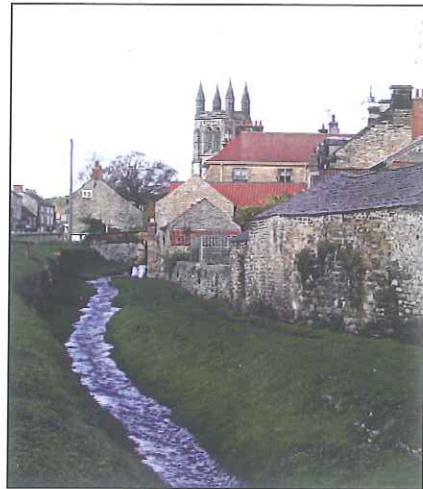


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# HELMSLEY

## Conservation Area Appraisal



Produced by:  
Ryedale District Council &  
North York Moors  
National Park Authority



## **Helmsley Conservation Area Appraisal**

‘Helm’ Old English meaning ‘Helm’s forest clearing’

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## 1. Introduction

This document is a character appraisal of the Helmsley Conservation Area. It is based on guidelines issued by English Heritage, the Government's adviser on the historic built environment, and has been jointly prepared by the North York Moors National Park Authority and Ryedale District Council. The aim of the appraisal is to help inform decisions made by the Local Planning Authorities, the Highways Authority, the Parish Council and local residents. The appraisal also highlights potential opportunities for enhancement works within the Conservation Area and makes recommendations for the implementation of further controls to help safeguard the character of the Conservation Area.

## 2. What is a Conservation Area?

2.1 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. A Conservation Area is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

2.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify, designate, preserve and enhance Conservation Areas within their administrative areas. The aim in a Conservation Area is to preserve or enhance not merely individual buildings but all those elements, which may include minor buildings, trees, open spaces, walls, paving materials etc., which together make up a familiar and cherished local scene.

## 3. What Effect does Designation Have?

3.1 The positive identification of an area helps focus attention on its qualities. It is intended that this will encourage a sensitive approach to any proposals for development. The local planning authority will exercise particular care to ensure that change, where it occurs, will preserve or enhance the character of an area. A Conservation Area designation would hope to increase the quality of design and ensure that new development respected its surroundings.

3.2 There are different planning controls in Conservation Areas and anyone proposing development should seek advice from their local planning authority.

3.3 The main effects of designation are that:

- All planning applications for development which would affect the character of a Conservation Area must be advertised in the local press and site notices posted.
- The construction of an extension or outbuilding over 50 cubic metres will probably require planning permission.

- Conservation Area consent is required for the demolition of buildings over 115 cubic metres.
- Planning permission is required for some alterations to dwellings including the installation of dormer windows and cladding.
- Satellite dishes or antennae on chimneys, front walls or front roof slopes will also require planning permission.
- Conservation Area designation also protects trees within the boundary by requiring owners to give the local planning authority six weeks notice of their intention to carry out any tree work on trees that are 75mm or over in diameter at 1.5m from the ground.

#### 4. Planning Context

- 4.1 Helmsley Conservation Area was designated in 1973 by North Yorkshire County Council.
- 4.2 The majority of Helmsley Conservation Area lies within the North York Moors National Park and this area is subject to the policies of the North York Moors Local Plan which was adopted in May 2003. The south-east area of the town, however, falls outside the National Park within the Ryedale District Council boundary. This area is subject to the policies of the Ryedale District Local Plan which was adopted in March 2002.
- 4.3 Although many alterations within the Conservation Area do not require permission from the Local Planning Authority, this guidance is designed to highlight the existing qualities of the Conservation Area and to encourage residents to execute high quality alterations that will preserve or enhance the existing environment.

#### 5. Location and Population

- 5.1 Helmsley is situated on the southern boundary of the North York Moors National Park approximately 60 metres above sea level. The town lays approximately 24 miles north-east of the city of York and 32 miles west of Scarborough. It is located at the junction of the A170, which runs on an east-west axis from Pickering, through Helmsley, to Thirsk, and the B1257, which runs south, from Stokesley, to join the A170 at Helmsley.
- 5.2 The population of Helmsley ward was recorded by the 2001 Census as being 3097. North Yorkshire County Council, however, estimated in 2000 that the population of the actual town was approximately 1500.
- 5.3 The Conservation Area covers an approximate area of 36.9 hectares (91.2 acres) and contains some 433 buildings within its bounds.

- 5.4 The Conservation Area also contains all 51 of the listed buildings located within the town, which represents approximately 12% of the building stock, as well as 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Appendix A). Of the listed buildings 48 are classified as Grade II and 3 are Grade II\*.

6. Wider Setting

- 6.1 Helmsley nestles in a hollow amongst undulating open countryside, flanked by imposing heather moor to the north and the rolling farmland of the Howardian Hills to the south. The flat lowland of the Vale of Pickering stretches eastwards from the town towards Malton. The River Rye forms part of the meandering southern boundary of the Conservation Area and is joined by Borough Beck at Rye Bridge, which flows southwards through the town from the moors. The meadows to the south of the Rye form an important buffer and create an idyllic setting for the town from the southern approach (see Photograph 1.)

**Photograph 1: Green buffer zone to south provides important views into the Conservation Area**



- 6.2 Due to the topography of the surrounding land, the approaches from both the north and south of the town provide elevated vantage points over the Conservation Area. From both approaches, the characteristic red pantile roofscape predominates as do the castle and church, which can also be seen from the eastern approach.
- 6.3 Helmsley Castle and Duncombe Park Estate to the west, the River Rye to the south and a steepening topography to the north-west have contained the development of the town. Consequently most recent development has taken place to the east and north-east of the settlement.
- 6.4 Helmsley's local geology is sandstone. The west and the north of the settlement, however, the latter of which gives rise to moor land, are predominantly limestone (Appendix B).

## 7. Origins and Development of the Settlement

- 7.1 Helmsley is likely to have been an important crossroads since prehistoric times and evidence suggests that there was human habitation in the vicinity of Helmsley dating to the Stone and Bronze Age. Finds of beehive querns confirm local agriculture and the milling of grain since at least the Iron Age. There are also reports of finds of Roman pottery and a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman coin.
- 7.2 The main origins of the settlement, however, date to the medieval period and by the 10<sup>th</sup> century a church and burial ground had been constructed here. The position of the settlement at the confluence of Borough Beck and the River Rye, the latter of which could be crossed at this point, played an integral part in the development of Helmsley as a market town. Although the first recorded market held in the present Market Place was in 1467, markets were probably held on the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 7.3 By the Norman Conquest a cluster of large properties, which still form a distinctive element in the street plan, had been established around the church, causing a diversion of the north-south road. The Domesday Book records show that Helmsley also boasted three manors at this time.
- 7.4 Following the Norman Conquest, Helmsley's significance was underlined by the construction of a castle on the knoll. This allowed both the 'town' and the river crossing to be controlled. The original date of construction of the castle is uncertain but in 1120 the manor was granted to Walter Espec who either established or rebuilt the castle. It was then extensively remodelled after 1190 and through the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 7.5 The presence of the castle, the seat of the local 'Lord', had a distinct impact on the development of Helmsley. In about 1190 a 'borough' was created by Bert de Roos, a planned, urban block of long, narrow plots which still today forms the eastern side of Market Street and Bridge Street. This coincided with the development of corn mills by the Rye and the construction of the east tower of the castle which would loom over the town. When Castlegate and Church Street were laid out some 150 years later the tower was heightened still further. The only known house surviving from this time is Canon's Garth, north-east of the church, together with a fragment inside the Old Manor House on Castlegate.
- 7.6 Later growth saw the development of new areas (Bondgate, High Street and Ryegate) and intensification and infill of previously under developed sites. The main market place remained the focus of lordly authority, however, as evidenced by the construction of an imposing building, now Rectory House, for the Estate's agents in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the overall form of Helmsley was largely complete. The vast majority of buildings which exist today date from this period or later.

- 7.7 In 1695, the combined Helmsley, Kirkbymoorside and Rievaulx estate was bought by Sir Charles Duncombe. In 1713, the castle's use as the Duncombes' residence was superseded and Duncombe Park Mansion was constructed. The mansion is situated outside the Conservation Area about 1km south west of the town.
- 7.8 By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century weaving had become established as the town's predominant cottage industry despite its reliance upon imported flax. The weavers were located on Bondgate and Bridge Street with some associated properties bordering the Beck. There were also some tanneries on Ryegate. The growth of machine driven looms in the West Riding, however, eventually destroyed Helmsley's weaving industry and, with the collapse of the linen trade, the weekly Saturday market also declined.
- 7.9 Agriculture continued to play an important role in supporting the town's economy. Several enclosures were agreed upon in the seventeenth century but it was not until the early 1820's that all arable land was enclosed with only two common pastures remaining. Appendices C & D demonstrate the growth of the settlement from the early middle ages up to 1822.
- 7.10 Although some infill development occurred within the town little substantial building work took place until the mid nineteenth century when the town enjoyed an economic recovery. Civic Buildings such as the Town Hall were constructed during this period. The row of cottages to the north of Bondgate, the Feversham Arms Hotel and the new police station were all built in the 1850's when the Golden Lion was rebuilt. In the 1860's the church was also largely reconstructed.
- 7.11 In 1871 an extension of the Pilmoor branch railway also reached Helmsley facilitating travel to and from the town and catalysing the development of Station Road, extending Ryegate eastwards. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the construction boom had subsided although by this time many houses had been 'improved' or remodelled so that little thatch remained in the town.
- 7.12 The station was closed to passenger traffic in 1953 although the twentieth century also heralded periods of substantial development much of which had little regard for the character of Helmsley. The area between Bondgate and Station Road, known as Low Fields, and the area to the north of Carlton Lane were developed with small housing estates during the first half of the century. A larger housing estate called 'The Limes' was also later constructed on land to the east of the town. It is mainly these areas of recent development which have been excluded from the Conservation Area although the focus on development outside the town centre has helped preserve some of Helmsley's burgage plots, and thus the original settlement pattern associated with the medieval development of the town. The last decade has continued to see a demand for housing which is resulting in development pressure on the land surrounding the Conservation Area and the spaces within it. Appendix F provides an illustrated bird's eye view of the town as it looks today.

## 8. Overview of Architectural and Historic Character

- 8.1 By 1600 the skeleton of the town, its streets and property blocks, was largely complete, although few of the buildings which now clothe this frame were erected earlier than the 1700s. Today, the overall character is that of a well preserved market town, with relatively wide streets interspersed with pedestrian or single track alleys, which retains much of its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century character. The glass plate negatives in Appendix E illustrate how Helmsley would have looked in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 8.2 The large majority of buildings within the Conservation Area are small scale and constructed of local stone which is cream and honey in colour and helps to create an unique sense of place. The use of local building stone within the Conservation Area also links the town with the surrounding landscape creating an organic character. The majority of buildings, even most of those of higher status, are constructed using rubble stone which has been laid to course. Most roofs are covered with pantiles although some of the larger, more imposing town houses and civic buildings have been constructed using ashlar stone and slate as a demonstration of affluence. Unusually for the North York Moors there is a relatively equitable mix of Westmorland and Welsh slate.
- 8.3 Practically all doors and windows are constructed of timber. Two or three light Yorkshire sliding sashes predominate amongst the cottages whereas vertical sliding sashes are more common in the larger properties towards the centre of town. The majority of traditional doors are four panelled solid timber doors although some six panelled or vertically boarded doors do occur. Chimneys are predominantly brick with the occasional stone built chimney. The use of quoins is not widespread especially amongst the more humble buildings and very few dormer windows, bay windows or porches exist within the Conservation Area. Where dormers do occur they are small with double pitched or cat slide roofs. Hardly any roof lights are visible from the main routes through the Conservation Area and this helps limit visual clutter within the streetscape.

**Photographs 2 & 3: Typical streetscapes showing terraced, pavement edge, low- level development with varied ridge heights and roof pitches. Stone and pantile predominate with brick chimneys and the occasional slate roof.**





- 8.4 The dominant character is one of pavement edge development creating strong, horizontal building lines within the street scene. This effect is softened by an organic, small-scale growth pattern, with an accordingly irregular roofline both in terms of ridge height and pitch. Low ridge and eaves heights, the use of rubble stone and small paned windows consolidate this sense of informality and create an overarching horizontal emphasis. This effect is dramatically interspersed with height provided by All Saints Church and the trees within its grounds, views of the castle and the taller civic and mercantile buildings within and around the market place.
- 8.5 The pattern of pavement edge development should create a feeling of enclosure within the town. The relatively wide streets, however, the regular occurrence of open spaces such as alleyways to the sides of properties, allotments and burgage plots and the sudden discovery of the open Market Place at the heart of the town prevents this from happening. These features, combined with low building heights create the overriding sense of a relatively open and permeable townscape.

## 9. Detailed Architectural Assessment

- 9.1 In order to make the appraisal more accessible the detailed assessment of the architectural and historic character has been divided into five smaller areas (see Appendix G). These sub areas have been chosen to incorporate streets and spaces that relate to each other both geographically and characteristically and include:

Area 1 High Street, Borough Beck, Cleveland Way, Church Street, Castlegate, Helmsley Castle

Area 2: Buckingham Square, Bridge Farm Close, Rye Bridge

Area 3: Market Place, Bridge Street, Borogate

Area 4: Ryegate, Pottergate, Bells Court

Area 5: Bondgate, Carlton Lane, Villiers Court, Elmslac Close, Canons Garth

### **Area 1: High Street, Borough Beck, Cleveland Way, Church Street, Castlegate, Helmsley Castle**

- 9.2 In plan this area is dominated by the castle although it can actually only be glimpsed from alleyways leading off Castlegate and from the Cleveland Way car park. It is often the first part of Helmsley that is viewed by visitors, especially those arriving from the north and using the Cleveland Way car park.

#### **Photograph 4: View of Helmsley from the B1257**



The view from the B1257 across the northern end of the town is very characterful providing a unique sense of place (Photograph 4). This is enhanced by Borough Beck which adds an idyllic charm to the streetscape and contributes significantly towards the character of both this Area and Area 2. The character of this area is, however, undermined slightly by unsympathetic development to the rear of buildings along Beckdale Road including the construction of modern conservatories with fussy ridge lines and the use of non vernacular roofing material. These buildings fall outside the Conservation Area boundary and it is therefore the responsibility of the owners and local planning authority to ensure that future alterations do not have a detrimental impact on this well known view into the Conservation Area.

- 9.3 The burgage plots to the west of Church Street and Castlegate provide an important open space (see Character and relationship of Open Spaces). Traditional outbuildings make a positive contribution to the character of this area. Often they have been constructed lengthwise along the boundaries of the burgage plots and consequently there is a predominance of gable end development along Castle View. This alignment has the added benefit of allowing views through the burgage plots to the rear of Church Street and Castlegate which creates a sense of permeability. The low ridge level of the outbuildings also creates an incremental roofscape that leads up to one of the most stunning views of All Saints Church within the Conservation Area (Photograph 5).

**Photographs 5 & 6: Views across the burgage plots to the rear of Church St towards the church and the English Heritage Visitor Centre create a sense of permeability.**



- 9.4 Some outbuildings and burgage plots are disused or underused and as such this area is potentially vulnerable to development pressure. Although the area currently has a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area this contribution is fragile. Currently there are no controls over boundary treatments and the sense of permeability created by traditionally low level fencing and the ensuing views across these burgage plots is being eroded by the erection of inappropriately high, close timber boarded fencing. This not only obscures views through the Conservation Area, it creates a sense of enclosure along the footpath which could be threatening to users.
- 9.5 The area to the east of Castlegate faces the same pressures and is equally as sensitive (see Character & Relationship of Open and Green Spaces).
- 9.6 The English Heritage visitor centre (Photograph 6) is an excellent example of good, modern design within the Conservation Area, utilising high quality natural materials and sympathising with the scale of development within the surrounding area. Its glazed central section provides views through to the castle but also reflects the open nature of this area of the Conservation Area.

**Area 2: Buckingham Square, Bridge Farm Close, Rye Bridge**

- 9.7 This area is dominated by Duncombe Park Estate's housing and its connections with the Estate are made tangible by the presence of the Estate entrance and old gate house. Although this area is dominated by terraced housing its character is quite different to that of Areas 1, 4 and 5. Housing is set back from the pavement edge creating small front gardens which are bounded by picket fencing and cast iron railings. Both are low level and permeable and should not be replaced with panelled fencing or higher boundary treatments which would enclose this area. There are several larger houses on Buckingham Square and the southern end of Bridge Street which are also notable for their vertical sliding sashes and green Westmorland slate.

The vista from Buckingham Square along the Castlegate section of Borough Beck towards the bridge and church provides one of the most well known views of the Conservation Area (see Character & Relationship of Open and Green Spaces).

### **Area 3: Market Place, Bridge Street, Borogate**

- 9.8 The Market Place forms the historic, social and commercial nucleus of the town. It continues to provide an important functional space for the Conservation Area and a market is still held here on a weekly basis. Consequently the Market Place represents an important, open public space although much of the open space within the Market Place is currently used



for car parking and conflict between pedestrians and vehicles is an ongoing issue. Despite the visual clutter caused by parked cars the market cross and Feversham Memorial both rise above the square contributing towards the sense of place and longevity. The Feversham Memorial also provides a solid and identifiable hub to the Conservation Area whilst its steps supply a well-used, informal seating area during summer. Although the Market Place contains larger buildings than the rest of the Conservation Area, many of which break with the normal pattern of development, comprising two and a half or three storeys, the open space of the market place prevents these

buildings from becoming too oppressive. The majority of buildings which contain three storeys also have diminishing storeys and as such appear smaller than some larger, two storey buildings. Buildings here are mostly constructed of coursed rubble and some are rendered or painted both of which help to reduce the formality of the Market Place. The organic cluster of buildings to the south of the square also softens the appearance of the Market Place adding charm to the character of this area. Borogate and Meeting House Court provide smaller scale pedestrian mews both of which link the Market Place to the rest of the Conservation Area and provide safe and attractive areas in which to walk and shop. The castle can be seen from the north and east of the square. Although the Market Place provides an attractive focal point to the Conservation Area several issues threaten to undermine the character of the area. These include streetscape clutter caused by too much signage, inappropriate shop fronts and street furniture and vehicular domination. These issues are all discussed under the section entitled 'Opportunities for Enhancement'.

### Photographs 7, 8 & 9: Varied scales of developments within the Market Place



#### Area 4: Ryegate, Pottergate, Bells Court

- 9.9 This area forms the eastern boundary to the Conservation Area and contains the largest amount of new development. The oldest streets in this area, evident from early maps and archaeological analysis, are Pottergate and Ryegate. These streets, together with Bondgate, enclose a property block that is a relict landscape of the 12<sup>th</sup> century ‘borough’ town planning, although the historic houses that now occupy it date predominantly from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These buildings are small, mostly low, terraced cottages constructed from local stone with pantile roofs and Yorkshire sliding sashes. They are built close up to the pavement edge and have a varied eaves lines, ridge height and roof pitch.
- 9.10 Historic plot boundaries and the traditional built form have been maintained in these streets in part, but the new development including Bells Court and Rye Court depart from these historic street forms and building patterns. This new development appears alien in its context and jars with the otherwise harmonious streetscape. The incorporation of non-vernacular architectural elements, such as porches, exacerbates the impact of this development.

#### Area 5: Bondgate, Carlton Lane, Villiers Court, Elsmac Close, Canons Garth

- 9.11 Bondgate, whilst being bounded on the south by traditional, terraced cottages, is slightly unusual in that it has several larger Victorian villas set in their own grounds on its northern side. These gardens and the mature trees that they contain enhance the character of this area. There is also a row of twelve terraced houses known locally, due to their number, as the ‘Apostles’ (Photograph 10). These too are set back from the pavement edge creating small yet attractive front gardens. The repetition and similarity of these cottages is part of their charm but the installation of plastic doors and windows in some of these cottages threatens to undermine the character of this row. The installation of plastic doors and windows has also taken place

further along Bondgate and on Pottergate, in Area 4, detracting from the character of the area and standing out as an alien and unsympathetic material. Often, however, modern methods of window opening have just as negative an impact on the character of the area as the use of plastic does (Photograph 11). The predominant boundary treatment in this vicinity is stone walling and both this and the traditional outbuildings make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

**Photographs 10 & 11: The installation of inappropriately designed, plastic doors and windows is beginning to erode the character of the Conservation Area.**



10. Local Details and Features

10.1 There are particular styles of door and window type which recur many times within Areas 2, 4 and 5. It may be that these designs were associated with the Duncombe Park Estate although no records have been found to support this theory. Where these features exist they should be preserved. Similarly where it is obvious that all the cottages within a row once incorporated these features but that some have been replaced they should be reinstated. Numbers 12-20 Ryegate, for example, should all incorporate this door type although only 12 and 14 do. It is not, however, advised that these features be incorporated into properties where there is no evidence for their prior existence.



**Photograph 12:  
Vernacular Door Detail**

- 10.2 There are few traditional street lights within the Conservation Area but where they do occur they have a positive impact and as such should be conserved. These include the Victorian lamp post opposite All Saints Church and the lamp post adjacent Cleveland Way. There are also three post boxes set within walls on Pottergate, Bridge Street and High Street which contribute towards the street scene.
- 10.3 Cast iron signs also have a positive impact. These include the directional finger post to the north of Rye Bridge pointing to Thirsk, Malton and York, the pedestrian, directional finger post near the entrance to Cleveland Way pointing to Rievaulx and the flat sign attached to Barclays Bank on Bondgate pointing to Kirkbymoorside and Scarborough. These should be restored where necessary and maintained. Additional modern signs and bins attached to these posts should be removed or kept to the absolute minimum and be designed to match the existing signs.
- 10.4 During the 1940's Helmsley was made into a Defended Location (known as a Hedgehog) by the addition of, amongst other things, anti-tank walls. Two sections of these walls still exist; one to the west of Carlton Lane and the other by the bus stop on Carlton Road. These are not statutorily protected but should be conserved as important archaeological elements of the town's history.
- 10.5 Other features of note include several wooden, hanging signs outside shop fronts (Photograph 13) and carved wooden emblems on several of the public houses. These should be encouraged as should the use of traditional shop front awnings.
- 10.6 Traditional outbuildings also make a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area (see Character and Relationship of Open Spaces).

**Photographs 13 & 14: Traditional hanging signs add character to the streetscape**



## 11. Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

11.1 Helmsley boasts a particularly high quality of vernacular buildings, many of which have been well maintained and conserved in a sympathetic manner. The demolition of practically any building within the historic core of the town would have a detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area. As such it has been decided not to specifically identify individual buildings within this section.

## 12. The Character and Relationship of Open and Green Spaces

12.1 Open spaces play an important role in helping to define the character of the Conservation Area. They increase the sense of openness within the town affording special views into and out of the Conservation Area which in turn help to define the sense of place (Appendix A).

12.2 The gardens and allotments to the east of Castlegate constitute an important example of green, open space (Photographs 15 & 16). They provide an important break in the building line, afford an insight into how this area was previously used and valued and contribute to the sense of openness within the town. The medieval burgage plots to the west of Church Street also provide beautiful views of both the church and castle and help prevent the footpath from the car park feeling enclosed and threatening (Photographs 5 & 6). Similar open areas can be found on both sides of Pottergate, to the south of Carlton Lane, to the north of High Street and at the end of Bridge Farm Close.

12.3 Back land spaces such as these provide an important sense of permeability and prevent the character of the Conservation Area from becoming too dense. Most of these open spaces are not intensely utilised and this adds a certain charm and softness to the character of the Conservation Area. This is enhanced by the fact that many are not surfaced to modern standards and this should be taken into account when considering applications for new uses in such areas. Traditional cobbles still remain in Duncombe Place and these should be conserved.

12.4 Similarly, many open spaces contain vernacular outbuildings of various sizes. These add a lower scale element to the streetscape providing views of incremental ridge heights and as such practically all of these outbuildings, even those in poor condition, make a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area. These buildings should be conserved wherever possible.



**Photographs 15 & 16: Open spaces & outbuildings to the west of Castlegate enhance the character of the Conservation Area**



- 12.5 The Market Place is one of the most important open spaces within the Conservation Area and provides a central focus for commercial and social activity within the town.
- 12.6 There are few publicly owned trees within the Conservation Area. Despite this, mature trees growing in private gardens or outside the boundary are visible from most areas within the historic core. Where green areas do occur in public places they make a positive contribution to the street scene, softening the character of the area and providing a setting which enhances the built environment. These areas include the churchyard, the meadows and woodland to the south of the Conservation Area, the verges on High Street and the trees and stream banks which follow Borough Beck along High Street and Castlegate providing a picturesque thread which runs through the Conservation Area (Appendix C).
- 12.7 The undeveloped spaces around the perimeter of the town are very important in creating a green buffer, affording views into and out of the Conservation Area and enhancing the character of the town. The most significant of these are the meadows to the south of the Conservation Area (Photograph 1) and the Duncombe Park parkland.
- 12.8 At the time of writing there are no Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area.

**Photograph 17: Borough Beck and its banks create an idyllic green thread running through the Conservation Area.**



13. Neutral and Negative Factors

- 13.1 The environmental quality of the town is generally good but there are a few elements which currently detract from the character of the Conservation Area.
- 13.2 A small number of shop fronts have been inappropriately designed and constructed using non-traditional, poor quality materials. The prominent location of these shops exacerbates the impact on the character of the Conservation Area. A couple of shops also have inappropriately large signs which conceal architectural features such as lintels. These look out of proportion and, therefore, at odds with, the building on which they sit. Similarly, signs have been introduced which have not been constructed of timber. These are highly reflective and flat in appearance and detract from the character of the Conservation Area.
- 13.3 Recent housing developments in Areas 4 and 5 depart from historic street forms and building patterns thus diluting the character of the Conservation Area. Cul-de-sacs, front gardens and porches are not common features within the Helmsley Conservation Area and should be avoided wherever possible.
- 13.4 Cluttered and inappropriately designed signage, poorly designed and sited bins and poor maintenance of cast iron signs currently detract from the character of the area. The same is true of overhead cables, cabling attached

to the facades of buildings, internally illuminated bollards and an inappropriate and inconsistent approach towards street furniture.

**Photographs 18 & 19: Cluttered signage and poor maintenance detracts from traditional cast iron sign posts**



- 13.5 Inappropriate boundary treatments have the same effect. Tall, close boarded timber fencing, such as that found on Castle View and within the allotments to the west of Castlegate, can visually enclose areas that previously had an open feel and provided views through the Conservation Area. This creates a sense of impermeability and enclosure which is at odds with the character of the Conservation Area given the local predominance of low stone wall boundaries and permeable low level fencing. Similarly the concrete fencing on Castlegate, whilst relatively neutral given its height, should neither be replicated elsewhere within the Conservation Area nor replaced on a like for like basis if it fails.
- 13.6 Patched areas of tarmac and concrete are not only unsightly; they undermine the continuity of the streetscape and make the area look uncared for. Pavements and footpaths should preferably be constructed using high quality, natural materials. It must be remembered in pedestrian areas, however, that concrete and tarmac surfaces which have not been patched and therefore retain their integrity can create a neutral backdrop.
- 13.7 The use of non traditional building materials such as plastic doors and windows undermines the integrity of the historic fabric of the town and has a very negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area. Unfortunately, many of the doors which have been replaced using timber have been replaced with inappropriate alternatives which contain too much glazing. Similarly, the loss of cast iron rain water goods and replacement with plastic, especially if grey, helps erode the character of the area and quality of the streetscape.

14. Opportunities for Enhancement
- 14.1 Co-ordinated, high quality street furniture and lighting that is suitably designed given the character of the Conservation Area. Street lights should be of a consistent design and appropriately scaled for the townscape. Good quality materials should be used. If possible 'white' light should be used as opposed to orange sodium style lighting.
- 14.2 The appearance of the bins could instantly be improved and made less intrusive if the colour of the bin bags used was changed from orange to black.
- 14.3 Co-ordinated, high quality street and pavement surfaces should be introduced to enhance the overall integrity of the streetscape. Although surfacing material should be high quality it should not stand out and, therefore, visually compete as a feature within its own right. Kerb lines should be maintained and a suitable local aggregate used in road surfaces to relate carriageways to the surrounding environment. Materials suitable for more urban situations are unlikely to be appropriate in Helmsley, necessitating the investigation of alternative coverings.
- 14.4 Replacement shop fronts should be vertical in emphasis and both shops fronts and signs should be constructed of timber. Traditional awnings and appropriately scaled hanging signs can enhance the character of the streetscape. Individually applied lettering can be less intrusive than large signs and should be considered as an alternative option.
- 14.5 Publication of a Supplementary Planning Document relating to shop front design would help inform owners of commercial properties and planning officers when making decisions relating to the renovation of shop fronts.
- 14.6 Rationalisation or removal of highway and commercial information signs, bollards and road markings should be considered to limit visual clutter.
- 14.7 Replacement yellow lines should be in 'primrose' and thought should be given to removing the central white lines as both a visual enhancement and as a means of slowing traffic.
- 14.8 Rationalisation or removal of cables and wires both on buildings and above the streets should also be carried out wherever possible for similar reasons.
- 14.9 Rationalisation or removal of parking within the Market Place should be considered to provide a more pedestrian friendly environment and to enhance the character of the core of the Conservation Area.

## 15 New Development and Development of Back Land Areas

- 15.1 In order that the special character of the Conservation Area is preserved or enhanced, proposals for new development must be sensitive in their design and detailing.
- 15.2 The location of new development should be sited to respect historic street patterns and plot forms. It must be positioned where it will respect the character of surrounding buildings and maintain key views. If the opportunity arises for development along a historic street frontage, the new build should maintain the line of historic street front.
- 15.3 The design of any new development should reflect the immediate environs in massing, fenestration and scale. It should not overwhelm existing buildings but should seek to enhance and complement these structures. This may require the creation of terraced buildings of varied length and size. Traditional detailing and local features should be reflected or complemented by the design of any new build. All new development should utilise sympathetic materials, which should be used to relate the new to the surrounding historic buildings.
- 15.4 Due to the high environmental quality and intact historic street frontages, it is envisaged that the majority of new development in Helmsley will be on back land areas. Here, development of back land areas must respect the scale, massing, materials and character of the surrounding buildings.
- 15.5 Where historic land divisions survive these must be maintained. Any proposed development should be placed within the plot similarly to existing buildings, being laid out lengthways along the burgage plot if appropriate.
- 15.6 When locating new buildings on a plot, views of landmark buildings should always try to be maintained.
- 15.7 There are some areas in the town, such as the back land area to the west of Pottergate, which would present a good opportunity for development. Here, there are large areas of open undeveloped ground and the evidence of a strong burgage plot pattern in this area is not so apparent. In addition, development here is likely to have limited impact upon the surrounding historic buildings, altering only the setting of, and views from, rear elevations. Great care, however, must be taken not to obstruct any views of landmark buildings by developing this area in an unsympathetic manner.
- 15.8 Access issues are an important aspect of integrating design into any new development. In particular any development of the Pottergate backland area must resolve access issues in accordance with North Yorkshire County Highways advice. Currently, it is considered that the existing access provisions from Pottergate fall below current visibility standards. It is possible that a north to south one-way road system which utilises existing single track roads may overcome this concern.
- 15.9 High quality modern design may be appropriate when developing back land sites. The integration of contemporary architecture with the traditional buildings of Helmsley is well demonstrated by the new visitor and interpretation centre at Helmsley Castle. This should take care however, to respect its context and draw references from the historic context into which it is being introduced.

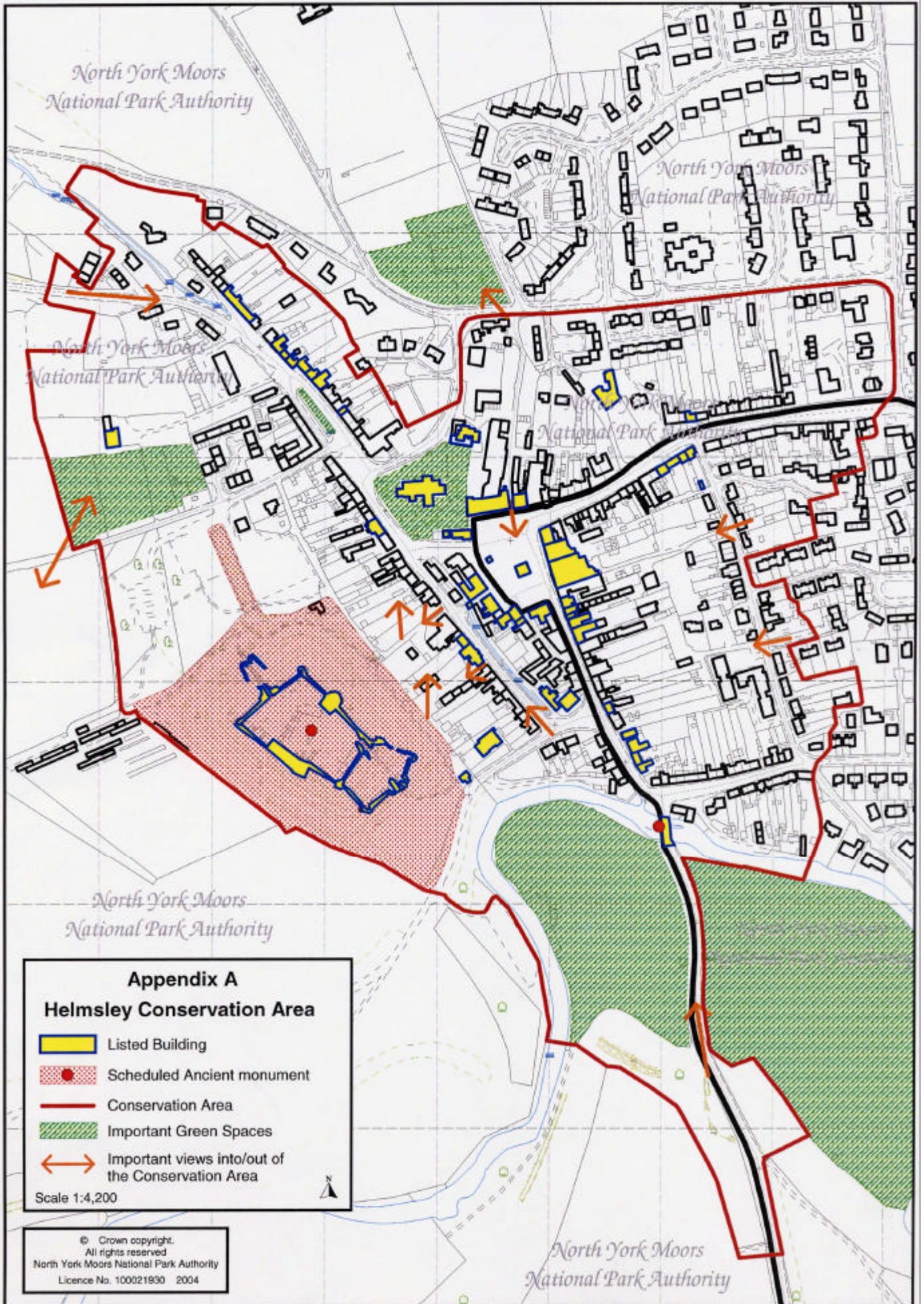
- 15.10 The south side of Carlton Lane may also present opportunities for development
- 15.11 Permeability of views particularly from the Castlegate back lands should be maintained. Treatment of plot boundaries may be significant to this and options for their treatment should be explored for possible enhancement of the surrounding pathways.

## 16. Conclusions

- 16.1 The overall character of Helmsley Conservation Area has been well maintained and most architectural details have been preserved. There is, however, an identifiable 'creep' of the replacement of traditional features with inappropriately designed substitutes sometimes constructed of modern materials particularly along Bondgate and Pottergate. The most obvious examples are the replacement of traditionally designed timber windows and doors with plastic alternatives, the design and detailing of which bear no reference to the local vernacular. The majority of buildings within the Conservation Area are not listed. This means that the character of the Conservation Area is largely derived from buildings that are afforded no protection from the type of alteration highlighted above and which are consequently highly susceptible to change. The future character of the Conservation Area is, therefore, currently reliant on the education and discretion of property owners. This renders the character of the streetscape highly vulnerable.

## 17. Recommendations for Conservation

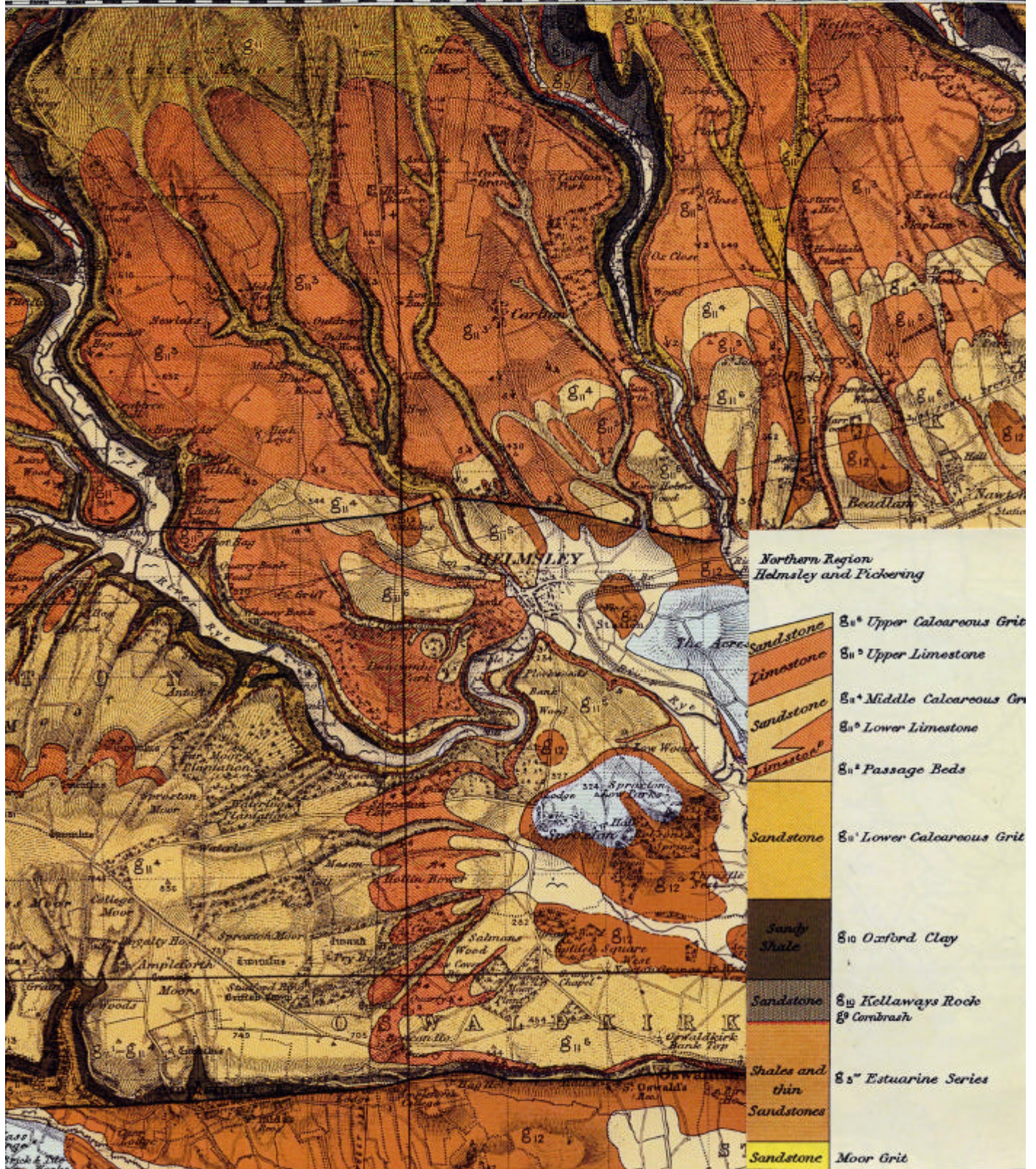
- 17.1 It is recommended that the serving of an Article 4 Direction Order be investigated. This would remove certain permitted development rights and allow the Local Planning Authority prior consideration to be given to alterations and proposals for change. The impact of proposed works could then be assessed against the fabric and detailing of the surrounding streetscape and the overall character of the Conservation Area. This would halt the decline of, and prevent further damage to, the fabric and character of the Conservation Area.
- 17.2 Under an Article 4 Direction Order, the replacement of windows and doors, alterations to chimneys, roofs or boundary treatments and the introduction of render or painted stonework would be brought under control
- 17.3 A thorough process of consultation would be carried out prior to the implementation of such an order in order to give local residents, businesses and the parish council an opportunity to comment on these proposals.
- 17.4 Implementation of such an order would be supported by the distribution of information to all residents within the Conservation Area explaining the implications of the Order and the reasons for its introduction. Guidelines would also be provided promoting good practise and indicating the type of works which would and would not be supported within the framework of the Conservation Area character appraisal.



# APPENDIX B

ANCE SURVEY OF GREAT BRITAIN

57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66  
 f 7' f 6' f 5' f 4' f 3' f 2' f 1' f 0'





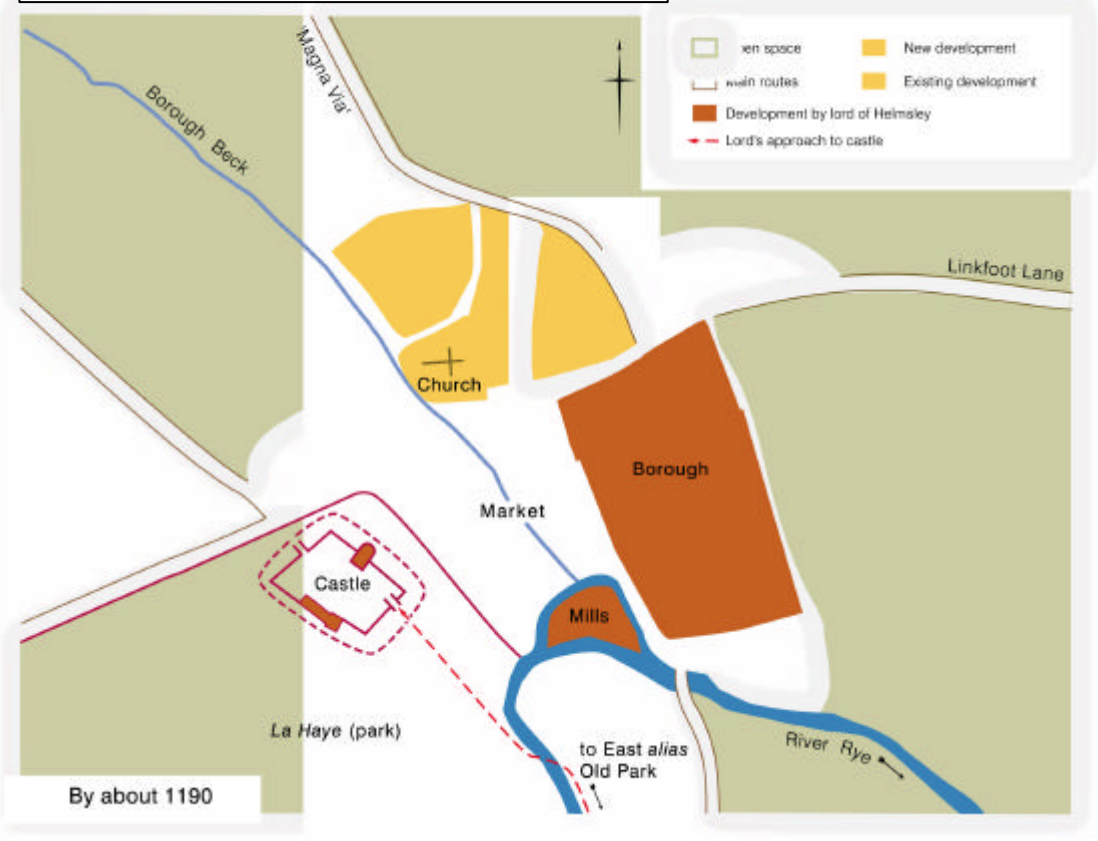
**Appendix C i** © English Heritage 2004



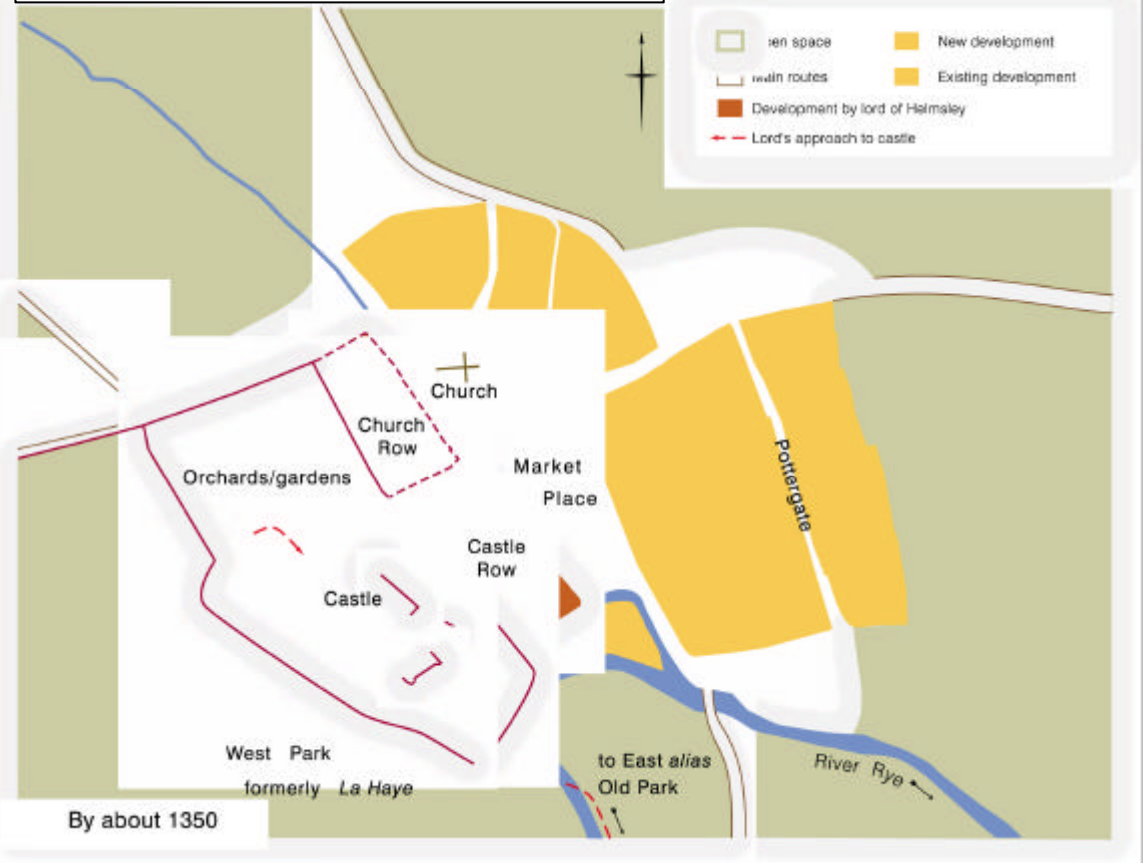
**Appendix C ii** © English Heritage 2004



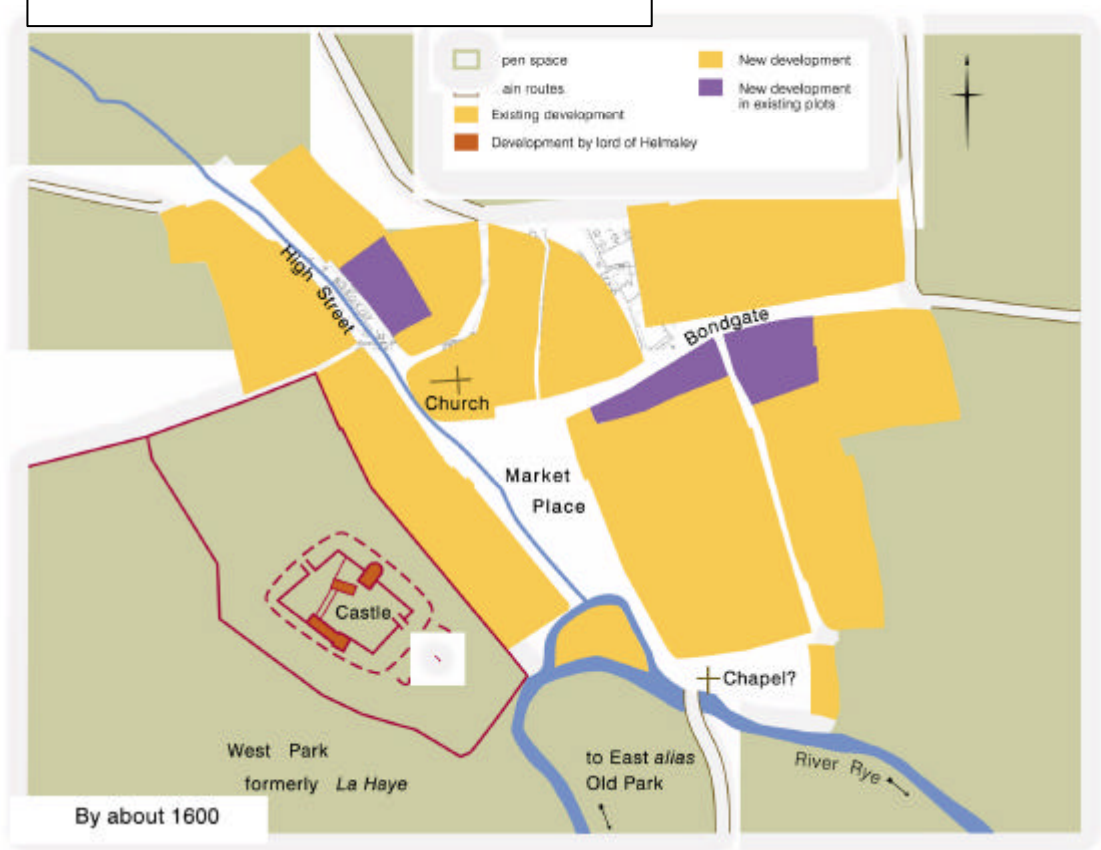
**Appendix C iii** © English Heritage 2004



**Appendix C iv** © English Heritage 2004



Appendix C v © English Heritage 2004



Appendix C vi © English Heritage 2004



## Appendix E

Glass plate negatives of Helmsley

Date unknown but approximately late nineteenth century



View of Market Place from Bondgate



View west along Bondgate



View of Buckingham Square from Bridge Street

**Appendix F** : Birds eye view of Conservation Area

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