walcot, flint arrowheads and other implements of the Neolithic period (4000BC- 2351BC) including a stone axehead have been found.

The earthworks of the deserted medieval village at Walcot are now mostly ploughed out and are only visible on aerial photographs; the site has produced limestone building rubble and quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery. The foundations of a medieval building were discovered during the construction of the southern end of the driveway to the Hall. These could be the remains of the house occupied by the priest who lived close to Walcot Chapel and Seminary, built in 1147AD by the Abbot of Peterborough these buildings may be located in the Park nearby.

Physical evidence for the medieval settlement of Alkborough has come from the site at College Farm, adjacent to Countess Close. Here, building debris of limestone, tile, burnt stone and areas of clay floors were uncovered when a pasture close was ploughed up in the 1960s.

Pottery finds demonstrate that these house sites were occupied from the 13th to 16th centuries. This may previously have been the site of a small cell of Benedictine monks founded in 1052AD by Spalding Priory. The monks were recalled to Spalding in 1220AD when the Priory buildings at Alkborough appear to have fallen into secular hands.

4.3 Historic landscapes/parks/gardens.

There are no formally registered parks or gardens in the area, however, the parkland landscape from Countess Close southwards is clearly a significant part of the 18th and 19th century development of the Goulton estate.

4.4 Effect of historical development on the plan form of Alkborough.

The almost circular shape of the churchyard suggests a pre-Christian site. From this focal point, Front Street develops a width of marketplace proportion although there is no suggestion of a market charter. Back Street, as the name implies, is of inferior dimension completing the rectangular plan, while Cross Street enables the centre of this shape to be used.

This figure-of-eight plan was certainly established by the 18th century although how it served to connect the church and Countess Close in the Middle Ages is unclear. Historical property tended to be built fronting directly onto the street giving a direct relationship between street and building line, while later development differs in being set back within its plot.

There are several routes from the centre of the settlement, which are clearly ancient routes to other local centers and places of economic and cultural importance such as Whitton to the northeast, the Trent Flats, Burton upon Stather, Winteringham and West Halton. By contrast Walcot, is a typical country estate with the old and new houses of the 17th and 18th centuries set in parkland with the home farm. Whether the medieval village of Walcot was deliberately destroyed in order to create the planned parkland setting, as was often the case, has yet to be confirmed.

5 Character and Appearance.

5.1 General.

Alkborough retains a character formed by the consistent use of limestone, red brick and pantiles on buildings fronting softly informal streets with a background of mature trees and hedges.

The village can be divided into five elements: the churchyard and the property fronting it; the figure-of-eight plan; property to the north of the church; the ancient monuments of Julian's Bower and Countess Close; and Walcot. Each of these areas is described in detail in Section 6 below.

5.2 Relationship to Setting.

There are constant reminders of the strategic scarp-top location in the dramatic views that open out, particularly to the west and north. The church tower dominates views across open countryside towards the village. It is notable that the tower is also the main landmark to be seen from below the scarp face. Most of the historical development, in Back Street for instance, is set back from the edge and little recent building has intruded upon this view.

It is also characteristic that the built form of the village is masked, in views from outside it, by trees and hedges. The distinctiveness of the village is, therefore, vulnerable to any development that extends beyond that envelope.

5.3 Activity and Uses.

The primary land-use in Alkborough is residential and for modern purposes this must include a substantial element of outward commuting, as there is little employment within the village other than farming which, of course survives with increasing mechanisation and decreasing manpower. The integration of active farmyards into the fabric of the village is an essential facet of its character.

Other uses include the school, the church, the village shop and the Coronation Club.

5.4 Open Spaces, Trees and Vistas.

The relationship of the village and the countryside is heightened by the mature trees and hedges that tend to occur in back gardens, rather than on the streets. There are notable yew trees in the churchyard and deciduous species along the scarp edge and on the north side of Countess Close, providing a backdrop to properties in Back Street. Particularly uncharacteristic are the Leyland Cypresses that form dense over-high hedges around the Manor House.

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To the south, trees play a major part in the parkland of Walcot providing shelterbelts around the immediate farmland and avenues to emphasise the entrances to Walcot Hall. This land together with Countess Close, Julian's Bower and the churchyard are the major open spaces.

More vulnerable, perhaps, are the wide grass verges of Front Street, where the absence of kerbs allows an essential softness to survive, and the significant spaces between buildings where trees or more distant views can be glimpsed.

In the Local Plan, two areas are identified as Areas of Amenity Importance where development will only be permitted if it would not adversely affect the open character. They are Countess Bower and the churchyard, including the area immediately to the north and the grounds of Orchard House. In addition, the area around Prospect Farm and the southern half of the conservation area, from Countess Bower to Walcot, form part of the Lincoln Edge Area of High Landscape Value.

The farmyards included within the village also provide distinctive spaces that contribute strongly to the local character. They are particularly vulnerable to the threat of infill development.

5.5 Building Materials and Architectural Styles.

Earlier houses in the settlement date from the 18th century, although some may have older components. They tend to be single storey, fronting onto the road, with limestone walls and pantile roofs. The windows are vertically hung sliding sashes or the 'Yorkshire' horizontal sliding type. In several cases there is evidence of these houses being raised to two storeys in the later 18th and 19th centuries with brick arches to the lower window openings.

From the late 18th century, two-storey houses are the norm, some rendered to give a finish to poor quality stone. In the 19th century brick takes over from stone. Some of the brick, as at Prospect Farm and the Wesleyan Chapel, is a yellow-buff colour that tones with the limestone, but mostly it is red brick exploiting the contrast with the stone when used for quoins and arches.

Farm buildings have seen a similar evolution from stone to brick and, more recently to system buildings with sheet material cladding. The 20th century has seen similar departures from tradition in housing with a return to the single storey form (bungalows), but with a much deeper

plan form necessitating larger roofspans. Modern details have included box dormers with timber cladding and plastic-framed windows in a variety of uncharacteristic casement forms.

Higher status buildings have always been able to justify the use of imported materials in order to emphasise their difference or secure higher quality. Thus the church uses gritstone from Yorkshire and Walcot Old Hall uses red bricks that were not generally available in other parts of the country for another hundred years.

The Old Hall is built in a 17th century style that is beginning to use classical devices, such as pediments, but emphasises its load-bearing solidity with heavy mullion and transom windows. By contrast, its successor (The New Hall), a century later gains relative lightness from large sash windows with slender glazing bars. There is some suggestion that the origins of the New Hall predate that of the Old Hall i.e. the old was built as new and occupied until fashion dictated a further move to more salubrious surroundings.

5.6 Listed Buildings.

It is the consistency of the older buildings, rather than their quality in a wider context that is significant to the character of Alkborough. It is not surprising, therefore, that only a few buildings stand out sufficiently to be statutorily listed.

The most important listed building is the Church of St John the Baptist with its 11th century tower, medieval aisles and late Victorian restoration. It is grade I. The remnant of the churchyard cross, apparently worn down by the sharpening of blades, is grade II as are the other listed buildings in the village - the 18th century Providence Cottage and the Wesleyan Chapel of 1840.

At Walcot, the Old Hall is grade II*, while the much altered Walcot Hall is grade II, as is the nearby Peel Cottage built for the estate in early 1800s.

Just outside the conservation area, off West Halton Lane, the four-storey tower of a former windmill is listed grade II.

There are other buildings that would be listed but for alterations to windows and roof coverings, such as the 18th century Manor House and Southdale House in Cross Street.

5.7 Buildings of Townscape Merit.

This appraisal has identified a significant number of Buildings of Townscape Merit (see map). These are buildings which, although not listed, are considered to contribute positively to the character of the Alkborough Conservation Area. They date from the 18th and 19th centuries, although some have been added to since. Most of these buildings, however, are largely unaltered or, could with some restoration, be easily reinstated to their original appearance.

The age and architectural interest is considered to provide sufficient justification for them to be given special protection and the Council will resist their demolition unless the applicant can prove that 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 Area Analysis.

6.1 General.

This section examines the buildings and spaces within the conservation area in greater detail by considering it in five sub-areas. The aim is to identify the special character of the area that provides Alkborough with its particular “sense of place” and to summarize the details and features that matter.

The five areas are: -

- 1) The Churchyard, including Churchside and Church View.
- 2) The figure-of-eight plan.
- 3) Property to the north of the Church.
- 4) Julian’s Bower and Countess Close.
- 5) Walcot.

6.2 The Five Areas.

1) Churchyard, Churchside and Church View.

The Church of St John the Baptist occupies the highest point in the village, its churchyard elevated above street level and encircled by a stone retaining wall. Indeed, the roundness of the churchyard suggests a pre-Christian site. The church was associated with Spalding Priory in 1052, so the early work in Yorkshire gritstone to the tower and nave is Saxo-Norman. Thereafter, further additions and alterations were made in the 12th, 14th, 15th and early 19th centuries.

In 1887 John Oldrid Scott restored the church with the addition of a new chancel. Now, the stone building, with slate on the nave roof and tile on the slightly higher chancel, is the focal point of the village, while the four-stage tower is a prominent landmark in views from below the scarp and across farmland from the east and northeast.

Scott also added the timber south porch, the floor of which is inlaid with the pattern of the turf maze at Julian's Bower. Stone steps with a wrought-iron gate and an overthrow lantern reach the yew-lined path to this entrance.

The churchyard contains the shaft of a medieval cross, worn to the appearance of modern sculpture, apparently by the sharpening of swords. There is also a war memorial in the form of a Celtic cross, and a number of yew trees.

2) Churchside.

This short road on the west side of the churchyard leads to an area of rough grass to the north. Facing the church, at the north end, is a pair of late 19th century red brick houses. The left hand of these is called 'Aquis', a reference to the mistaken belief by the 18th century historian William Stukeley that Alkborough was a Roman settlement. In front, is a low boundary wall with terracotta copings.

Adjacent, to the south, is a pair of 1970s houses uncharacteristically set back from the road. South again is Mapleton House, perhaps 19th century but now with modern render, concrete tiles, steel and timber casements and an untraditional paneled door.

Next is Becket House, a rubble stone building in two parts. First, a late 18th- or early 19th century single-storey house, typical of the area, with brick quoins, brick-arched windows either side of a plain planked door and a pantiled roof. Dormers were added later, as was the two-storey extension on which the gable end has been rebuilt with characteristic Lincolnshire tumbling brickwork.

Church View.

This short row of rubble stone houses faces the south side of the churchyard. Greyfriars is a typical single-storey cottage, like Becket House above, with a weathered concrete tile roof. The next house and Church View Cottage beyond are a similar slightly later pair, although the first has late Victorian dormers. Then Nos.1 and 2 are a mid-19th century pair rising to two full storeys with canted bays to the ground floor, stout six-panel doors and a pantiled roof. The two pairs are slightly set back behind a dry-stone boundary wall.

Area Summary

- The church is the most significant building in the village.
- The churchyard is raised and edged by a stone retaining wall.
- The cross, war memorial, entrance gate and trees are important.
- Greyfriars is a particularly good example of a late-18th century cottage.
- The earlier houses front directly onto the street.
- Mapleton House has lost significance - modern materials and detailing.

2) The figure-of-eight plan.

The arrangement of a front street and a back street, so named, with Cross Lane dividing the area between them into two blocks, suggests a conscious plan for the layout of the historical heart of the village.

Front Street.

This forms the east side of the village, curving at the north end towards the church. On the north side, a Victorian pair of houses appropriately called Church View and The Gables respectively punctuates the end of Front Street. They are limestone rubble with a datestone of 1870. A steep tiled roof encloses a dormered first floor and there is an ornate chimney stack.

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The Gables retains the original triple casements, each divided horizontally into four panes, while Church View has modern single panes of plate glass.

Adjacent are two 1970s bungalows, one brick and one cream rendered, which nonetheless have drystone boundary walls. Behind them, indicating an earlier use of the site, is a 19th century brick and pantiled outhouse or stable.

'Rosalie' and 'The Cottage', a pair of two-storey houses, follow. Rough render, modern windows and a plastic door disfigure the first. They are, however, important in closing northward views up Front Street as it curves to the church.

To the south is the substantial farmhouse of Holme Farm, rendered and banded with simple casement windows. Behind is a range of stone and brick farm buildings and to the side is a site once occupied by further houses.

On the south side of Front Street, as it emerges from Church View, is the only listed house in the village. Providence Cottage was a single-storey stone house, perhaps dated by the adjacent gateposts inscribed 'IFOY 1797', but it was raised to two storeys in 1829. The openings have stucco flat arches to a central paneled door with 16-pane Yorkshire sashes to either side and above.

The adjacent Easton is a bungalow of buff fletton brick with a concrete tile roof and plastic door. Then, Front Street Cottage is a 1½ and two-storey range where historical appearance has been submerged beneath harsh rendering and a variety of modern casements.

As Front Street turns south, Lynwood is an Edwardian pebbledash house, at right angles to the road, with four-paned sashes and a timber porch. The garden it fronts has a drystone boundary as far as Stony Ridge, a buff brick bungalow set back in its plot.

Beyond, on the corner with Cross Lane, is Pear Tree Cottage. This 18th century stone and pantile house has brick quoins and gables. In a later re-ordering, the central door has been replaced with a casement to match the style of the other windows.

On the other corner, the Old Post Office is another 1½ and two-storey range much altered by rendering and modern windows, including bow

windows recessed into the thickness of the walls and over-large inelegant dormers.

The next pair of houses has a 19th century brick front on a limestone rear. They were clearly built when bricks were expensive and, therefore, only for show. Unusually for a house, the economical English Garden Wall bond was used. The wider window in the left hand half may indicate a former shop.

The Wesleyan chapel of 1840 has a grey brick front divided into two bays by Ionic pilasters with a pedimented gable above. A dummy door to the left matching the working door to the right maintains symmetry. These have later roundheaded margin-light windows over.

To the left, Chapel Court leads to a cul-de-sac of five 1960s houses in two bungalow terraces of brick with concrete tiles. In front of them, two 1970s bungalows face Front Street before its corner with Back Street.

On the east side of Front Street, Marern House was once a typical single-storey 18th century house until it was raised and rendered in the late 19th century and extended to form a butcher's shop. The Edwardian windows and shop front survive, as does the small abattoir to the left of the entrance gate.

The adjacent house has similar 18th century origins but with the addition of a shop and modern dormers in a concrete tile roof.

Next, Ravendale is a mid-to-late 19th century red brick house with a paneled doorway at the centre and plate-glass sashes to either side and above. A similar arrangement exists in the slightly earlier house next door but abrasive blasting has irretrievably eroded the surface of the brickwork.

The former Victorian Methodist chapel uses yellow brick dressings to contrast with the three bays of redbrick pilasters enclosing arch-headed windows. It has a boldly dentilled gable front with finials to either side, but the ground floor has been insensitively altered to provide a garage door.

South of this is a pair of 19th century houses whose history has been lost under featureless render and modern doors and windows. Beyond are two early 20th century pebbledash houses with brick window surrounds and a typical diamond motif between the storeys.

Back Street.

Back Street forms the south and west sides of the plan. On the south side is College Farm, a large farmyard with the rubble stone and brick-quoined farmhouse at right angles to the road and several stone and pantiled farm buildings. There are more modern brick and steel buildings too, but the yard is contained behind drystone walling.

The wall follows the road as it curves and the mature trees of Countess Close form a backdrop to Walks End and Walks End Cottage. These are a pair of red brick and pantile houses going away from the road with tumbling brickwork to the gables, but modern timber and plastic casements instead of traditional sash windows. Beside them and forming an 'L' shape is Watersmeet, a single-storey brick house. Behind them there are two buff brick bungalows and adjacent, a more recent red brick bungalow with Julian's Bower behind it.

Here, there are glimpses of views over the Trent valley, while Walks End and Walks End Cottage provide a particularly important stop to southward views in Back Street. An imposing tree in the grounds of the Julian's Bower bungalow also punctuates these.

The west side of Back Street continues with an early 20th century rendered and pantiled house set well back from the road overlooking Julian's Bower followed by a recent house in imitation of reclaimed brick.

As the road kinks opposite Cross Lane, a single-storey stone house with Edwardian detailing is the former library and next to it are two brick workshops. This was the premises of Frank Drinkall and Sons who were wheelwrights serving the agricultural community until the early 20th Century. A drystone wall fronts the site and there is a 1920s timber chalet behind the workshops taking advantage of the view.

There are two further properties before Back Street becomes Churchside. The Vicarage is a 1970s buff brick house with large modern windows. High Meadows is more recent, a single storey with a large expanse of pantiled roof. Both are set back considerably from the road. Opposite, the east side of Back Street starts with the two pairs of buff brick Sarah Gaunt bungalows.

Next there is the imposing bulk of the Coronation Club giving a solid emphasis to the south corner of Cross Lane. This early 19th century building is of brown brick with a hipped pantile roof and 16-pane sash

windows. A more recent porch, supported on yellow brick piers, ties two panels of iron railings. Hallgarth Cottage was originally a pair of limestone cottages with brick quoins and a hipped roof. It has a door at each end and two bays of narrow Yorkshire sashes. The adjacent plot has a range of late red brick farm buildings that are currently vacant. They were poorly converted to residential use with over-large windows detailed by low-grade fletton bricks.

The adjoining house at right angles to the road in another example of a single-storey stone cottage raised to two storeys in the 19th century. Behind this is Wellsgate, a substantial hipped roof, stone and brick house.

Rivers Mead and Fanthorpe Farm are both set at right angles to the road. The former was a pair of 18th century single-storey cottages with a hipped pantile roof to which dormers were added. The limestone has been painted cream. The latter is an early 19th century stone building with a red brick front. It is in derelict condition, but is currently being rehabilitated with considerable rebuilding. Beyond is a small single-storey red brick cottage with ornate chimney stacks and Yorkshire sash windows with shutters.

After this, Back Street turns southeast. Here, the Tower House has a single bay of yellow brick, rising to three storeys in order to exploit the view. It was built in the late 18th century by a Captain Wilkinson in order to look out over the site where his ship foundered and his family drowned in 1770. It has two sash windows with iron window-guards above a finely detailed square bay, which has fluted pilasters supporting arched window heads and a bracketed cornice over. Three bungalows follow and then the limestone and pantiled Corner Farmhouse appropriately marks the junction with Front Street.

Cross Lane.

On the south side, the range of stone and brick outbuildings behind the Coronation Club leads to the much-altered Lapwings. Then, two 1970s buff brick houses, set back from the road, and the current Post Office in a coach house to the rear of the Old Post Office.

On the north side, Thornthwaite and Southdale are a large pair of limestone houses, dated 1788, with a pantiled roof and tumbled brick detailing to the verges of the gable end. With its imposing panelled doorcase, Southdale would be one of the best houses in the village but

for the modern casement windows. Two modest doublefronted houses follow, rendered with shallow arched heads to the ground floor openings, and then another 18th century single-storey rubblestone cottage that has been raised with a rendered upper storey. Alterations include the blocking of the central door, modern arched window frames and a concrete tile roof. A gap to the right, before Pear Tree Cottage on Front Street, gives views of the church and also accommodates a mid-20th century buff brick house set back from the road.

Area Summary

- The contrast between Church View and The Gables shows the value of original fenestration.
- Rosalie and The Cottage are important in views from the south.
- Holme Farm is an example of a farmstead that has remained in the village rather than being re-established in the fields after the enclosures.
- Harsh renders and unsympathetic fenestration have taken away the historic character of properties such as Rosalie, Front Street Cottage and the Old Post Office.
- Walks End and Walks End Cottage provide an important stop to views in Back Street.
- Historically, houses were built to a building line at the back edge of the pavement. However, some were set at right angles to the street to allow for access onto the plot.
- Where buildings are set back from the street, the loss of continuity is often compensated in part by drystone boundary walls.
- The use of buff brick on some modern buildings, such as the Vicarage and the Sarah Gaunt bungalows has a neutralising effect but it does not fully mitigate the intrusive effect of non-traditional form and siting.

3) Property to the north of the church.

From the church, Whitton Road leads east and then turns northeast. On its south side, Spring Gate Farm has a white, rendered farmhouse, a barn and two other limestone farm buildings contained by a drystone boundary wall. This is very much a working farmyard and there are also several modern steel structures.

Glenmore and Ardway are two bungalows, set back behind tall hedges, and then a 1970s house fronts the road before a small group of brick and pantile farm buildings.

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On the north side, Orchard House is a large 1970s bungalow with long box dormers in its steeply pitched roof. It is set on an island site, to the right of which, a lane leads north to Prospect Farm. Facing this lane are a new stone and brick house, a 1980s house built of harsh orange brick, and The Bungalow, which has 19th century or earlier origins now faced with pebbledash and plastic joinery.

On Whitton Road, The Cottage is one of two stone cottages the latter having retained its three-light casements although it has, unusually, been re-roofed in slate. Turning the corner, there are two 1970s bungalows before the tall dense hedges of Leyland cypress, which surround the Manor House, become apparent. These trees are particularly uncharacteristic of the conservation area.

There are two recent red brick and pantile houses before the drive to the Manor House, which is a substantial Georgian red brick house with modern windows and a concrete tile roof. To the north is the site of a demolished barn largely enclosed by further Leylandii lining a drive that leads west to Dove Hill, a 1960s 'modern' house set in verdant gardens. The lane then turns north down the edge of the scarp to the Flats.

On the east side of Whitton Road, there are two 1970s houses on the corner with Huteson Lane, a former route to the east. Behind them are four 1960s bungalows and beside them two more, then the village primary school. The Goulton family of Walcot gave this stone and slate building to the village in 1874.

An additional school building was opened in 2000. Behind this addition is a small late 19th century, white painted cottage. Called Humber View, it is indicative of the long views obtained to the north and east over open farmland.

Three bungalows and two more recent houses extend the village northwards to the Old Vicarage, a substantial mid-Victorian red brick house with blue brick banding, a tiled roof and tall ornate chimneystacks. The modern bungalow beyond is not in the conservation area.

To the north of the church and Orchard House, is Prospect Farm, named for the commanding view it has over the scarp to the Trent Falls. A dignified three-bay façade of grey brick with 16-pane sashes suggests an early 19th century date, but this fronts a rubblestone building with domestic and agricultural ranges behind, which may be earlier. There is also an extensive range of red brick and pantile agricultural buildings and

a corrugated iron Dutch barn. Currently derelict, Prospect Farm is in the course of repair.

The lane from Whitton Road to Prospect Farm turns west and descends the scarp giving access to the Flats. On its south side, there is a grassy area of open land immediately north of the church and a spring that issues from three arches in a low brick wall.

Area Summary.

- Working farms within the fabric of the village, such as Spring Gate Farm, are characteristic of Alkborough.
- Space between buildings is more significant north of the church than in the denser figure-of-eight plan.
- Materials such as harsh orange brick and pebbledash do nothing to enhance the local character.
- While planting often softens the effect of buildings and provides enclosure, tall hedges of *Leylandii* are so aggressive as to detract from the character of the area.
- The spring opposite Prospect Farm is a special feature of the area.

4) Julian's Bower and Countess Close.

Julian's Bower and Countess Close are the two scheduled ancient monuments in the conservation area. The former is a turf maze, just over 12 metres in diameter, situated in a shallow depression on the edge of the scarp just off Back Lane. Once common across northern Europe only eleven turf mazes of medieval origin survive, of which eight occur in this country.

The name is taken from Julius, son of Aeneas, a major character in the Troy Saga with which mazes are traditionally associated. Local diarist Abraham de la Pryme who understandably assumed it to be Roman made the first known reference to Julian's Bower in 1697. The maze is now considered to be of medieval date and may have been cut by the monks of Spalding Priory before 1220AD.

Mazes such as this were used for ritual dances and children's games, and the sunken position provides ramped areas for spectators. The depression may equally be a product of re-cutting the pattern over time. It is known that Julian's Bower has been re-cut several times and the pattern in the floor of the church porch, laid in 1887, now serves as a reference.

The site is also a major viewpoint at the start of a hilltop walk to Burton-upon-Stather. A plaque on a stone plinth records the distant landmarks to the west. Countess Close, to the south of Julian's Bower, is an earthwork comprising a series of ditches and ramparts around an almost square main enclosure, with a large annex or second enclosure on the south-western side. The Countess is thought to be a Saxon heiress, Lucy, Countess of Leicester, Lincoln and Chester. She was related by birth and marriage to the owners of Alkborough and Walcot at the time of the Domesday survey (1068).

The historian, William Stukeley, visiting in 1724 thought the site to be a Roman castle, and he drew a conceptual 'aerial' view, which shows entrances through the ramparts on the north and south sides. However, it is now accepted that the site is a fortified medieval manor house. Unfortunately, much damage was done to the site when parts were leveled in 1967. Now, the centre is a field and the edges are lined with mature trees providing an important backdrop to the southern side of the village.

Area Summary.

- Julian's Bower is important as a viewpoint as well as a monument.
- The trees around Countess Close provide a significant background.

5) Walcot.

To the south of Countess Close, the conservation area is characterised by mature trees and parkland associated with Walcot Hall, which is in a small hamlet about half a mile separate from Alkborough village. The house is set in a belt of trees between two areas of open farmland with trees along the scarp edge behind. It was built in the late 18th century for Thomas Goulton.

The west front, comprising the first limb of the original 'H' plan, was demolished in 1964. The surviving east front is of brown brick under a slate roof. It has two bays of large sash windows either side of an early 19th century Doric porch with a tripartite sash above. The ends have contemporary canted bays on the return elevations.

Behind Walcot Hall are pedimented stables and Peel Cottage, an early 19th century rubble stone estate cottage with sash windows and a hipped pantile roof.

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On the Walcot Road, as it leads south from Alkborough, there is a small cemetery that was provided by the Goultons in 1906. Then, as the road zigzags past the Hall,

Walcot Old Hall fronts onto a corner. This is a mid-17th century red brick house with a double-depth pantiled roof. It has a full height gabled porch with an ornate pedimented brick doorway and a three-light mullion and transom window above. To either side there are similar windows with pediments also to the ground floor.

The other elevations have mullion and transom windows too, all with leaded lights.

A brick boundary wall has an elegant wrought-iron gate.

Behind the Old Hall, there are several ranges of stone and brick barns and other agricultural buildings, including a long slate-roofed cart shed and a much-altered brick farmhouse.

To the south, Manor Farm is a late 19th century house and on Walcot Road there is a 1970s buff brick house.

Further south, beyond the immediate parkland of Walcot Hall, a small group of houses complete the conservation area. On the east side of the road, Sunnysdene has 19th century origins subsumed by recent additions under an orange pantile roof. Opposite, Ivy Cottage is a single-storey rubble stone cottage much altered by a row of catslide dormers, a large rear extension, entrance arches and roadside planting in the manner of a garden.

Honeysuckle House is a 19th century stone and brick house with modern casement windows including bows to the ground floor.

Chapel House and Copper Beeches are extensive modern bungalows and Stonecroft and The Ramblers are a pair of late 19th century estate cottages built of stone and brick with gable fronts forming an 'H' plan behind a scalloped concrete fence.

Area Summary.

- Mature trees and open spaces dominate this area.
- Walcot Old Hall and Walcot Hall are two of the most important buildings in the whole area.
- The cemetery, though easily overlooked, is an important feature.
- Building alterations have not necessarily been improvements to the conservation area.
- Roadside verges emphasise the rural character except where they have been planted as gardens.

7 Problems and pressures.

7.1 General introduction.

The main threats to the character of Alkborough are the cumulative effect of uncontrolled alterations to historic property and the design of new development. Further issues are the maintenance of older buildings, particularly those not in residential use, and the management of tree surgery and replanting. These have been noted in the analysis above and their effect is recorded in this Section and on the plan at Appendix 4. Recommendations to counter the threats and enhance the distinctiveness of Alkborough follow in Section 8.

7.2 Buildings that have a negative impact on the conservation area.

Buildings or structures considered to have a negative impact on the conservation area have been identified. These are the buildings that use materials or detailing or are sited in a manner that is at odds with the prevailing character. Unfortunately, this means most of the development that has taken place since the 1950s.

Policies relating to these buildings are recommended in Section 8 below but briefly, if demolition and redevelopment were proposed, this would be welcomed by the Council subject to an appropriately designed scheme. In addition 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

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Other buildings that make a “neutral” contribution to the character of the conservation area have been identified and are also marked on the Townscape Analysis map. These are older buildings that have been altered or modern buildings whose design is considered to be reasonably in keeping with the surrounding area.

7.3 Buildings-at-risk.

In general, the buildings of Alkborough are well cared for. The most notable building-at-risk is Prospect Farm, but a scheme of repair and rehabilitation is in progress. The same is true of Fanthorpe Farm in Back Street.

Buildings for which there is cause for concern include Hillcrest to the north of this, the Methodist Chapel on Front Street and the adjoining house, and a number of agricultural buildings such as those on Whitton Road.

The Mill tower on Whitton Road, once at risk is now to be incorporated and retained as part of a dwelling.

7.4 Sites that have a negative impact on the conservation area.

The only recorded site is that of the demolished barn immediately northwest of the Manor House. The enhancement of this site would be welcomed by the Council.

7.5 Alterations to historic buildings.

Within the conservation area, a number of both listed and unlisted properties have suffered from the loss of original detailing and materials, such as the insertion of modern windows, the loss of original clay pantiles to concrete, and the insertion of unsympathetic dormers. Some guidance to avoid such change, which is detrimental to the overall character of the conservation area, is included in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Alkborough. Further advice can be obtained from the organisations listed in Section 9.

7.6 New development within the conservation area.

On the whole, developments over the last 50 years have not been kind to Alkborough. The functional evolution of farming, as seen in steel-framed structures and cylindrical silos, is entirely understandable, but housing developments have brought elements of the town and suburb to the village.

Contrary to the indicators that would come out of any analysis of the conservation area, newer houses have tended to be set back from the street within their plots instead of reinforcing the building line and thus the character. They have brought deeper plans necessitating larger spans and increasing expanses of roofing. They have also introduced non-traditional detailing and materials. Design guidance for any further development is included in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Alkborough.

7.7 Street audit.

It is evident that street surfaces in Alkborough were never formalized with setts or paving and, in a sense, modern tarmac is a natural successor to the rammed earth and stone that would have preceded it. It is important, however, to note that the edges are also informal and any tendency to define grass verges with modern kerbs would not be an enhancement.

The verges are significant, particularly in Front Street where they are a positive element in the exceptional width between the buildings. As far as possible they should remain simple and green. Occasional punctuation with trees or daffodils is understandable, but any further planting of a permanent all-year-round nature would erode the rural character.

Street furniture is minimal, as it should be in a small village, with just the occasional seat. Overhead wires supply telephone services and, while the effect is not oppressive and the wooden poles provide a mounting for unobtrusive streetlights, it is in the long-term interest of the conservation area for wires to be placed underground.

7.8 Summary.

- The repair and maintenance of older buildings should be encouraged.
- Guidance should be given on alterations avoiding the use of non-traditional materials and detailing.
- In general, buildings should follow the building line at the back of the pavement.
- New buildings should not be sited on the edge of the scarp slope intruding on views from the west.
- A limited palette of materials – limestone and brick with pantiles or slate – will maintain unity between new and old buildings.
- Maintain the softness of roadside verges by avoiding the introduction of kerbs.
- Avoid further planting of greens and verges.
- Avoid the introduction of uncharacteristic species, such as Leyland Cypresses.
- Gaps between buildings are important for glimpses of trees and views.
- Management of the ageing stock of mature trees is needed.
- There is limited need for specific programmes of enhancement of the conservation area beyond what can be provided in day-to day planning practice.

8. Recommendations.

8.1 General.

This section contains a number of recommendations, which will be subject to public comment before this appraisal is formally adopted by North Lincolnshire Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

8.2 Buildings-at-risk survey.

Although only a few buildings in Alkborough were identified at 7.3 above as being in any way at risk, their condition should be monitored and action for their repair should be promoted within a policy across all the conservation areas in North Lincolnshire.

8.3 Trees.

The character of the conservation area is heavily dependent on a background of mature trees. Clearly, this is an ageing resource and a management programme would be advisable to ensure continuity through new planting to compensate for natural wastage.

8.4 Development control including Article 4 directions.

New development.

The scope for new development in Alkborough is very limited. Indeed, the opportunities are virtually restricted to the possible replacement of buildings that do not make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Even then, the particular spatial characteristics, noted at 5.4 above and in the analysis, must be safeguarded.

The need has already been noted at 7.6 above for design guidance to address the problems of siting, detailing and choice of materials for new buildings. To an extent this will be provided in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Alkborough. In addition, however, there is a case for a more detailed guide to principles for design and development control across North Lincolnshire including, particularly, advice on the detailing of traditional door and window joinery.

Existing buildings.

The erosion of the conservation area's character through the use of non-traditional materials and detailing, such as concrete tiles and plastic windows, is a recurrent theme in the analysis of Section 6. Most of these changes are alterations to single dwellings, which are normally permitted development not requiring planning permission.

An Article 4.2 direction has the effect of bringing alterations to the front elevation (such as new windows, doors, painting previously unpainted surfaces, and alterations to roof materials and profiles) under planning control. In Alkborough, an Article 4 direction already applies to the central part of the conservation area, corresponding to the original designation, although there is evidence that it is not necessarily having the desired effect. It is recommended that the Article 4 direction is extended to cover the whole of the conservation area and that the effectiveness of development control practice for such areas is reviewed.

8.5 Environmental and street improvements.

The need to maintain the informal character of the public areas, by avoiding kerbs and over-planting, has been mentioned above as has the very simple need to minimise the amount of street furniture in the village. The long-term strategy of the Council is to seek the under grounding of all overhead wires and the removal of telegraph poles in conservation areas. When this is achieved in Alkborough, there will be a need for a street lighting scheme using plain modern fittings mounted on simple columns or on buildings. It will be important for the scheme to observe a lower level of lighting, appropriate to the rural character, rather than an urban brightness.

8.6 Alkborough Conservation Area boundary review.

Following a careful survey of the existing conservation area and its immediate surroundings, two changes are recommended to the existing boundary:

i. Prospect Farm.

The current boundary cuts across the private garden in front of Prospect Farm. It is recommended that the boundary should follow the public footpath from the spring, at the west of prospect Farm, to the west corner of the garden to Dove View.

ii. Spring Gate Farm..

The current boundary follows an undefined line that actually goes through a building at the rear of the farmyard. It is also undefined at the rear of Holme Farm. It is recommended that, from Holme Farm, the boundary should turn east to include the Dutch barn and a property called Butts Hill and then northeast to join the existing boundary as it meets Huteson Lane.

9 Useful names and addresses.

For further information on the Alkborough Conservation Area, contact

Edward Rycklak in the Environment Team on [REDACTED], or write to:

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

For further information on the history and archaeology of the village, contact:

The Sites and Monuments Record
North Lincolnshire Museum
Oswald Road
Scunthorpe
DN15 7BD
Telephone: 01724 843533

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

English Heritage,
23 Savile Row,
London W1X 1AB.
General telephone inquiries: 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 W1P 6DY.
Telephone: 020 7377 1644

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For “Care for 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),
6 Fitzroy Square,
Alkborough Conservation Area Appraisal March 2002 26
London W1P 6DY.
Tel: 020 7377 1644

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