



Methodist Church



The Red Lion public house

LINCOLNSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
Epworth—2022



Cemetery Burnham Road

The Project

The primary objective of the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) is to create a record of the development and historic character of Lincolnshire's towns. It is anticipated that the survey will be of use and interest within the planning system and to the public, particularly those living within or visiting the towns. It should be noted that although every effort has been made to be thorough, the reports are not completely comprehensive and should not be expected to cover all that is known about a place.

The project consists of a written report, detailing the archaeological and historical background and development of the town. The character of the town will also be discussed within the report within specific Historical Urban Character Area (HUCA) assessments, which indicate the heritage value of each area based upon the four values identified within Historic England's 2008 Conservation Principles: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic, and Communal; these are also compared to values seen in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Extensive Urban Survey provides a 'snap shot' of the development of the towns of Lincolnshire taken at the time of survey; as such it is one of many data sets which could and should be consulted prior to development proposals within the towns. The North Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (NLHER) maintains an up to date record of all historical and archaeological data that is known within the district, and should be consulted as part of planning applications (NPPF21 para194).

Location

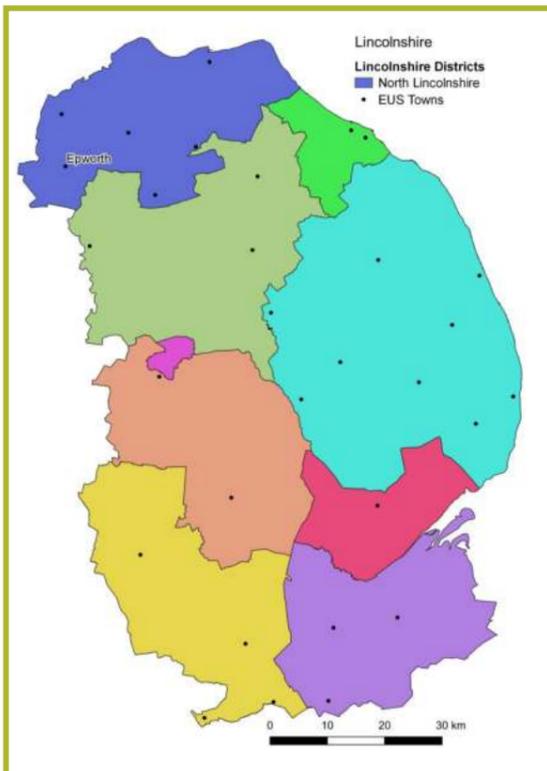
Epworth is located in the district of North Lincolnshire. It falls within Natural England's Natural Character Area 39—The Humberhead Levels which is described as *a low-lying, predominantly flat landscape, with large, regular and geometric arable fields without hedges but divided by ditches and dykes... Much of the land is at or below mean high-water mark and maintained by drainage, with fertile soils giving rise to one of the most productive areas for root crops and cereals... Variations in underlying deposits create differences within the overall flat farmed landscape, including lowland raised mires and lowland heathland... There is widespread evidence of drainage history, in particular the extensive drainage from the 17th century, revealed through canalised rivers, dykes, old river courses, canals, bridges and pumping stations.*

The Isle of Axholme was also surveyed as part of The Isle of Axholme Historic Landscape Characterisation Project. This project described the landscape as an area of *farmland, largely arable with extensive areas of hedgeless strip cultivated open strip fields, early enclosed land and recently enclosed land with raised mire and turbarry, much of the latter of which is wooded. Buildings are of local redbrick with pantile or slate roofs... there are many historic towns, villages and dispersed hamlets mostly medieval in origin.. Small self-contained planned 19th century turbarry settlements at Belton, Epworth and Haxey with smallholdings, cottages and modern rebuilt houses. The area was relatively isolated from the neighbouring region and from cultural main-streams. Its insularity is reflected in distinctive patterns of land-use, social character, the survival of open field strip farming, local folk customs and architectural styles.*

The geology beneath Epworth, as recorded by the British Geological Survey, comprises Mercia Mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of head clay, silt, sand and gravel and Sutton Sand Formation. Soil samples recorded during trial trenching in 2005 revealed palaeolithic deposits comprising peat overlain by thick blown sand layers at approximately -1.2m OD. Biological remains in the deposit suggest the area during this period was a largely marsh environment showing little or no impact by humans or other animals.

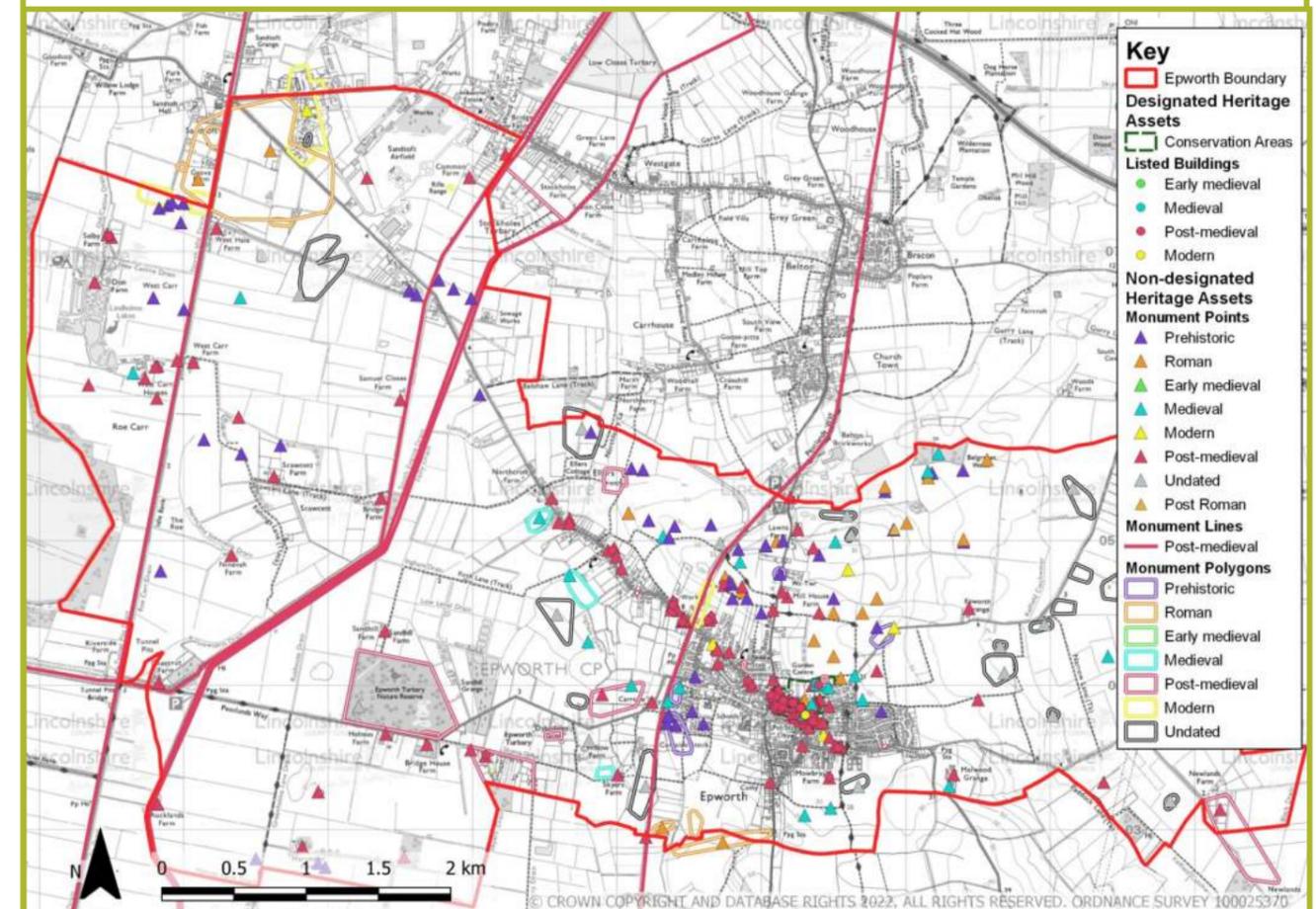
Topographically, Epworth is located on a small hill approximately 27-38m above sea level, which rises out of the surrounding flat lands which sit at about 6m above sea level. The highest point is to the south-west of the town and it has long views over much of the surrounding countryside and towards the limestone cliff. In the Isle of Axholme, the three main settlements of Crowle, Epworth and Haxey are all slightly raised areas surrounded by marshland. The River Trent separated the area from the rest of Lincolnshire and the River Idle separated it from Nottinghamshire and the original route of the River Don separated Axholme from Yorkshire.

The survey area is based upon the parish boundary.



Summary

Epworth is a small agricultural and residential town within the Isle of Axholme. It contains evidence from the prehistoric period onwards, although the present day town probably began during the early medieval period. The hill upon which Epworth is located rises out of the surrounding low-land was probably a major attraction for establishing settlement here. Epworth prior to the Norman conquest was an important local administrative centre; however in the following centuries it declined in favour of other local settlements and became more like an agricultural village in scale. It remained largely agricultural throughout the following periods with a heavy reliance on the natural resources in the surrounding land, enabling it to produce both arable and pastoral products which also encouraged secondary industries such as milling, hemp and flax production. Epworth was central in the founding of the Wesleyan branch of Methodism and statues to this can be seen in the town, and churches in other towns across the county and country further signify its importance. The modern growth of the town is involved with 18th and 19th century development to form a town of a highly mixed styles although with a continuous theme of small brick built buildings throughout. The landscape surrounding the town retains the pattern of ancient open strip fields, enclosures and turbarries (historic peat cuttings). This historic landscape is a rare survivor nationally and is designated within the North Lincolnshire Local Plan as the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme.



1. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 PREHISTORIC

Most prehistoric finds and sites are located in the more elevated areas of Epworth, particularly to the north. It is likely that in the prehistoric period the area surrounding Epworth was waterlogged or flooded, at least on a seasonal basis. This would make areas which were on higher land the only manageable land to live or work on for much of the year. Peat layers recorded from the late glacial period (12000-10000BC) are indicative of a marsh environment at that time (NLHER: MLS20760).

There is extensive evidence of prehistoric activity within the survey area. Aerial photography has highlighted a number of possible prehistoric sites, although most are yet to be investigated further. To the north-east of the town, further cut features including a rectilinear enclosure and the remains of two possible ring ditches have been identified by aerial photography which has been carried out in the area (NLHER: MLS2455). Ring ditches are recorded to the west of Belton Road which have been attributed to the Bronze Age, although their true nature remains uncertain (NLHER: MLS17989). Cut features from the prehistoric period have been archaeologically investigated around Epworth, including a site on Sandtoft Road, where pits dated to the Bronze Age have been recorded (NLHER: MLS20761).

An extensive programme of field walking has been undertaken across much of the area as part of the Community Archaeology Research Project (CARP), which examined a large area between 1999 and 2004. This project recorded a large number of artefacts including many from the prehistoric period. Flints dating to between the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods and the Bronze Age reflect a variety of types, and show the extent to which people during the prehistoric period were living in and managing their environment. Mesolithic flints, cores and blades are recorded, particularly across the higher ground. A notable Mesolithic find recorded in the area is a perforated macehead which was found approximately 3km to the south-east of Epworth (NLHER: MLS2517). There are a number of Neolithic flint finds recorded across Epworth including worked flints and cores, leaf arrowheads (NLHER: MLS17412, MLS20209), and axe heads one of which was made from greenstone (NLHER: MLS19596, MLS20501). These axe heads are a common find in the south of the Isle of Axholme, and are suggestive of land clearance during the Neolithic period around this area.

There is less evidence dated to the Bronze Age around Epworth, although some of the flints identified as dating to the Neolithic may also be from the early Bronze Age. A flint thumbnail scraper was recovered from the north of the town and a possible ring ditch was identified from cropmarks nearby (NLHER: MLS20209).

The Iron Age to Roman period is represented in the archaeological record in Epworth by cut features and datable artefacts. At the eastern limit of the survey area, an extensive complex of ditches and enclosures have been recorded spreading across several fields, which are thought to date to the prehistoric period (NLHER: MLS20220). To the north-west of the survey area adjacent to West Carr, another rectangular ditched enclosure has been identified, as well as additional ditches of a similar nature, which could be suggestive of a larger system (NLHER: MLS20725). To the south-west of the survey area, an Iron Age and Roman field system has been indicated by a number of ditches containing pottery and animal bone (NLHER: MLS19818). Flints have also been recovered nearby to the site (NLHER: MLS21819). Archaeological investigation of a site to the south of Carrside recovered pottery and charcoal dating to the Iron Age and Roman period (NLHER: MLS21349). Further archaeological finds and archaeological remains are probable across the survey area.

1.2 ROMAN

There is a lot of evidence for Roman activity in the wider area of the Isle of Axholme. It is believed that the Romans were responsible for the construction of a number of dykes and for adjusting the course of the River Idle and the River Don around the Isle of Axholme in order to improve transport and communication between Lincoln (Lindum) and York (Eboracum).

Within the survey area there is a large amount of archaeological evidence dating to the Roman period. The majority of finds are in the northern half of the survey area, particularly focused around the higher ground, although there is also possible evidence of a Roman track to the south of the town (NLHER: MLS4281). A Romano-British complex has been recorded approximately 5km to the north-west of Epworth. The cropmarks include enclosures, trackways and linear features (NLHER: MLS7249). There are two potential Roman settlements recorded to the north-east of the town centre, the large amount of Roman pottery recorded in the area is suggestive of occupation in the locality (NLHER: MLS20210, MLS19903).

There are a large number of Roman findspots across the north of the town centre. These include a 2nd century trumpet brooch, broken in antiquity, a 2nd century ring terminal brooch, and a copper alloy coin of Honorius (394 – 402 AD) which were found during metal detecting in a field north of Epworth (NLHER: MLS17395). Further pottery and coins are also recorded to the north of the town centre (HER: MLS17407, MLS17538, MLS17537) and a Roman spindle whorl (NLHER: MLS17338), a coin of Gallienus (NLHER: MLS17511) and a coin of Vallerian (NLHER: MLS1751) have been discovered near the church in Epworth.

Excavated evidence for Romano-British activity was uncovered in the south-west of the current settlement (NLHER: MLS2481). A number of Romano-British ditches were identified containing pottery, animal bone and wood charcoal. These are likely to have been ditched field boundaries with some evidence for burning events, but the absence of charred grain suggests that crop processing did not occur in this area. It is probable that further remains from the Roman period are preserved in situ within the survey area.

1.3 EARLY MEDIEVAL AND ANGLO-SAXON

Epworth was the pre-conquest administrative centre of Axholme and was within the wapentake of Epworth (NLHER: MLS9584). Despite its clear local importance, there is limited evidence seen for this period in the archaeological record. A sherd of early Anglo-Saxon pottery was recorded near Lockwood Bank (NLHER: MLS20150) and late Roman/ early Anglo-Saxon pottery was also recorded during field walking to the north-east of the town centre (NLHER: MLS20211). Furthermore an Anglo-Saxon coin was also found by a metal detectorist in 1982 (NLHER: MLS2661).

1.3.1 PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE

The name 'Epworth' is Old English and means Eoppa's enclosure' from the personal name Eoppa and word 'enclosure'. Old English was commonly used between the 5th and 12th century (Bullen, 2022).

1.3.2 DOMESDAY SURVEY

Epworth is recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Epeuerde'. It was recorded as belonging to Leofwin (or Leduin) in 1066 before being granted to Geoffrey of La Guerche by 1086. A manor house existed in the settlement as well as 13 villagers, 8 freemen and 9 smallholders. Natural resources included 16 acres of meadow and a square league of woodland. Other resources included 12 ploughlands, 11 fisheries and 2 plough teams belonging to the lord and 6 belonging to the tenants. The settlement lost value after the conquest falling from £8 in 1066 to £5 in 1086.

1.4 MEDIEVAL

In the 1115-18 Lindsey Survey, Epworth is listed as within the Axholme wapentake but by the late 12th century all of the villages in the parish were listed under the wapentake of Manley and it had ceased to be an administrative centre. It was an important settlement in the Isle of Axholme, most likely due to it being the highest settlement in the region and its central position.

1.4.1 STREET PATTERN AND DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Epworth was granted to the Mowbray family during the reign of Henry I (1100 to 1135) and remained with them until 1476 (NLHER: MLS2447). The Mowbray messuage has been described as a small castle or manor house which stood close to the church (NLHER: MLS9584). The Manor House was constructed around 1344 by Lord Mowbray. The house stood until at least the mid-1700s. A large house with "*hall, parlour, kitchen with three lofts over them*" was recorded by Stonehouse in 1839 (Stonehouse, 1839). During archaeological excavations over the modern period, 12th-16th century foundations and ceramic building material has been found thought to be associated with the Manor House, including various patterned floor tiles bearing Mowbray arms. It is believed that the house fell into disuse in the 16th century.

The early focus of Epworth was located in the same area as the present day town centre. The roads High Street, Market Place and Church Street are probably the preserved outline of an early triangular market place which has been infilled with later buildings. The medieval market was located at the junction of a number of roads which allowed ease of access. The town reflects a planned character, with many boundaries demarcating the edge of the village, beyond which was agricultural land. Burgage plots are also visible in the town centre, particularly to the north of High Street which may have originated around the same time as the first formal market charter in the 14th century.

1.4.2 RELIGION AND EDUCATION

The Parish Church of St Andrew was constructed in the late 12th century, probably replacing an earlier structure (NLHER: MLS2448, NHLE: 1068692). Other religious structures are recorded across Epworth, including a possible chantry dedicated to St Mary and St Katherine set up by Lord Mowbray in 1344, that was reputed to have been sited in the same area as the Mowbray Manor House, close to the Church. Fifty carved figures of 'angels, saints, martyrs and bishops' found during demolition of 'The King's Head' which stood at the junction of Church Street and Market Place, probably date to the 15th century and may have been associated with this chantry (NLHER: MLS2449). A Premonstratensian Cell may have been established at Melwood Grange in the south-east of Epworth around the same time; however its location is disputed (NLHER: MLS2474). A Carthusian Priory was founded at Melwood in circa 1397-8 and the Premonstratensian holdings were transferred to the Carthusians in 1399. The site is now a Scheduled Monument (NLHER 2471: NHLE: 1017487).

1.4.3 ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY

The earliest recorded market to be granted in Epworth was in 1327, which was to be held by John de Mowbray (Mowbray). Further grants were awarded in the later part of the same century to Thomas de Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham who was granted a

market and an annual fair for Epworth in 1383 (NLHER: MLS9584). A market cross was erected in the market place in the medieval period which still stands, though it was reset in 1806 (NLHER: MLS2450, NHLE: 165145).

The economy of Epworth was likely to have depended on agriculture and local craft production, and evidence of an open-field system is recorded by the NLHER and is still visible in the landscape surrounding the town in the present day (NLHER: MLS2453). Flax and hemp growing and processing was a major part of the economy of Epworth, and was a trade which was seen across much of the wider Isle of Axholme. The plant was processed in retting pits, the remains of which are recorded across the survey area. These pits were used to separate outer husk of the flax and hemp from the useful textile fibres within (NLHER: MLS10561, MLS17348, MLS19477). Such was the importance of the trade to the local economy that some retting sites were reserved for use by the lord of the manor (NLHER: MLS19476). This trade continued to be of great importance into the late post-medieval period.



1.4.4 LANDSCAPE

The landscape surrounding the town was incredibly productive for the inhabitants of Epworth, and provided a variety of opportunities from the communally organised farming system, with shared strip-cultivated open arable fields, meadows, and common pastures. In 1359 John de Mowbray of Epworth is said to have granted the commoners the right to exploit the Axholme commons 'exempt from all improvement'. The commons were located to the east, west and north of Epworth, although the arable and later private enclosure was closer to the town, on the higher land. Epworth shared 14000 acres of lowland common with the Westwood Manor, upon which 12000 cattle were kept alongside pigs and sheep (Miller, 1997). The commons provided great amounts of resources for local people such as rabbits, fowl and fish, materials for building including wood, clay and reeds as well as fuel. They were also intersected by creeks and drains which served to remove excess water from the land, provide a communication network and also acted as a barrier to outsiders unfamiliar to the area (Thirsk, 1953). The arable land, which was largely on the higher ground to the north-east, was part of the open-field system, although some areas were subject to early piece-meal enclosure. The pattern of these former field systems are unusual in the fact that they have been very well preserved and are among only a handful to survive in England. They are recognised in the North Lincolnshire Local Plan as an Area of Special Historic Interest (NLC, 2021).

1.4.5 CHARACTERISTIC BUILDINGS

The Parish Church of St Andrew (NLHER: MLS2448, NHLE: 1068692)

The Grade I listed Church of St Andrew is largely 14th to 15th century in date with a late 12th to 13th century nave and arcades. It is built on the probable site of an earlier church. The 14th century chancel was almost destroyed in 1642, and was partly rebuilt in the 1670s. Renovations to the church took place in the 18th and 19th centuries.

1.5 POST-MEDIEVAL

1.5.1 STREET PATTERN AND DEVELOPMENT

Epworth continued as a nucleated settlement in the early post-medieval period. Between 1590 and 1640, 100 new cottages were built in Epworth, likely within the bounds of the town core. The town's prosperity during this time is attributed to the economic return from the common land provided in the Isle of Axholme and improvement of agricultural land due to drainage (Epworth Conservation Area Appraisal). The population grew by 15% in the 17th century (Miller, 1997), and Epworth became especially prosperous in the 18th century due to its rich soils as well as the improvement to methods and tools. This boom in the economy caused the most change in the development of Epworth by increasing the population and giving the town more wealth. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the town expanded to the north-west, along Station Road and West End Road, with new farmsteads and houses as well as chapels. In the early 19th century, there was also a growth in isolated farmsteads; this was largely following the enclosure of the agricultural land surrounding the town, which altered the agricultural organization of the town, and provided opportunities for new farmsteads to be constructed. In the 1830s, new buildings were built in brick and tile, while older mud and stud buildings were replaced with these materials. The brick used for the new construction was often locally produced due to the high quality clay in the Isle of Axholme (Miller, 1997). Although the economy in the 19th century was irregular, there were a number of public buildings established during this period including a temperance hall, library and

police station as well as a voluntary fire service station (Whites Directory, 1872).

1.5.2 LANDSCAPE

Epworth was described as having incredibly fertile land in the 17th century; having two forms, one being sandy and another clay, the former holding a higher value. The farmers were said to be able to rotate hemp, barley and rye without a fallow year (Thirsk, 1953). An 'alternate husbandry system' was also in place in the privately enclosed land in Epworth and tenants divided their fields into three, rotating them with hay, grazing and crops (Thirsk, 1953).

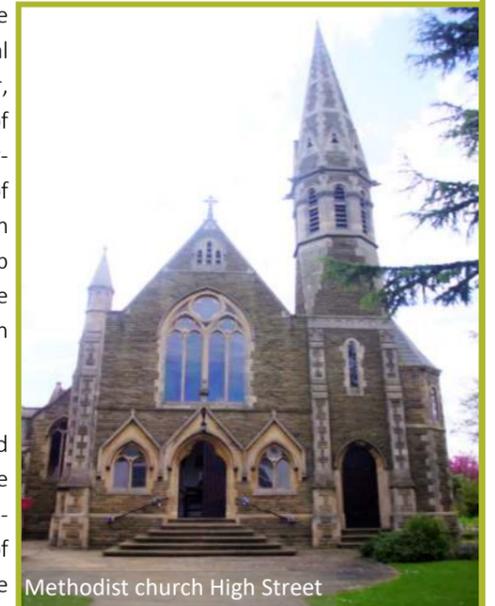
In the same century the Isle of Axholme was transformed through large scale drainage schemes put into force in 1626 following an agreement made between Charles 1 and Cornelius Vermuyden, a Dutch drainage engineer. The agreement stated that the drained land would be split into thirds, on third going to the King, one to Vermuyden and the other to the local people who had rights of common. This threatened the locally organised agricultural systems which had been in place for hundreds of years. The schemes were responded to with violence from some of the inhabitants of the Isle of Axholme who were set to lose their livelihoods and access to a wide array of resources upon which they depended (Holmes, 1980). They also believed that the King had no ownership over the land, the commons having been granted to the tenants in a charter from Sir John de Mowbray in 1359. The anger of local people was felt in the late 1620s and 1630s with the destruction of materials and crops, damage to the church and the abuse of workmen (Peacock, 1870). A number of Dutch overseers who had been employed by Vermuyden were instructed to carry weapons resulting in the death of one man. Despite this, Vermuyden was backed by the government and royal officials were encouraged to quell the riots forcefully; with the ring leaders being taken to London, fined and released on the condition that they would not disrupt the schemes any further (Holmes, 1980). 'The drainage of the Isle of Axholme was a formidable example of the deployment of royal authority to crush a peasantry who were forced to watch the dismemberment of their traditional economy' (Holmes, 1980). The commons around Epworth were reduced from 14000 to 5900 acres, following drainage (Miller, 1997). This scheme led to a loss of fishing and fowling, upon which many livelihoods depended, in the landscape around Epworth, although they remained prominent industries in the area. The South Axholme area generally maintained a strip-cultivated open-field system of fields, with society being mostly composed of many small free-holders. This continued after the enclosure of Epworth in 1803 as there were no major landowners. In this way, Epworth retained the 'townfield' system of an 'open' parish, with many landowners (Miller, 1997).

Despite the drainage of the Isle of Axholme having a purpose of improving the fertility of the land, it had the opposite effect in Epworth. The lack of natural warping and frequent flooding resulting in a loss of fertility of the soils (Miller, 1997). Despite this it remained a relatively fertile area and the production of hemp and flax was very high. The enclosure of some areas of land within the parish, which took place by Parliamentary Act in 1803, resulted in further loss of land and resources for the inhabitants of the town. In compensation, the parish council rented out one-acre plots on Epworth Turbary to allow the poor to set up small holdings and build their cottages (NLHER: MLS20660). These plots have been partially preserved into the present day and are recognised in the North Lincolnshire Local Plan as an Area of Special Historic Interest (NLC, 2021).

1.5.3 ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY

The main industries in Epworth after agriculture, were based on peat, clay and coal extraction and on processing agricultural produce. The commoners lifestyle was therefore severely impacted following the drainage schemes of the 17th century. Draining the land led to loss of fishing and fowling access, and the parish of Epworth was compensated by an award to assist sack cloth production for the poor instead (Miller, 1997). Despite this, fishing and fowling was still a prominent industry, though it was surpassed in importance by the production of hemp and flax. There were weekly markets and Epworth was one of the major market towns in the area. Annual fairs for hemp and flax were held which made a large contribution to the local economy (Wright, 1982). The large supply of hemp and flax led to widespread home weaving and small factories for the production and processing of sacking and sailcloth (Miller, 1997). In 1730 there were 4 factories for sacking in Epworth (Wright, 1982). In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the parliamentary enclosure brought an increased amount of arable land into cultivation. There was also an increase of small scale secondary farming industries, such as milling, malting, brewing, seed crushing and agricultural engineering (Wright, 1982). The turbaries, which had been granted in compensation following the enclosure, were used by locals for market gardening, growing potatoes and keeping livestock, as well as providing turves of peat (Miller, 1997).

In the depression of the post-Napoleonic period, local markets began to decline, including Epworth (Miller, 1997). The in-



Methodist church High Street

creased ease and reliability of transport to larger urban centres, such as Doncaster, meant more people were going to these regional markets instead of small town markets. The economic health of the town further suffered as trade continued to decline in the early 19th century.

Despite this, there was still growth in the town, including the construction of local civic and religious buildings. The gas works was established in 1868, on Tottermire Lane (NLHER: MLS22386). The complex consisted of one storage tank and four buildings in two terraces. Most of the eastern part of the structure survives and has been converted into a house. The rest of the land has been converted into parking for the fire station situated to the east.

1.5.4 RELIGION AND EDUCATION

Epworth retained St Andrews as its parish church however, over the post-medieval period there was a very strong non-conformist presence within the town. Other religious buildings included a possible Baptist meeting house, suggested from documentary evidence of the Epworth Baptist Record Book (1673), which is thought to be the oldest non-conformist record in England (NLHER: MLS21825). A second Baptist chapel was built in 1857, replacing an earlier chapel and incorporating its burial ground (NLHER: MLS17504). A Primitive Methodist chapel was built in 1821 (NLHER: MLS17505), and a New Connexion Methodist Chapel was built in 1860, replacing an earlier one (White's Directory, 1872). There was also a Roman Catholic Chapel which was built in 1864 by a former resident of Epworth (White's Directory, 1872).

The founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, John Wesley (1703-1791) was born in Epworth and grew up in the Old Rectory (NLHER: MLS2451, NHLE: 1068805). He sought to reform the church from within and established a new form of Methodism which spread across much of Lincolnshire and the wider country. He is known to have preached at a number of spots in the town including at an open air meeting site (or possibly a barn), and the market cross during the 1730s (NLHER: MLS21922, MLS2450). The first known Wesleyan Chapel was located on the High Street (NLHER: MLS22502) and was constructed in 1772. This was replaced in 1821 by a large Wesleyan chapel that in turn was replaced by the extant Wesley Memorial Chapel erected in memory of John Wesley (NLHER: MLS6530). The 1886 Ordnance Survey map showed 'Methodist Chapel (Wesleyan)' next to an unnamed farmstead, and it has been speculated this may represent an open-air chapel or meeting site due to the lack of structural remains (NLHER: MLS21922).

There were a number of schools established in Epworth, particularly religious schools. A Free School was set up in 1711 and was gifted three acres of land in 1728 and 1731 for its upkeep (White's Directory, 1872). Three schools were extant by the late 19th century with two opened in Epworth between 1845 and 1876; the National School in 1845 by a Government grant and another primary school (NLHER: MLS22384). These were located on Battle Green, High Street and Market Place, and a Mechanics' Institute was also established between 1836 and 1838 (Wright, 1982).

A new cemetery was established to the south of the town in 1881 and a chapel was constructed at the entrance (NLHER: MLS21928).

1.5.5 RAILWAY AND TRANSPORT

Roads in the Isle of Axholme remained in poor condition until the 1830s. Turnpikes were never established, so the roads could be unreliable and some were known to be impassable in winter. The Stainforth and Keadby Canal was constructed around 1792 to 1802 which provided Epworth with more opportunities to export goods. The creation of a floating dock in Goole at the end of the Aire and Calder Navigation Canal also expanded this. However, these easier transport links to larger market centres had a detrimental effect on local markets as the economy moved to larger population centres like Doncaster. In the early 19th century pauper labour was used to pave the roads in the Isle of Axholme with Yorkshire flagstones and created causewayed paths for horses (Miller, 1997).

1.5.6 CHARACTERISTIC BUILDINGS

The Old Rectory (NLHER: MLS2451, NHLE: 1068805)

The Old Rectory is Grade I listed and was built circa 1709 to replace the previous rectory that was destroyed by fire earlier in the year, this house was the boyhood home of the founder of Wesleyan Methodism John Wesley and his brother Charles. The building has since been made into a museum of the Wesley family and Wesleyan Methodism.

1.6 MODERN AND 21st CENTURY

1.6.1 STREET PATTERN AND DEVELOPMENT

Epworth's population grew slowly and unevenly over the course of the 20th century with 1856 people recorded as living in the parish in 1901. The population fell to 1795 people in 1931 before rising again to 1975 residents in 1961. In 2020 the population was estimated to be around 3734. The layout of the town centre established in the medieval and post-medieval periods was largely preserved into the modern period. Over the course of the century development continued along the main trunk roads with infilling which has created a mixed architectural picture across much of the area, and in the later 20th century development took place behind the road front. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, larger stand-alone developments have taken

place on the edge of the town.

1.6.2 TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Agriculture continued to be a large part of the local economy in the 20th century and was partially controlled by the local court leet. This system prolonged the use of strip farming in the town as well as regulating drainage (Olney, 1979). Over the 20th century, some of the former industries associated with agriculture such as milling have been lost to the town, although some mill buildings remain (NLHER: MLS7743). In the more recent decades, the town has become a commuter town for the larger local settlement centres of Scunthorpe and Doncaster and the local economy largely comprises a small number of town centre shops (Lyman, 2004). There is a small amount of light industry scattered across the survey area, generally located in areas of former activity such as on the former airfield, railway station and mills.

The Epworth show which began in the 19th century has continued over the modern period and is still held on the August Bank Holiday.

1.6.3 RELIGION AND EDUCATION

In the modern period, the Methodist New Connexion chapel and school located on the High Street which had been built in 1859-60 was converted into a youth centre in 1944. In 1926 Epworth Turbary Mission was built it was originally entirely of wood with a black tarred external coating (NLHER: MLS22760). It was encased with breeze blocks during the 1970s, and a new roof was added 2011.

Education in Epworth has changed over the 20th century. The Baptist school building still stands, although it is no longer used as a school (NLHER: MLS17504). The former Primitive Methodist school, located on Station Road, has also since changed use, and is now a shop (NLHER: MLS17505). The primary school on Battle Green was enlarged in 1912 to accommodate 300 pupils. In the 1960s, it was converted into a public house now known as the Old School Inn (NLHER: MLS22384).

Two large new schools, including a primary and a secondary, have been established in the 20th century, to the south-west of the town centre, within an area which was also residentially developed during the latter half of the 20th century.

1.6.4 RAILWAY AND TRANSPORT

The Isle of Axholme Joint Railway was opened in 1903, and was one of the last lines in the county under the Light Railways Act of 1896 (NLHER: 7910). Epworth North Railway Station was opened on Station Road in c1903 (NLHER: MLS22564). The railway was relatively short-lived and closed to passengers in 1933 although the section from Haxey Junction to Epworth was used for freight until February 1956 (Mills, 1989). The site of the former railway station is now used for light industry and commerce.

1.6.5 MILITARY

Sandtoft Airfield was established at the north-west of the parish in 1943. It included several structures and facilities including a rifle range (NLHER: MLS22573). It remained active until 1945, at which time the aircraft and some buildings were disbanded. Following a short period where it was used by the US Air Force, the airfield came back into the control of the UK in 1955. In the following decades parts of the airfield were sold off and in 1969 the Sandtoft Transport Centre was opened on the site of a former hanger. In 1982 another hangar was built for use as a recreational light aircraft facility (Blake, Hodgson, Taylor, 1984). In the 21st century, part of the airfield is used for light industry.

A Royal Observer Corps underground monitoring post, which was in use during the Second World War and then again between 1961 and 1968 is extant to the north-east of Epworth (NLHER: MLS20313). It is the only remaining complete Second World War Royal Observer Corps structure in Lincolnshire.

HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Summary

The Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) have been based on the Historic Urban Character Types (HUCTs). The HUCT maps are available separately to this document. The HUCTs highlight patterns of development through areas which have originated at a similar time, are comparable in how they have developed or demonstrate a similar character or land use. The identification of HUCTs with these similarities allows groups (HUCAs) to be formed and analysed as a wider area.

The HUCTs are divided into 14 periods (see table opposite); these have been narrowed from the periods in the archaeological and historical background to provide a more detailed picture of the development and character of a place, incorporating the Industrial Revolution and the fast pace of development throughout the 20th century.

The character areas are discussed in terms of heritage value, based upon Historic England’s 2008 ‘Conservation Principles’, these include: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic, and Communal. ‘Conservation Principles’ sets out a method for thinking systematically and consistently about the heritage values that can be attributed to a place. People value historic places in many different ways; ‘Conservation Principles shows how they can be grouped into four categories. A concordance table has been produced to compare the values taken from the ‘Conservation Principles’ with the NPPF21, in terms of significance.

The values are as follows:

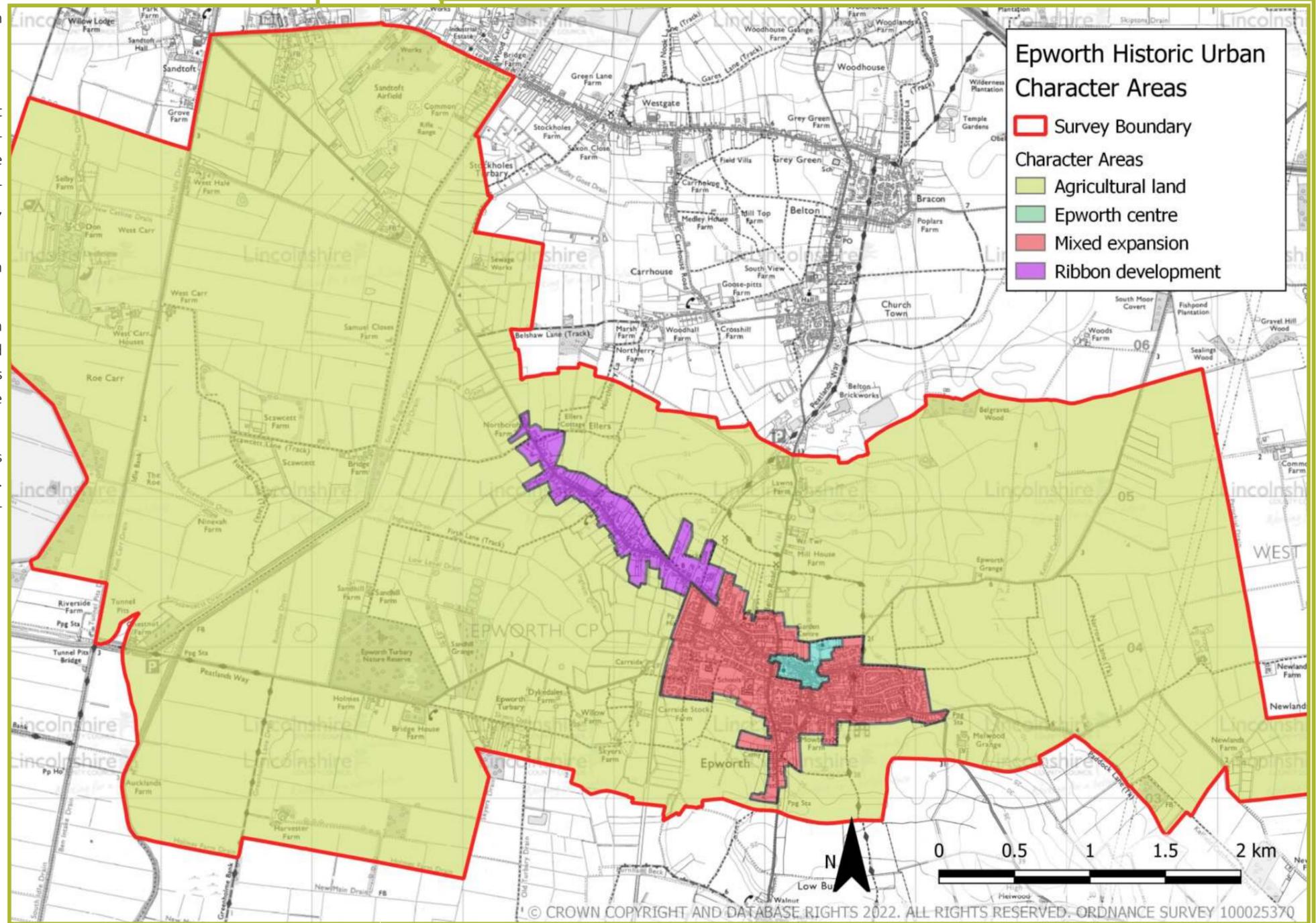
Evidential: the potential of what is present within the HUCA to tell us more about past human activity if investigated. This might relate to a national story of archaeological knowledge or architectural history. One factor which will affect the value is the integrity of what the HUCA contains. Archaeological deposits may be compromised by later development or buildings may be significantly altered by later, unsympathetic extensions and alterations.

Historical: the potential of the HUCA overall to illustrate the story of the town. In some circumstances the story may be of national importance.

Aesthetic: the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from the HUCA, principally its appearance. This may be derived from a designed element like a 20th century council housing estate, or from the way the HUCA has evolved over time. Unattractive elements, such as neglected sites, might reduce the aesthetic value.

Communal: the values the local community attach to the HUCA - what it means to the local population, including commemorative, symbolic and social values. Also to what extent the HUCA has the potential to increase public sensitivity towards the historic environment.

Period	Date Ranges	Abbreviations	
1	Prehistoric	10000-43	Pre-H
2	Roman	43-409	Rom
3	Early Medieval	410-1065	E-Med
4	Medieval	1066-1539	Med
5	Post Medieval	1540-1759	P-Med
6	Late 18th Century	1760-1799	Late 18thC
7	Early 19th Century	1800-1832	Early 19thC
8	Mid 19th Century	1833-1865	Mid 19thC
9	Late 19th Century	1866-1899	Late 19thC
10	Early 20th Century	1900-1924	Early 20thC
11	Early Mid 20th Century	1925-1949	Early-mid 20thC
12	Late Mid 20th Century	1950-1974	Late-mid 20thC
13	Late 20th Century	1975-1999	Late 20thC
14	21st Century	2000-Present	21stC



The Conservation Principles values

This can be used to understand how value has been assigned in the value tables which can be found in the Historic Urban Characterisation Area Assessments (HUCAs).

Evidential value

High	There is a high potential for the heritage assets within the HUCA to contribute to an understanding of the history of the town. Archaeological sites are likely to survive (both below ground and above ground fossilised within the townscape) and for new research relating to the nature and origins of the built heritage to enhance the understanding of the development of the town. New insights into the history of the town can contribute to an understanding of the development of towns from the medieval period onwards both within Lincolnshire and more widely.
Medium	There is the potential for heritage assets to contribute to an understanding of the history of the town, but there may be fewer opportunities for new insights to be deduced due to the nature of the heritage assets in question or subsequent changes to the historic character of the HUCA. The potential for archaeological deposits to contribute to an understanding of the development of the town may currently be unclear due to the current level of understanding of the origins of the HUCA. The potential may also be impacted by levels of development.
Low	There are no or very few known heritage assets. The understanding for the potential for above and below ground archaeological deposits to survive may be affected by the current lack of research within the wider area. Mitigation may still be required dependent upon an assessment of both the nature of any prospective new development and the potential of the individual sites being developed.

Historical value

High	The legible heritage assets either dominate or significantly contribute to the historic character of each HUCA. There are strong associations between the heritage assets (both tangible and intangible) within the HUCA that are potentially demonstrable and/or the heritage assets make an important contribution to the history of the wider area. There are often designated sites within or lying adjacent to the HUCA and in some cases these may comprise or include portions of Conservation Areas. The high value is not precluded by some degree of 20th/21st century alterations to the historic character.
Medium	Legible heritage assets are present within the HUCA, but are not necessarily predominant or they have undergone some form of alteration. Their presence, however, may contribute to an understanding of the development of the character area and/or there are potential associations between assets. Further research may clarify these associations and elucidate the contribution of these assets to the history of the wider area. Even in their present form they do enable the public and community to visualise the development of the area over time.
Low	There are no or very few known legible heritage assets; where they exist their associations are not clearly understood.

Aesthetic value

High	The completeness or integrity of the extant heritage townscape and its contribution to the aesthetics of the zone is significant. There are opportunities to enhance or restore the historic fabric of the HUCA. The HUCAs will often form part of or form the setting to Conservation Areas.
Medium	The components of the townscape are legible, but there may have been considerable impact by 20th or 21st century re-development of elements of the historic character. It is not possible within this project to discuss whether the modern alterations have positive, neutral or negative impacts upon overall aesthetics.
Low	The aesthetics of the historic character have been significantly impacted by 20th or 21st century development. It is not within the scope of this project to discuss whether their contributions are positive, neutral or negative within the wider townscape.

Communal value

High	Contains numerous heritage assets which could be used to engage the community through interpretation. The heritage assets clearly form part of a wider history of an area which can be drawn into a narrative. There may already have been a degree of interpretation and/or the community/public already has access to at least some of the heritage assets within the zone.
Medium	The ability for the heritage assets to contribute to the history of the town may be limited by the current understanding, their legibility within the townscape or through limited access.
Low	There are few known heritage assets which make it difficult to elucidate their history or apply it to a wider interpretation. There is no access or the legibility of the heritage assets is negligible.

Concordance Table between Historic England Conservation Principles and the NPPF

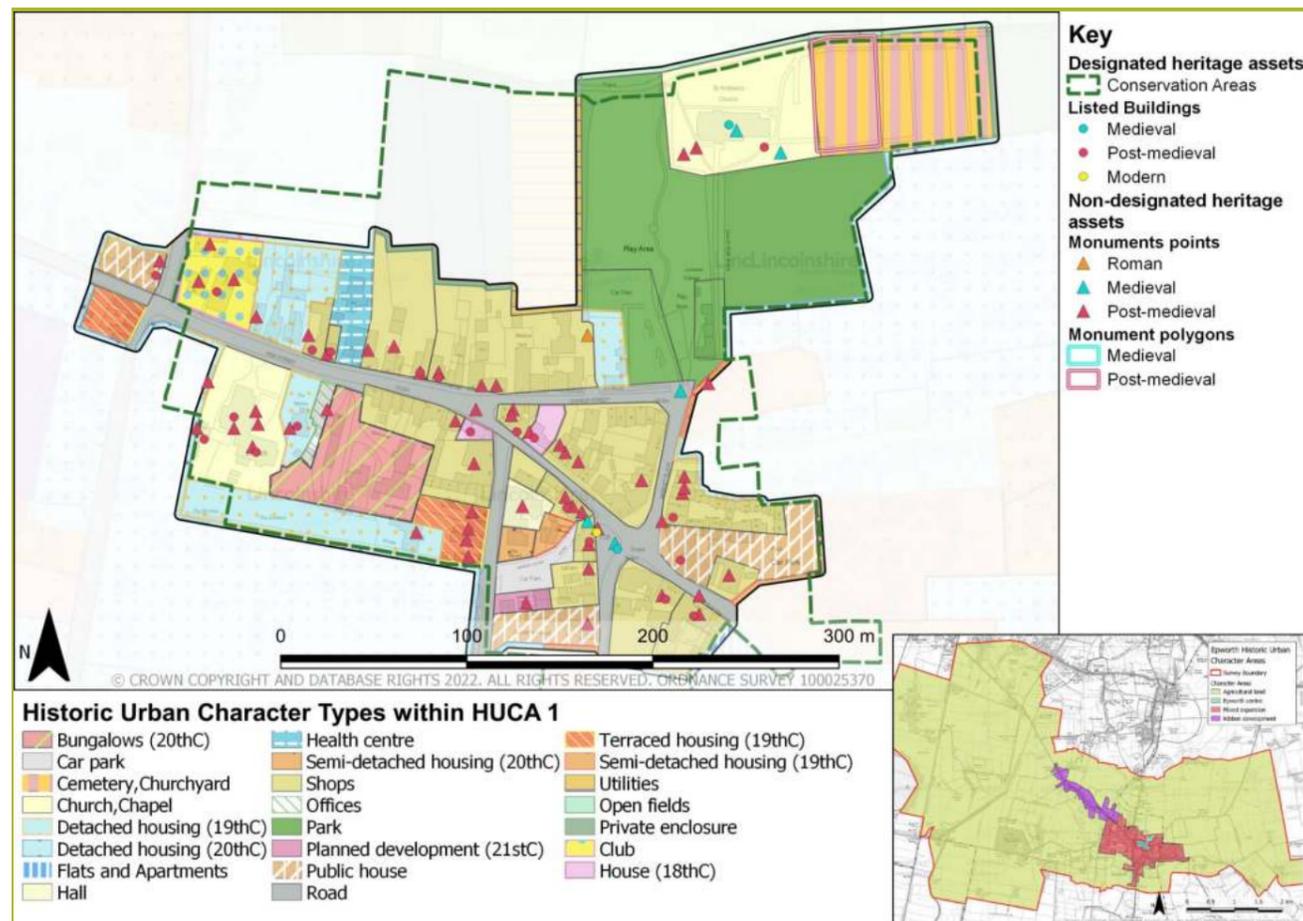
NPPF Significance	Conservation Principles	Conservation Principles Scope Note	NPPF Scope Note
Archaeological	Evidential	<i>"the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity."</i>	<i>"There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point."</i>
Historic	Historical	<i>"the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative."</i>	<i>"An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity."</i>
Architectural/ Aesthetic	Aesthetic	<i>"the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place."</i>	<i>"These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture."</i>
*See Paragraphs 190 (b) and (c), 193, 197 (b) and (c), 205, 206.	Communal	<i>"the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory"</i>	<i>N/A see relevant paragraphs</i>

EUS in planning

It is anticipated that the EUS will be used to support appropriate application of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the future development of Lincolnshire's towns. The EUS is directly applicable to the aims set out in the 2021 NPPF, particularly in Chapter 3 'Plan Making', Chapter 12 'Achieving well-designed places' and Chapter 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. Chapter 3 states that *Strategic policies should... make sufficient provision for: conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment... Plans are 'sound' if they are: Justified... based on proportionate evidence.* For both objectives the EUS can provide a thorough evidence base which can assist in the production of plans. Chapter 12 states that Planning policies and decisions *should ensure that developments... are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting... establish or maintain a strong sense of place using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.*

The EUS discusses local character, including built character and landscape setting, the evidence provided in the character assessments can be used to aid in the creation of 'well-designed places' through supporting an understanding and appreciation (from a heritage perspective) of the history and character of a town. The EUS contributes to the application of Chapter 16 of the NPPF by providing another evidence source on which to base development applications. The discussion of the character within the town can also be used to assist in the reappraisal and designation of new conservation areas.

Recent design-related guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, explicitly reference the significance and value of understanding the historic character of a place. Well-designed places are: based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design; integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them; influenced by and influence their context positively; and responsive to local history, culture and heritage. In all cases the EUS programme, and its products, are directly aligned with the aspirations in these key planning guidance advice notes and emerging legislation.



HUCA 1—Epworth centre

Key characteristics

- ◆ Town centre, with a mixed use including commercial and residential,
- ◆ Spread out shops, the former market centre has largely become a crossroad,
- ◆ Small scale, 2 storeys, some 3 storeys,
- ◆ No formal design, although similar form with some local variations including window design and roof pitches,
- ◆ Close-knit, narrow terraced streets, the central road pattern forms a triangle which was probably a market originally,
- ◆ Red brick is most common with some use of render,
- ◆ Shop frontages 19th-20th century, many have used timber,
- ◆ Pantile and slate are common, modern tiles have also been used in some cases,
- ◆ Urban townscape, the largest green space is provided by St Andrew's Church and the green,
- ◆ Market Place opens up at its northern extent to a car park and green/park with views up-hill towards the church.

Landscape History

Within the character area, there is only one piece of evidence that is earlier than the medieval period, which is a Romano-British spindle whorl (NLHER: MLS17338). Although evidence of occupation during the Roman period is known in the wider area, little is known in the town centre of Epworth. Settlement is recorded in the town from the early medieval period, as shown by the Domesday Survey which recorded a manor as well as a number of villagers and small holders. In the medieval period, the character area began to form into the town centre which is extant today. The market in the town was probably planned and was within the triangle now formed by the roads Market Place, Church Street and High Street. Burgage plots are still visible to the north of High Street facing into this triangle which are also probably a remnant planning during this period. The market was probably infilled in later centuries, forming the road pattern visible today. St Andrew's Church shared a northern boundary with the High Street plots in what was probably a planned layout. Although the present church was built in the 12th century, it probably replaced an earlier structure (NLHER: MLS2448, NHLE: 1068692). During the medieval and early post-medieval periods, mud and stud buildings were common in Epworth, these were largely replaced throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries by brick buildings which are now the prevailing type seen in the character area. The HUCA has a good level of preservation with only minor amount of infilling in the modern period.

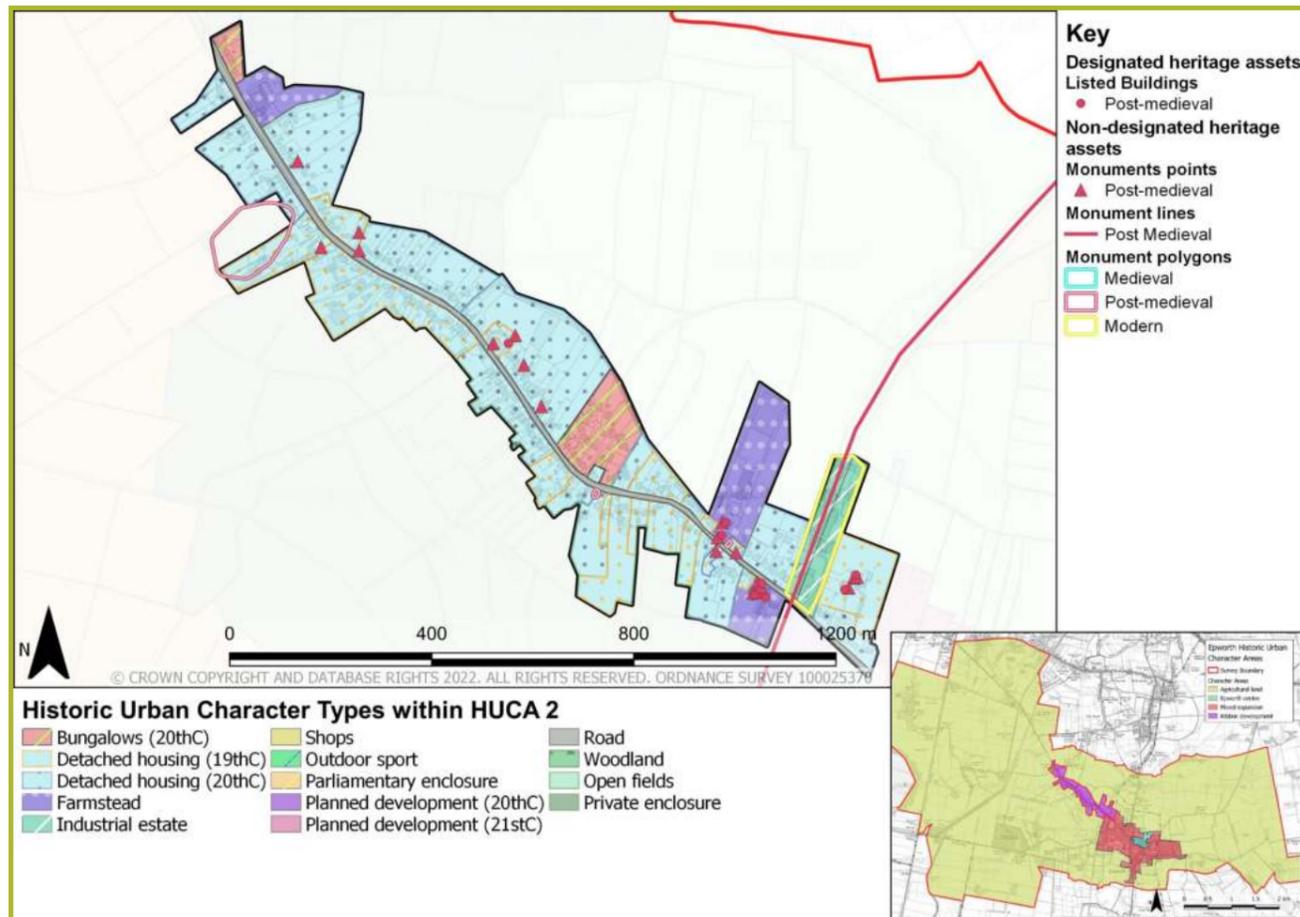


Evidential Value: The character area contains plentiful evidence largely relating to Epworth's medieval and post-medieval town history. The historic environment in the HUCA includes its layout and boundaries which are a reflection of its medieval growth. Its post-medieval built environment demonstrates the redevelopment and economic growth seen in the town over the 18th and 19th centuries, which allowed the buildings in the area to be modernised from mud and stud to brick and pantile.

Historical Value: The church of St Andrew reflects the older Anglican history of the town and on High Street the 19th century Methodist chapel demonstrates the shift in religious attitudes which is also seen across wider Lincolnshire. Epworth had a pivotal role in the introduction and spread of the Wesleyan branch of Methodism.

Aesthetic Value: Although not formal, the character area has a consistent character. The design, scale and layout of the town centre indicates a consistent growth over the 18th and 19th centuries. Epworth's low-key agricultural/ market town history is visible throughout the town centre and remains well preserved into the modern period.

Communal Value: There are several aspects of the town's history within the character area which could be and are used to engage the public on the history of the town. The market cross provides insight into the town's commercial history, and in the post-medieval period the town's religious history as the site was once used for preaching by John Wesley. The church green also provides an open space within which the town residents can gather.



HUCA 2—Ribbon development

Key characteristics

- ◆ Characterised by Epworth's 19th century growth with a large amount of 20th century infilling,
- ◆ A residential area, generally comprising large detached housing, some areas of detached bungalows, farm buildings,
- ◆ The former railway station has become a small area of light commercial industry,
- ◆ An open aspect with many buildings set back from the road behind front gardens and driveways, although older buildings more commonly are situated on the road front,
- ◆ Narrow pathways without a verge
- ◆ Low-density mixed brick, uPVC windows in modern buildings, older 19th century housing contains a larger amount of timber,
- ◆ Pantile and modern concrete tile roof material,
- ◆ Boundaries frequently include brick walls, or vegetation,
- ◆ Street greenery such as grass verges or street trees is provided within gardens,
- ◆ Rear boundaries to the north defined by historic field boundaries.

Landscape History

There are no recorded heritage assets within the character area prior to the post-medieval period. However, it was probably part of an open field system and the shape of the later development pattern appears to have followed the strips which were once cultivated as part of that system. In the 18th and 19th century, as the town began to expand outside of its nucleus, and Station Road and West End Road began to be developed. Farmsteads are found along its route, some of which are still functional. In the later 19th century and throughout the 20th century the road continued to be developed largely with large detached houses some development has taken place behind the street frontage with smaller bungalow developments.

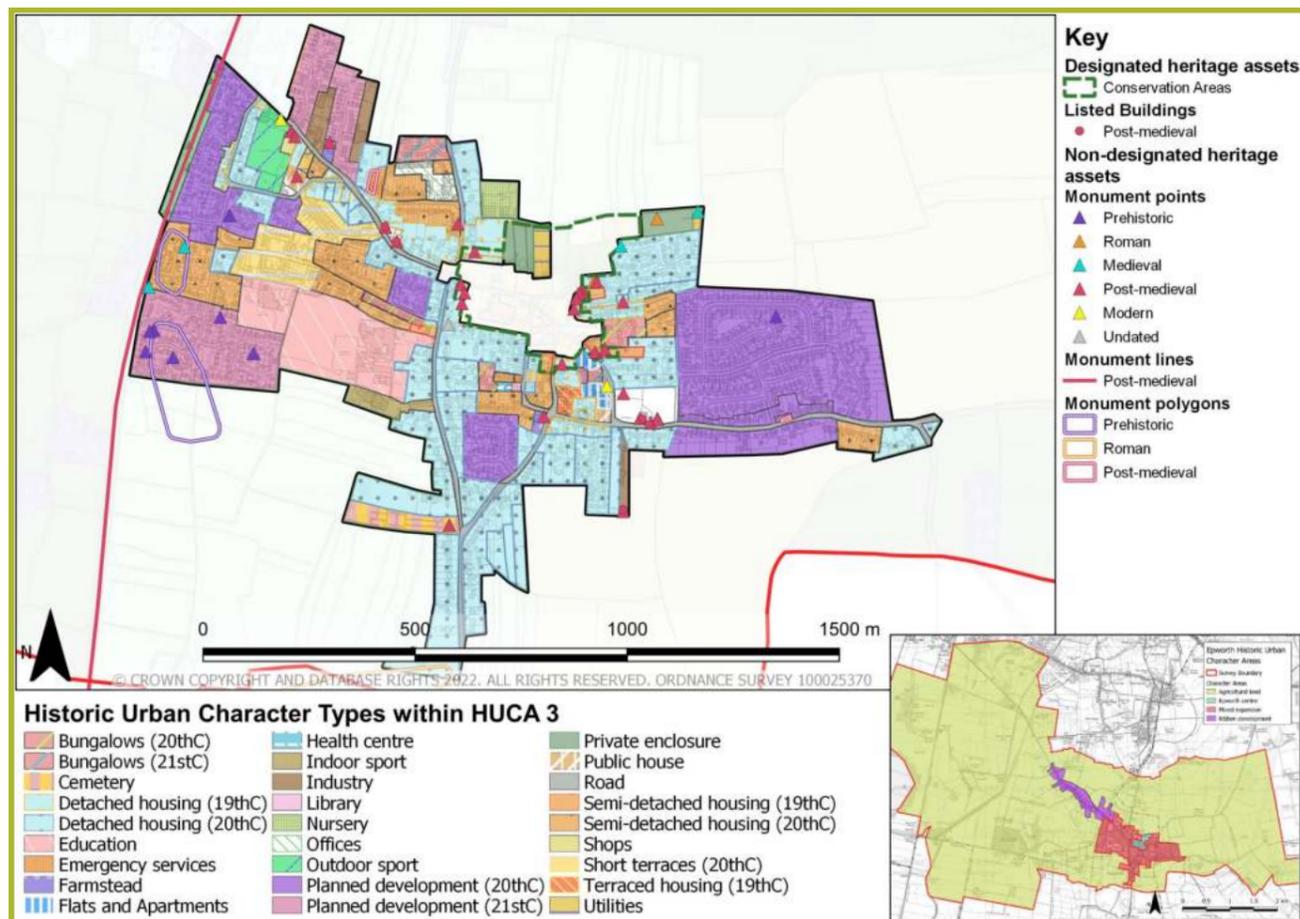


Evidential Value: The evidential value which is most prominent within the character area is the 19th and 20th century built environment. This highlights Epworth's agricultural history with many farmsteads located along Station Road and West End Road. The modern development in the town reflects a pattern which is seen across Epworth including infilling.

Historical Value: Legible heritage assets are present within the HUCA. Their presence, contributes to an understanding of the development of Epworth, particularly during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The association between the area and the wider town shows a shift which has occurred in the wider town. In its present form it does enable the public and community to visualise the development of the area over time.

Aesthetic Value: The character area contains buildings largely from the 19th-20th century, the growth of the town and its changing nature is visible across the character area.

Communal Value: The ability for the heritage assets to contribute to the history of the town may be limited due to the private nature of the HUCA.



HUCA 3– Mixed Expansion

Key characteristics

- ◆ Characterised by a mixture of residential development,
- ◆ Largely modern development with some older buildings on the main routes into the town,
- ◆ Further development of public buildings, including schools,
- ◆ Mixture of styles and characters associated with the time of construction,
- ◆ Mixture of red/brown brick some use of render,
- ◆ Timber and uPVC windows as well as pantile and concrete tile dependent on period of construction,
- ◆ The views from the HUCA extend over the lower valleys to the east and west.

Landscape History

The character area contains a number of heritage assets from multiple periods. Within the south-western corner of the HUCA the remains for Iron Age field systems are recorded (NLHER: MLS19818). Excavation in this area has revealed 2nd century pottery as well as animal bone, which suggests that animal husbandry was practiced nearby. In the medieval period, the HUCA would have comprised agricultural land much of this area is topographically higher than the surrounding area to the east and west, and as such much of it was cultivated. The plan layout of the character prior to development indicated a preservation of the former strip layout seen in open field systems. Some development occurred, generally on road corners and along main roads in the 18th and 19th centuries, including farmsteads. A new cemetery was also established on Burnham Road in the mid-late 19th century (NLHER: MLS21928). The bulk of development within the character area has taken place over the 20th century initially, this comprised a number of private and council led developments closer to the town centre. In the later 20th and early 21st centuries development has taken place in large planned areas on the edge of the town. New schools have also been founded to the south-west of the town centre, surrounded by residential development.

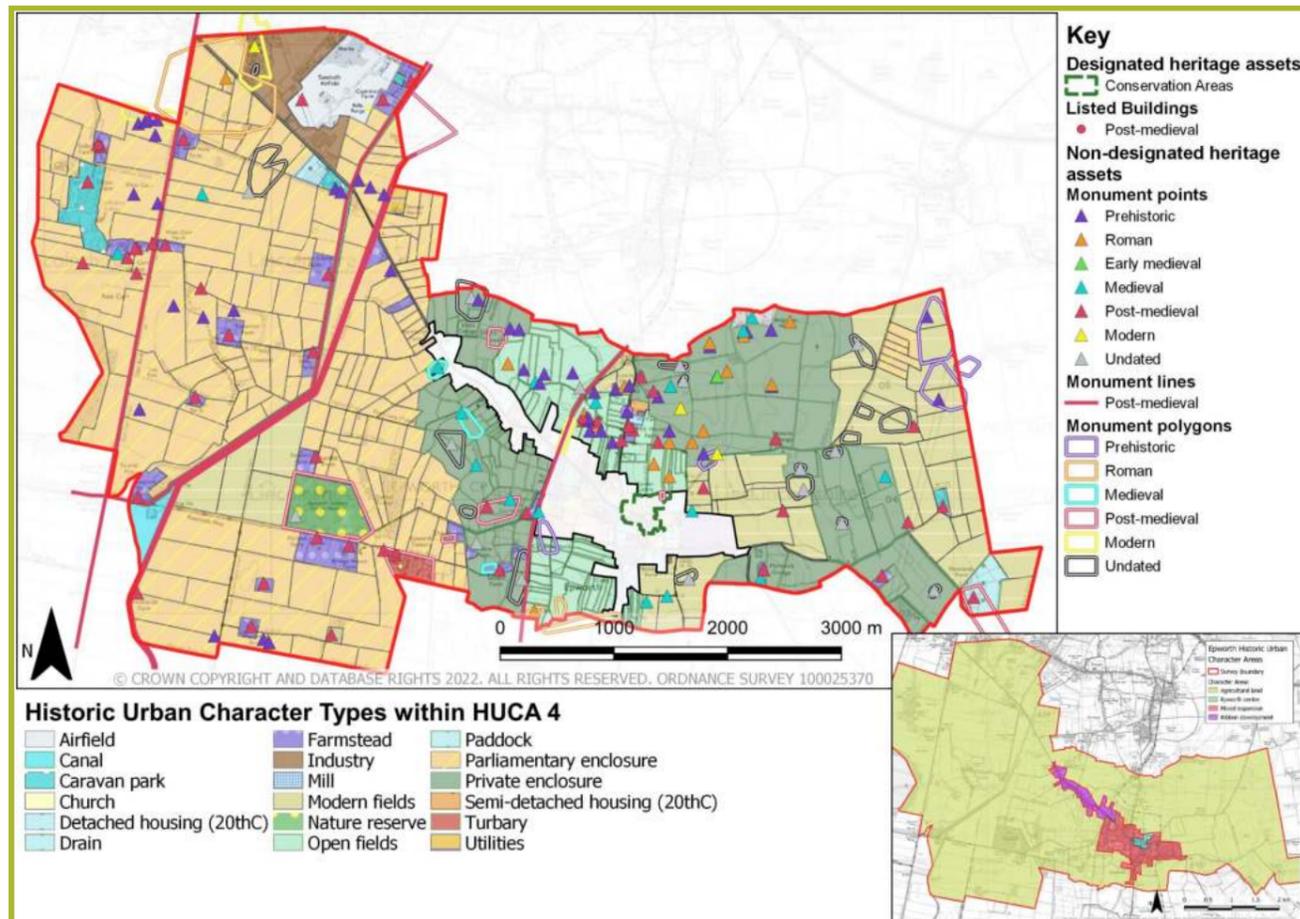


Evidential Value: Archaeological investigation within the character area records prehistoric agricultural activity in Epworth. In the post-medieval period, the development of Old Rectory and several farmsteads are also important to the local historical narrative.

Historical Value: Legible heritage assets contribute to an understanding of the development of the character area through multiple periods. Buildings from the modern period demonstrate the expansion of the town, as it has been transformed from a small agricultural settlement to more of a commuter town, serving larger population centres like Scunthorpe and Doncaster, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The Old Rectory is important for the religious history of Epworth as the birth place of the Wesleyan of Methodism', which was to spread across the country and extend overseas.

Aesthetic Value: The character area largely reflects the 20th century growth of Epworth, although some older residential properties and farmsteads are extant throughout the area. The scattered buildings from the 19th century provide interest across the character area and provide insight into the former agricultural history of the town.

Communal Value: The Old Rectory is the dominant heritage asset within the character area which is now used to engage the public and the history of John Wesley and Methodism.



HUCA 4—Agricultural Land

Key characteristics

- ◆ Agricultural area. Mixed pattern including medieval strip fields, medieval and post-medieval irregular private enclosure, straight-sided parliamentary enclosure and modern fields,
- ◆ 19th and 20th century farmsteads,
- ◆ Boundaries include hedgerows and drains,
- ◆ Topographically a ridge runs north-south through the centre of the HUCA; the land slopes to the west and to the east, before rising to the limestone scarp,
- ◆ Crossed by post-medieval infrastructure including drains and the lines of former railways.

Landscape History

The character area contains numerous assets from multiple periods. Prehistoric evidence in the HUCA includes cropmarks as well as scattered finds, such as flints or tools. Axe-heads are a common find in the south of the Isle of Axholme, and are suggestive of extensive land clearance during the Neolithic period. There are two potential Roman settlements recorded to the north-east of the HUCA (NLHER: MLS20210, MLS19903), and further Roman artefacts including coins, brooches and pottery have been recorded following field walking across the area. In the early medieval and medieval periods, the agricultural system for the town was established with large areas of common, often located in the lower wetter areas of the parish, as well as arable farming. In the medieval and early post-medieval periods there was some private piecemeal enclosure which has resulted in patterns of irregular enclosures, the boundaries of which are particularly visible to the east of the town. This strip farming system continued after the parliamentary enclosure of Epworth in 1791 as there were no major landowners, and endured into the modern period. The present day field pattern reflects this. From the mid 19th century, one-acre plots on some of the turbary land were let cheaply to the poor of the parish who had relinquished rights to land during the enclosure, enabling them to settle in small, often self-built cottages. Only a handful still survive as smallholdings few retain their buildings intact; an example is Edenroyd (NLHER: MLS22527). An Epworth Turbary was left to be used as classic turbary which has created undulating ground left by peat and sand digging. This has been colonised by scrub and woodland, now used as nature reserves (NLHER: MLS20660). In the early modern period, the court leet system was used to organise the agricultural system of Epworth, which was one of the reasons for the survival of strip farming. Historically, the enclosure of the open strip fields, whether by individuals or parliamentary act, was strongly resisted in the Isle and the communal arrangements for farming the strips continued through to the modern period. The persistence of the elements of the former landscape and the resultant openness of the core area around the town remains the dominant characteristic of the contemporary landscape. This remnant landscape is of great historical importance and is acknowledged as the best and largest example of very few surviving landscapes of this type in the country.



Evidential Value: There is a great amount of historic evidence within the character area, including archaeological remains dating to multiple periods such as enclosures and settlement evidence dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods. Later evidence includes well preserved landscape history which is contained in the field patterns preserved across the survey area. These include some of the last surviving open strip fields in England which are recognised both to the north and south of the town.

Historical Value: The turbaries are also of great importance and despite some loss of the former small holding buildings they still provide an insight into the agricultural history of the town.

Aesthetic Value: The variety and preservation of former agricultural landscapes is highly visible across the survey area and unusual across much of Lincolnshire, where older forms of farming have been obscured by the introduction of post-medieval and modern farming techniques. As such Epworth's landscape is of great importance. The development of the landscape is visible across the survey area, although some interpretation could be beneficial for full understanding of this asset.

Communal Value: There is a great amount of social and agricultural history within the character area, some areas are directly accessible such as the Epworth turbary Nature Reserve. The character area contributes to the history of Epworth which continues to have a strong connection with agriculture. The area has to be crossed to gain access to the town which highlights to visitors and residents the farming nature of the landscape in which Epworth is situated.

DISCUSSION

Historic background

Epworth during the prehistoric period was largely a low-lying and seasonally waterlogged or flooded environment except for an area of higher, drier land where the town was later to be established at least on a seasonal basis. Peat layers recorded from the survey area suggest that the area was part of a marsh environment during the late glacial period (12000-10000BC). Aerial photography and field walking in the area has highlighted a number of possible prehistoric sites, and scattered finds often of tools such as Axes, which are indicative of environmental management and forest clearance. Archaeological excavation on some sites across the area have revealed ditches and enclosures at the eastern and western limits of the survey area. Archaeological investigation of a site to the south of Carrside recovered pottery and charcoal dating to either the Iron Age or the Roman period (NLHER: MLS21349). There is a lot of evidence for Roman activity in the wider area of the Isle of Axholme, and within the survey area. Across the survey area, scattered Roman finds are recorded including coins and pottery. To the north of Epworth town centre there are also two probable settlement sites recorded, indicated by the large amount of pottery recovered in the vicinity. Epworth began to grow into the present-day town during the early medieval period, when it became the administrative centre of its own area. By the Domesday survey of 1086, the settlement had a local population, and an established agricultural system. The town became part of another administrative district in the later medieval period; however it did continue to grow in commercial importance demonstrated by its acquisition of a formal market charter in the 14th century. It was also during this period that the town was planned, the evidence of which is still visible in the present day road pattern. The agrarian systems continued to be developed over the medieval period and played a central role in the local economy of the town. This system of communal arable farming and communing endured into the 17th century, when a large part of it was curtailed by the introduction of large-scale drainage schemes in the Isle of Axholme, instigated by King Charles and Cornelius Vermuyden. This disrupted the agricultural organisation of the town and also resulted in lasting changes across the landscape. In the early 19th century some areas of the parish were enclosed through a Parliamentary Act, although some parts of the area had been subject to private enclosure before this. This further disrupted the local agricultural make-up of the parish. In compensation for the loss of agricultural land and rights some local people were offered turbarry and small holdings in exchange. These areas can be seen, although altered, in the present day. A great deal of hemp and flax was grown in the Isle of Axholme and in the 18th century, local cloth making factories were set up, contributing to the local economy. The town saw further large changes in the 18th and 19th centuries as older mud and stud buildings were replaced with brick and pantile structures, many of which make up the present day town. New civic and religious buildings were built during this period, coinciding with the rise of methodism. Wesleyanism was also established in the town by local man John Wesley, and as such Epworth has an incredibly important role in the founding of this branch of Methodism. Wesley's childhood home is now a museum and statues of the preacher are also extant in the town. In the modern period, the town has grown, although not to a large degree. Its former trades have largely ceased and although there are small local traders and commerce, it has become a dormitory town for larger population centres such as Doncaster and Scunthorpe.

Character summary

The character of Epworth is one of small scale brick built structures, which is a direct result of a fairly small local economy which has dominated in Epworth throughout its history. The town centre, which is represented in HUCA 1, reflects the 18th and 19th century redevelopment of the town and the founding of multiple local buildings of civic importance such as the Old Rectory, new Methodist churches, schools and the police station. This expansion continued on the main road out of the town, which is represented in HUCA 2 across Station Road and West End Road, where a number of farmsteads and 19th century properties were constructed. In the 20th century, this area, was infilled with modern residential development largely comprising detached housing and bungalows. In HUCA 3 larger residential expansion occurred in the town, on its east, west and south sides is recorded. This development comprised private and public residential development as well as schools for the growing population. The agricultural land which is pivotal to the history and economy of Epworth is characterised in HUCA 4. This has a well preserved and varied character, displaying field patterns from the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods, as well as evidence of the sweeping changes which followed the wider draining of the Isle of Axholme. The landscape of surviving ancient open strip fields and early enclosures surrounding the town centre of Epworth, together with its turbarries, is of national importance. North Lincolnshire Council seeks to protect this special character in its Local Plan (NLC, 2003).

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Acknowledgements

North Lincolnshire Council.

Extensive Urban Survey



The Parish Church of St Andrew

Epworth

2022

Project Number 2897

Historic England, Lincolnshire County Council

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