



**Boston Spa is a place of special character and historic interest.**

**This appraisal and management plan sets out the features that contribute to its distinctiveness and identifies opportunities for its protection and enhancement.**



# Boston Spa

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Approved as a material consideration in the determination of planning decisions 28 September 2009

## Introduction

### Summary of Special Interest

Boston Spa was founded as a small spa resort in the mid 18th century. Its built environment is of extremely high quality, a fact which is demonstrated by the very high density of listed buildings in the village. Boston Spa is unusual in that it developed rapidly over a short space of time, with the majority of buildings in the historic core built between 1770 and 1830. The uniform style of architecture and unity of materials, scale and massing gives the settlement a strong and distinctive historic character. Numerous small lanes leading off the High Street are also significant in adding complexity and permeability to the settlement and indicating the former strip field layout of the land on which the village now stands.



These elegant terraced houses, dating from around 1812, are characteristic of Boston Spa.

## Summary of Issues

Boston Spa is an attractive and popular village. Property prices reflect this, which has led to considerable development pressure, both on garden plots and agricultural land within the settlement.

The high level of listed building coverage in the settlement has protected many architectural features from degradation, but this is not the case in unlisted buildings. Historic timber windows are at particular risk of loss. Every effort should be made to encourage householders to retain historic features such as windows and doors and to keep them in adequate repair.

Mature trees are a significant feature of Boston Spa. Some have been lost in recent decades. It is important to ensure the continued survival of mature trees in the conservation area and plan as appropriate for successional planting to replace any trees lost to over-maturity or decay.



Large villas set in spacious grounds and set well back from the street are found throughout the village.



Map overlay, showing the village in 1849 and the present day.



This large property was built circa 1790 as a spa hotel. Note the stone arches on the side wing, which were blocked in an early alteration to the building.



Two-storey houses on Church Street share the materials but not the stylistic grandeur of those on High Street.



## Assessing the Special Interest

### Location and setting

Boston Spa is a linear village close to the north-east boundary of the Leeds City Council area, three miles south-east of Wetherby and four miles north-west of Tadcaster. The village lies on the south side of a wooded river gorge through which the River Wharfe meanders. The surrounding landscape is formed of gently rolling, predominantly arable farmland, with large fields bordered by low gapped hedges with occasional hedgerow trees. Boston Spa was founded as a spa resort in the mid 18th century and was carved out of the north part of Bramham parish.

### General character and plan form

The character of Boston Spa derives from its development as a spa resort between 1760 and 1830. Classically-inspired Georgian architectural forms predominate, with fine-grained magnesian limestone contributing to the serene elegance of the buildings.

The village is laid out in a linear plan form along High Street, with Bridge Road leading to Thorp Arch bridge marking the centre of the settlement. 19th century buildings of a more domestic scale and vernacular form line the two main spurs off the linear plan, Church Street and Clifford Road.



Solid geology underlying Boston Spa

### Geology, topography and landscape setting

Boston Spa lies on the Southern Magnesian Limestone ridge, a narrow belt of Permian limestone which runs north-south from North Yorkshire to north Nottinghamshire. Small deposits of calcareous mudstone flank the east and west of Boston Spa village. The soils are generally mineral-rich and well-drained, making them well suited to arable crop production. The free-draining nature of limestone pasture also makes it suitable for thoroughbred horses, a characteristic which was

exploited in the area during the 18th and 19th centuries. The landscape is gently undulating, marking a transition between the Vale of York to the east and the Pennine fringe to the west. Fields are generally large, bounded by low thorn hedges with few large hedgerow trees. The River Wharfe cuts a gorge with river cliffs on its south side through this undulating landscape and its tree-lined banks provide picturesque enclosed views which have been celebrated since the 18th century.



Location of Boston Spa, between Tadcaster and Wetherby.

## Origins and Evolution

Boston Spa is a civil parish which was formerly part of Clifford township in the large ancient parish of Bramham. The village of Boston Spa first appeared in the archive record in 1799. While the village itself is not of ancient origin, there is abundant archaeological evidence for occupation of the vicinity from the Iron Age onwards.

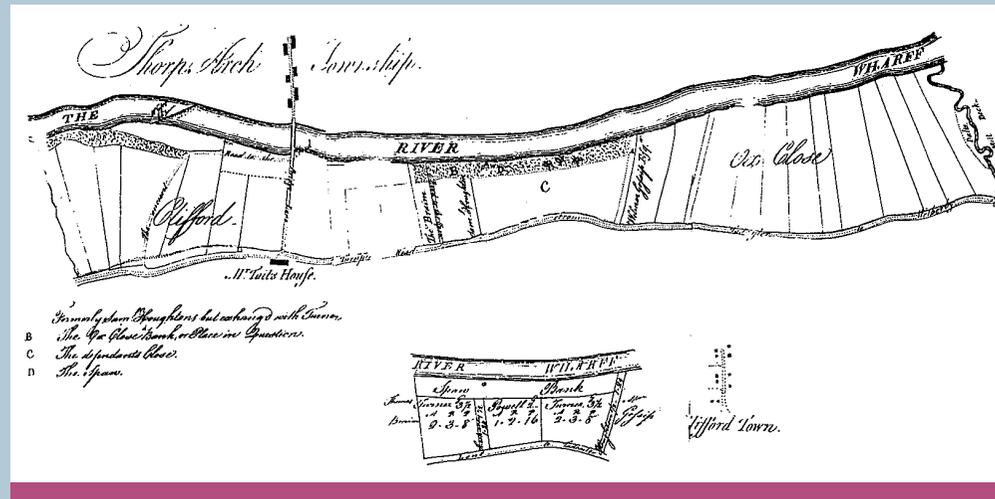
### Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon

Aerial photographs show cropmarks of archaeological significance to the immediate west of the village and indicate extensive activity in the area in the Iron Age and Roman periods (c.800 BC – 400 AD). Roman road number 280, known as Rudgate, ran to the east of Boston Spa and close to the Roman fort at Newton Kyme. The Roman presence in the area was corroborated by the discovery of a hoard of silver coins, along with a couple of single coins.

The area around Boston Spa continued to be of significance in the post-Roman period. The site of a high-status Saxon hall settlement is indicated by cropmarks just to the north of the Roman ford across the River Wharfe.

### Norman and Medieval

While both the villages of Thorp Arch and Clifford existed in the medieval period, the site now occupied by Boston Spa was part of the open field system of Clifford village. The area between what is now the High Street and the



Plan of Boston Spa and the Oxclose in 1786. Note Mr Tait's house, which became the Royal Hotel and can be seen in the photo below.

river was known as the Oxclose and was used for grazing animals. The lanes now known as Church Street, Clifford Road and Clifford Moor Road marked the edges of three fields which were used in a rotational strip-field cultivation system.

### Discovery of the Spa waters

In 1744 a labourer from Thorp Arch named John Shires discovered a stream of water issuing from the rock of the river bank. He found the water had a strong purgative effect when imbibed and told a number of people about his discovery. At the time, "purging" was considered to have medicinal benefits and the spring became popular among local people.

### Development of the Spa

Joseph Taite, a Clifford mason who had worked for John Carr on the building of

Thorp Arch Hall, built the first house for the accommodation of visitors to the spring in 1753: the Royal Hotel opposite Bridge Road. The stone used in its construction is said to have been quarried from the cliff near the spring, which probably had the effect of further opening up the riverbank around the spring.

In 1767 the publicans of Clifford - including Mr Taite - paid for a pump to be fitted to the spring, and thereafter began to charge people for access to the spa water. Residents of Clifford parish were exempted from the charge, but those from Thorp Arch were not, despite the village's close association with the spa until that point.

Thorp Arch Spaw (as it was then known) developed further as a spa resort as the fashion for visiting English

spas grew. A second hotel, The Terrace, was built close to the spa in 1788 and in the following decades was joined by numerous buildings along the High Street, some of which catered for the growing number of visitors while others became private residences.

### Turnpike road

The road between Tadcaster and Otley, which passed through what is now Boston Spa, was the subject of a Turnpike Act in 1753. The Act stated that the road had become ruinous and was impassable in the winter. The turnpiking of the road enabled trustees to extract tolls from users of the road, which proved to be extremely unpopular when first introduced. Rioters from Leeds were reputed to have marched to Harewood in 1753 to destroy the new turnpike gates and houses on the road.



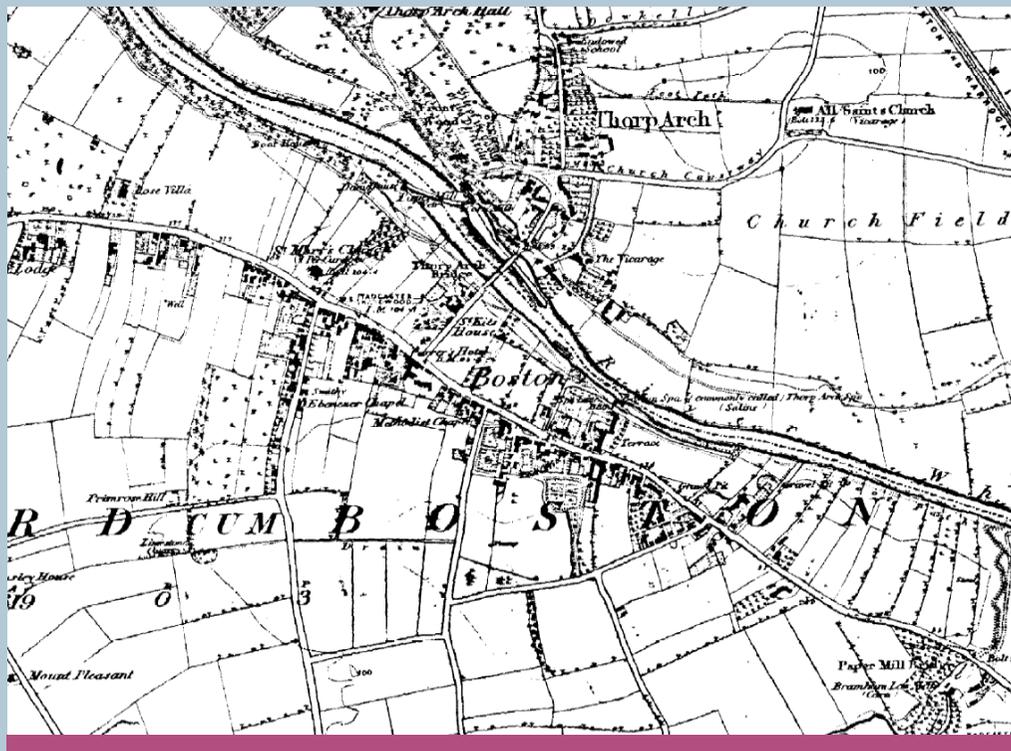
The Royal Hotel at the turn of the 20th century. The original three-storey 1753 building is slightly set back from the later buildings. (source: BSPARCH)

## Historic Development

### 19th Century

The village continued to grow in the early 19th century, with the development of further villas and elegant terraced rows as well as an increasing number of cottages for working-class families. The latter were clustered along the lanes leading off High Street, away from the rather more grand houses close to the spa.

Boston Spa was described by the Vicar of Bramham in 1812 as, " ...a very fashionable and genteel village, quite modern and inhabited by families who contribute very handsomely to the income of the vicar...". The village had rapidly developed from a small spa resort to become a popular residence for wealthy families. Census information from the mid 19th century shows that over 100 of the inhabitants



Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1849. Strip fields still visible at this stage.



High Street looking east. Note the flamboyant balcony extension to 223 High Street, presumably newly-built around the time of this photograph. (source: BSPARCH)

of Boston Spa were servants, a considerable proportion of the population, giving an indication of the large households maintained by the wealthy.

While the spa continued to attract visitors in the early 19th century, the popularity of spas was on the wane and by the 1830s it was clear that Boston was not keeping up with the growth of other spas such as Harrogate. The revenue of some hotels began to decline. Boston Spa's existence as a spa resort was at an end by the 1850s when

one of the Spa Baths companies was declared bankrupt.

### Church of St Mary the Virgin

The church of St Mary the Virgin, on the High Street, was built in 1812 as a chapel of ease. Before this time, residents were expected to attend the parish church in Bramham. The land for the new church was given by Samuel Taite and he was also reputed to have been the architect of the building.

Boston Spa remained part of Bramham parish until 1852, when it was made an ecclesiastical parish in its own right.

The church was largely reconstructed between 1872 and 1877.

### Chapels

The 19th century saw a considerable divergence of the Non-Conformist church movement, the majority of which reunited to form the Methodist Church in the 20th century. The Ebenezer Chapel, which is marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1849, was one of these branches of Methodism; the Primitive Methodist church was another branch, whose chapel on Church Street is now the Scout and Guide Hall. The Congregational Church and Sunday School was built in 1875 on the High Street but ceased to be used for religious purposes in 1950.

The imposing Methodist Church on Spa Lane was built in 1847 and became the sole Methodist Church in 1950. The large house (now divided into three) adjacent to the church was given in 1870 by Hannah Gill for use as the manse.



The Methodist Church on High Street, built in 1847 and listed Grade II.

## Origins and Evolution

### Schools

A number of private and state schools have existed in Boston Spa over the years. The decline of the village as a resort left several large properties which were suitable for conversion to private schools. The Terrace was adapted from a hotel to a boarding school in 1797, as was Wharfedale Hall in the 1850s. A number of smaller private schools existed throughout the 19th century, while State provision for education began with the founding of National Schools, for girls and boys respectively, in 1851 and 1854.



Ordnance Survey 1952. Linear strips are beginning to be eroded by 20th century estate development.



Wharfedale Hall was converted from a private residence to become a school in the 1850s. The building is Italianate in style, which is unusual in Boston Spa. The north elevation overlooks the river and the riverside footpath.



Boston Spa County Library, at 185 High Street. It transferred to its present site, the former telephone exchange building, in 1979. (source: Leodis)



Bus stop built to serve the late-20th Century housing estates on the south-west side of Boston Spa. Despite the graffiti, it makes a positive contribution to the streetscape and is a well-designed and unusual example of its period.

### 20th Century

The Village Hall was built in 1909 to provide a social venue and drill hall for the village. A group of trustees were appointed to raise the money for the hall, and its opening in May 1909 was celebrated with a two-day fete.

World War II brought great changes to the area around Boston Spa. A large munitions factory was built close to Thorp Arch railway station and many of the munitions workers were billeted in Boston Spa. An accommodation camp of pre-fabs was built opposite Boston Lodge, which after the war were refurbished to become the West End estate. Despite initial plans for the camp to be returned to agricultural land after the war, post-war pressure for new housing led both West End and a hatted RAF camp in the grounds of Chestnut Grove House to be retained for permanent housing.

From the early 1970s Boston Spa underwent major expansion, with the development of large areas of housing to the south and west of the village. The design and layout of the new housing did not sit comfortably with the distinctive character of Boston Spa, disrupting the previously strong linear character of the settlement and obscuring the historic field pattern which had survived from the 18th century.

# Character Analysis

## Spatial Analysis

### Settlement form

Boston Spa is a linear settlement running either side of the A659 and parallel to the River Wharfe, with its central point at the junction of High Street and Bridge Road. There is a fairly clear sense of entrance to the village from both east, west and south, with a visible transition from the surrounding open agricultural land. Views of the imposing church of St. Mary the Virgin emphasise arrival for those entering the village from the west, while the distinctive gable to the property at the end of Church Street / Primrose Lane offers a unique gateway for approaches from Clifford.



Fenestrated gable marking entrance to the village from Clifford

### Activity and grain

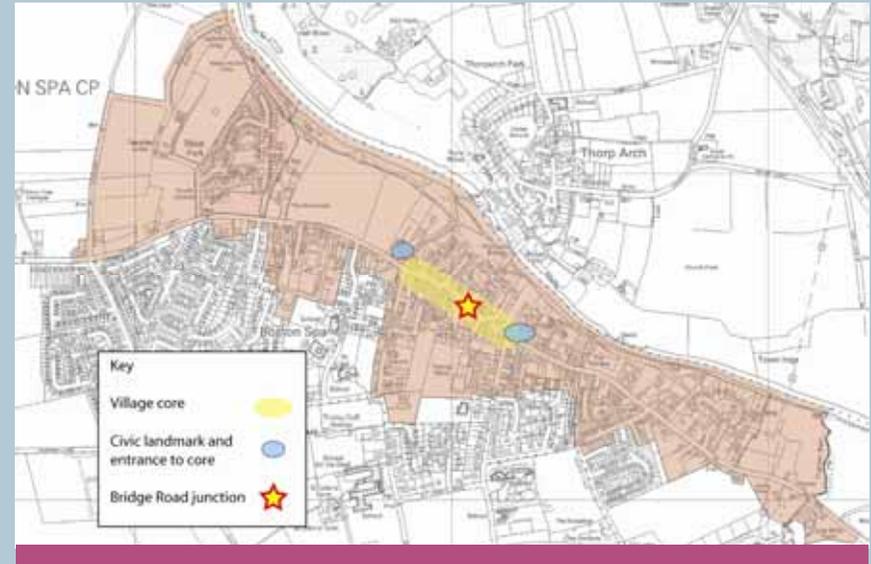
Activity is highest in the core of the village and is focused in the area between the parish church and the War Memorial. Shop fronts have a significant impact on the character of this part of

the conservation area. Frequently-used premises such as food shops and the post office as well as the main car park encourage a high footfall and a variety of people. Activity levels decrease as one moves away from the centre of the village, as is appropriate for a predominantly residential settlement.

The built environment is fine-grained, with a considerable richness both of materials and architectural quality. Buildings generally present an active façade to the street, with a high level of passive surveillance. The footprint of individual buildings generally reflects the plot size in which it sits. There are a number of large and imposing villas which lie in spacious grounds off the High Street, but the majority of buildings are more domestic in scale, set in smaller plots and are separated from the street by narrow front gardens.

### Character of spaces

Boston Spa is characterised by linear spaces, both along the High Street and in the form of strips of development running off the High Street. These largely follow the boundaries of former blocks of strip fields or early tracks. There are numerous openings off High Street in the form of arches, mews and lanes, often visually delightful, and of varying scales and characters. This aspect of Boston Spa's character reinforces its quality as a visually attractive place where subtle variety of form and feature is abundant and the local movement pattern is simple and legible. However, this is disrupted in



Map showing the relationship between key civic landmarks and the village's functional core.

places by the post-war built form which is suburban in character and layout.

Street frontages consist of a variety of forms, with fine detached properties, gable facades and short terraces, unified by materials and architectural period. Many are fronted by small gardens or forecourts protected from the road by magnesian limestone walls, a number with cast iron railings. The domestic character gives way to shop-fronts in the main commercial area. A number of shops on the south side of the High Street are of protruding single storey form with flat roofs. Many lack design quality but reveal the metamorphosis of polite Georgian residential buildings to commercial use as the village developed during the later 19th century. The north side of the High



Strip of development running off High Street.

Street at this point, however, has an unexpectedly suburban character quite alien to one's expectations of the centre of a historic village.

# Character Analysis

## Spatial Analysis

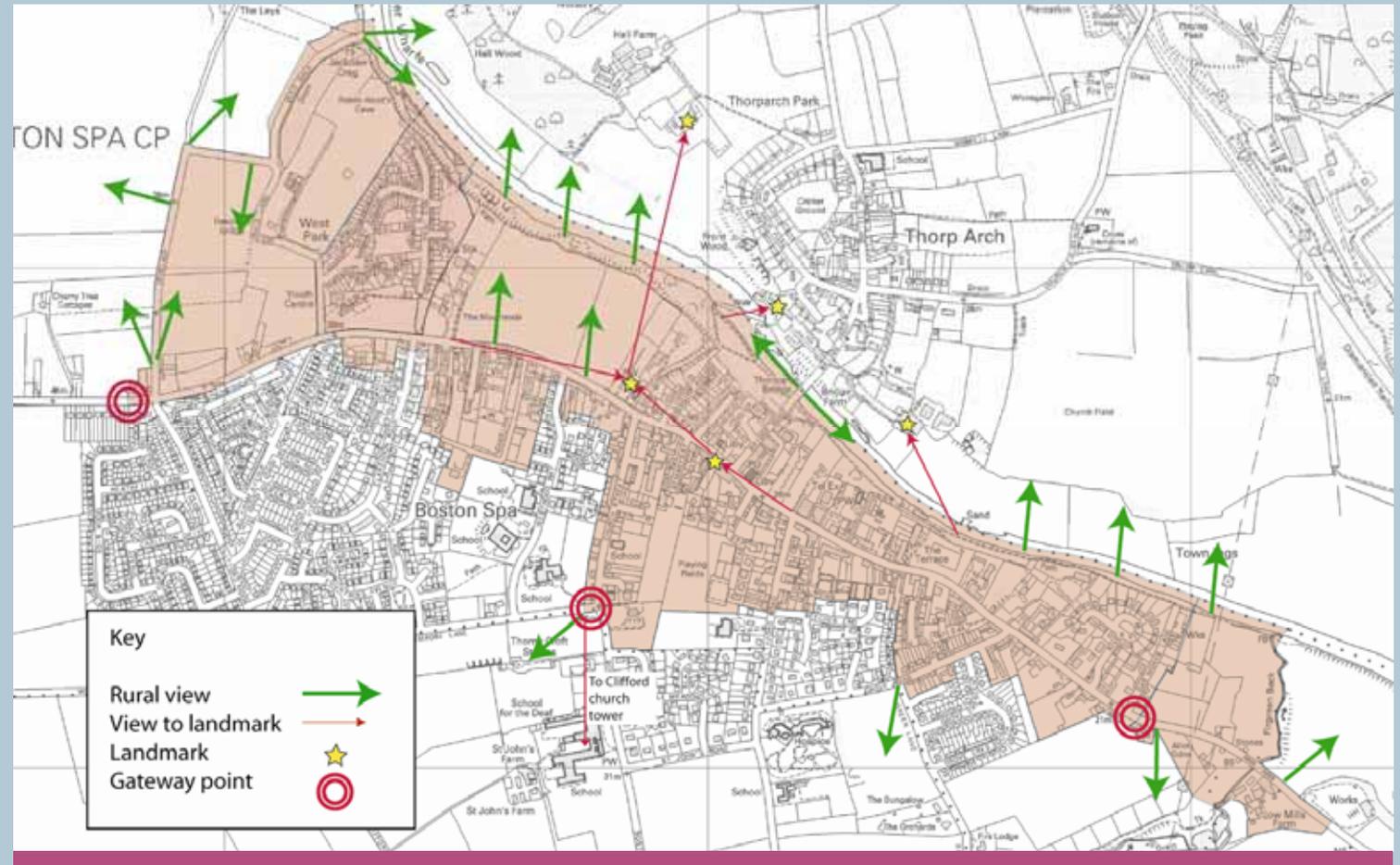
### Key views and vistas

Key views within and out of the conservation area are shown on the map (right). They are sub-divided into views terminated by landmark buildings and rural views, which mainly offer wide views across the landscape and give a sense of openness.

While views out of the conservation area reinforce the rural character of the village, the linear form of Boston Spa lends itself to a series of sequential views for anyone walking or driving along High Street. The gentle curve of High Street draws the eye and encourages progression toward the centre of the village.



The church tower acts as a key landmark, especially when entering the village from the west.



Map of key views and vistas

Enclosed views within the river gorge are also of particular significance. The picturesque qualities of the riverside paths have been celebrated since the 18th century, with natural rock formations and mature trees creating an attractive sequence of views as one walks along the riverside footpaths.

Sequential views are of significance as one walks around the village, with changing views of St Mary's Church

being of particular note. The gradual widening of High Street as one moves from the War Memorial to the former Royal Hotel, which is then terminated by 216 High Street, creates a sense of progression and arrival in the heart of the village.

### Landmarks

Significant landmarks are also shown on the map above. A number of these are immediately obvious to a visitor to

Boston Spa, but some, such as the glimpsed views of the former spa baths, or views to Bridge Farm in Thorp Arch, are less obvious but nonetheless significant. Clifford church tower, which can be glimpsed in long views to the south out of the conservation area, is also a significant landmark.

# Character Analysis

## Built Environment

### Architectural characteristics

Boston Spa is characterised by the predominance of Classically-inspired Georgian architectural forms. The majority of houses along the High Street display Classical proportions, with regular fenestration patterns and symmetrical facades. The use of architectural details is restrained, but details such as dentilled cornices and plat bands can be seen throughout the settlement. Buildings are predominantly two storey in height but this increases to three storeys in the core of the settlement. Dormers are not a characteristic of the buildings in the village.



Classical proportions are a very important feature of buildings on the High Street. Window heights diminish in line with the status of each floor of the building.

### Materials

The use of magnesian limestone as the dominant building material is one of the key characteristics of Boston Spa. The stone most widely used in Boston Spa is fine-grained and lends itself well to high-quality ashlar facing. Ashlar is, however, reserved for the highest status buildings and the majority of properties in the conservation area are faced with coursed stone, which adds an element of texture to the stonework not present in ashlar. Colour is also a significant feature, and the uniform palette of pale cream is a key characteristic of the village.

While almost all of the 18th and 19th century houses are roofed in slate, pantiles are commonly used on subordinate buildings such as outhouses. Limestone slate or thatch are not seen in Boston Spa.

There was very little expansion of the village after 1850 until major growth in the late 1970s. This has resulted in considerable uniformity among the historic building stock and stark contrast with the post-war developments, which made little concession to the character or layout of the earlier buildings.

### Local details

While many architectural details in Boston Spa stem from national styles of architecture, some locally distinctive details are present. Door and window lintels are formed of skewback (flat) arches and not single stones or timbers. Basket arches are a notable feature over carriage entrances.



Magnesian limestone is the dominant walling material, both for buildings and boundary walls.

Small houses frequently have chimney flues and tops constructed from brick, in contrast with the stone construction of the rest of the building. This is probably as a result of sulphur damage to the original stone flues.

### Public realm

The streetscape in Boston Spa is defined by the presence of coursed magnesian limestone boundary walls which enclose much of the public realm. They are generally between 3' and 6' in height. Of the surviving historic walls, a number of the lower walls are topped with cast iron railings. Paving in the public realm is almost entirely asphalt with concrete kerbstones. Yorkstone paving formerly surfaced the footways in the core of the village, but was lost

during the 20th Century. Some minor lanes off High Street such as Springfield remain unmade, which gives a pleasing sense of informality to these areas.



Milestone on High Street.

# Character Analysis

## Greenscape

The conservation area is bounded to the north by the River Wharfe, the banks of which provide the most significant element of greenscape in the conservation area. Mature trees shade the river-side path and frame long views along the river gorge. The open character of the countryside surrounding the village provides clear boundaries to the settlement and a sense of “entrance” to the village.

The large field to the west of the church is the largest area of open green space within the conservation area. While it offers a pleasant setting for views towards the church from the west and north, its use as arable land precludes any public access or use as amenity space.



View of the Spa bath house, viewed from Thorp Arch bridge. The bath house was built some time shortly after the installation of a pump in 1767.



## Positive buildings

Within the conservation area, not all buildings make the same level of contribution to the character of the area. Some buildings can be highlighted to indicate their positive contribution to the character of the area as a consequence of their architectural quality or historic interest.

The buildings coloured green on the map (above) make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. This contribution may be in one or more of the following ways:

- Landmark buildings
- Buildings which provide evidence of the area's history and development
- Buildings of architectural merit
- Buildings with local historical associations
- Buildings which exemplify local vernacular styles
- Groups of buildings which together make a positive contribution to the streetscape

There should be a presumption in favour of their retention in all but exceptional circumstances.

The quality of the built environment in Boston Spa is very high and this is reflected in the number of positive buildings. Other buildings in the conservation area make a minor or neutral contribution to the character of the area, while a very small number of buildings do not contribute to the area's character. Any future development will be required to demonstrate that it will retain or enhance the character of the conservation area. Any proposals in the future to replace existing buildings in the conservation area will be required to demonstrate how their proposal will make an equal or enhanced contribution to the character of the area than any buildings which are to be lost.

# Character Analysis

## Spatial Analysis

### *Threats and opportunities*

The street frontage of 184-188 High Street contains a number of single storey units and some which may not have long-term tenure. These factors indicate that this street frontage may be a target for re-development. Should this be the case, any proposals should reflect local features, character and context in order that any development integrates successfully with the built form and street scene of High Street.



Section of High Street which may be a target for re-development.

The recent spatial improvements adjacent to the Library present an opportunity to continue the scheme to unify both sides of the High Street and create a central "place" in the heart of Boston Spa. Improvements to the public realm using high-quality natural materials and carefully positioned seating, could change the perception of the space as a car-dominated thoroughfare to more of a square or village 'place'.



The sketch above illustrates a possible future opportunity for enhancement of the streetscape on High Street. The photo (below right) shows the present appearance of the same area. This sketch illustrates a possible long-term aspiration to enhance the area if future funding were to become available.

The scheme would develop the theme of recent public realm enhancement outside the library and improve the sense of connectedness either side of the road. At present the space is linear and dominated by the busy road, but the suggestion set out above would change the emphasis to accentuate the breadth of the space rather than the road. It would create a "place" in the Continental sense, a space for people to pause on their journey between shops and around the village. Rotating a bench which currently faces away from street would also help to re-unify the whole width of the area. The use of natural local materials is important to reinforce a sense of place.



# Character Analysis

## Summary of character

### Key characteristics:

- Gradation of architectural formality, with the most formal buildings along High Street, becoming increasingly informal as one moves away from the Georgian core.
- Creamy-coloured magnesian limestone the predominant building and walling material.
- Settlement edges defined by change in boundary treatment: stone walls give way to hawthorn hedges.

### Key ways to retain character:

- Retention of formal architectural character of built environment.
- Retention and reinforcement of Classical-influenced proportions and details.
- Use of appropriately coloured fine-grained magnesian limestone in the construction of new boundary walls and buildings.
- Use of natural slate as predominant roofing material. Some use of pantiles on subsidiary buildings may also be appropriate.



A carriage arch still in use to access service yards.



A partially blocked carriage arch to the left of this row of houses on Church Street.



214-216 High Street, listed grade II. Note the plat bands defining each storey.



Narrow lanes off High Street are characteristic of Boston Spa's streetscape.



The informal character of this unmade lane contrasts with the formality of High Street.



The gentle curve of this lane follows the course of the strip field on which it was built.



Traditional outbuildings are a significant element of the character of the village.



223 High Street, shown in the historic photograph on page 6. The decorative cresting has been removed from the side bay.



Windows dating from around 1818 and a simple palette of materials gives this former coach-house considerable historic character.

# Character Analysis

## West End

Hutments were erected at West End in 1942 to provide housing for munitions workers at the nearby Thorp Arch Royal Ordnance Factory. Munitions workers' housing was designed to resist incendiary bombs and so was built of dense brick or concrete, with reinforced door and window openings and shallow-pitched or flat roofs. After the war the hutments were refurbished to provide family housing, with enlarged windows, internal plastering and new tiled roofs. Munitions workers' housing has only recently begun to be studied and the largely complete survival of this estate represents a valuable historical resource for the future.

## Summary of character

Key characteristics:

- Uniform design and construction materials.
- Single-storey semi-detached houses set in generous gardens.
- Regular layout.
- Quiet, uncluttered public realm.

Key ways to retain or enhance character:

- Retain generous garden provision.
- Retain uniformity of materials and scale.
- Take opportunities to provide information on the estate's history.



Brick was used in the construction of these wartime hutments, in contrast with later "pre-fabs".



Ordnance Survey map of 1952, showing the layout of the dwellings. A few have been removed but the majority remain exactly as laid out during the War.

The original buildings all share a uniform design and palette of materials.



The central green with its avenue of trees gives a sense of semi-formal public space.



The lovingly-maintained gardens seen throughout West End are a key contributor to character.



Prefabs allowed people to realise their dream of living in a country cottage.

# Management Plan— Opportunities for management and enhancement

Boston Spa is an attractive and thriving village. This management plan sets out a number of principles to guide any future changes in the conservation area. Positive conservation management will ensure the ongoing protection of the village's special character.



## Sensitive new development in the conservation area

To be successful, any future development within the conservation area needs to be mindful of the local character of the village, while at the same time being distinctly of the 21st century and addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

Successful new development in historic areas should:

- Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it
- Respect important views
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings
- Respect historic boundary walls and historic garden plots
- Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.

(Source: CABE)

**Action:**  
New development must respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment.

## Protect surviving historic architectural forms

As a result of the number of listed buildings in the settlement, many architectural details in the conservation area have been retained. The retention of historic timber windows and doors enhances both individual buildings and the wider streetscape. However, unlisted buildings are not protected from inappropriate alteration which can harm the character of the conservation area. Owners and occupiers of historic buildings in the conservation area are encouraged to retain and repair historic architectural features rather than replace them with inappropriate modern substitutes.

**Action:**  
Surviving historic features should be retained and where necessary sympathetically repaired.



Retention of original windows and doors enhances the building as well as the streetscene.

## Article 4 (2) Direction

Conservation area designation controls the demolition of buildings and strengthens some planning rules, but it does not prevent the removal of historic features such as windows or some boundary walls. The City Council has the power to impose a rule known as an Article 4 (2) Direction and can do so if there is public support for such action. This would alter the planning rules so that property owners would need to gain planning permission for the removal or replacement of features such as boundary walls, windows, doors and roof materials. This would help to protect the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Action:**  
Determine the level of public support for the imposition of an Article 4(2) Direction within the conservation area and the geographical extent of its imposition.



The loss of historic windows and doors can have a disastrous effect on the appearance of historic buildings.

# Examples of opportunities for enhancement of the conservation area

## Protect archaeological remains

The area around Boston Spa has been occupied for over 2000 years and buried evidence of past occupation may survive within the conservation area. Development which may disturb archaeological remains may require a watching brief to ensure the preservation of archaeological finds.

**Action:**  
Development which involves below-ground excavation must have regard to the potential for archaeological finds.



Layers of past development can be seen in backland plots such as this as well as in the archaeological record.

## Development affecting the setting of the conservation area

It is important that development around the conservation area does not harm its setting. Any development in or around Boston Spa which affects the setting of the conservation area should have regard to views into and out of the conservation area, the setting of positive buildings and the character of the landscape. Appropriate design and materials should be used in development adjacent to the conservation area.

**Action:**  
The impact of development on the character and appearance of the conservation area should be considered. This applies equally to development outside the conservation area if it is likely to affect the setting of the conservation area.



The setting of the conservation area should be considered in proposals for new development.

## Infill development

A number of buildings in the conservation area lie in sizeable gardens. Inappropriate infill development which harms the relationship between existing buildings and the spaces around them would harm the character of the conservation area. Intensification of development which disrupts the character of the conservation area should be resisted. The scale, massing and proportion of buildings and the spaces between them are important in retaining the character of the conservation area.

**Action:**  
Any development proposing the infill of a site, or the subdivision of a plot, should respond to the scale, massing, layout and distribution of positive structures within the conservation area.



Development in the conservation area should respond to the scale and massing of existing buildings.

## Boundary treatment

Magnesian limestone boundary walls are a feature of Boston Spa's built environment. The transition from stone walls to hawthorn hedges demarcates the limits of the built up area of the village. Existing stone boundary walls should be retained, and an Article 4(2) direction may be imposed to this effect. Opportunities should be taken wherever possible to enhance existing historic boundary treatments, and any new boundary walls should be constructed of coursed magnesian limestone, pointed in lime mortar to match the appearance of existing walls.

**Action:**  
New boundary treatments within the conservation area should match the style and materials of those already in existence. Historic boundary walls and hedges should be retained wherever possible.



Magnesian limestone boundary walls are important in the conservation area.

## Examples of opportunities for enhancement of the conservation area

### Shop fronts

Shop fronts have a great impact on the character of the conservation area. The retention of historic shop fronts and hanging signs in the conservation area is encouraged. The design of any new or replacement shop fronts should respect the period and proportions of the building in which they are set and should use high-quality materials. Internally illuminated box-profile fascias or internally illuminated projecting signs would not be acceptable in the conservation area.

**Action:**  
New shop fronts in the conservation area should preserve or enhance the character of the area.



Good shop front design enhances the streetscape and the character of the conservation area.

### Street lighting

The street lights in Boston Spa are due to be renewed from 2009. Lighting columns in the conservation area should respect the setting of historic buildings and should not harm the character of the conservation area. Lighting columns should not be over-dominant and ideally would rise to the eaves heights of adjacent buildings. Lighting columns should be set at the back of the footway in order to minimise pavement clutter.

**Action:**  
New street lighting in Boston Spa should respect the setting of historic buildings and seek to enhance the character of the conservation area. Over-dominant lighting columns should be avoided.



Street lighting can enhance the existing character of an area if it is carefully designed.

### Public realm

The special character of Boston Spa should be respected in the provision of street furniture and road signs. The A659 is a fairly busy road but traffic speeds are not generally high. Road signs are generally unintrusive, but recent alterations on Bridge Street have not enhanced the character of the conservation area. Regard should be had to the current "Streets for All" guidance jointly published by English Heritage and the Department for Transport.

**Action:**  
The siting and design of road signs and street furniture should respect the special character of the conservation area and have regard to current "Streets for All" guidance. Opportunities should be taken as they arise to enhance the public realm.



High-visibility backing boards and over-use of road markings can detract from the historic character of the village.

### Tree management

Conservation area designation affords some degree of protection to mature trees. The full canopies of large mature trees make a significant impact on the character of the conservation area, both along the river bank and throughout the built up area of the village. The variety of tree species ensures interest and amenity throughout the year.

**Action:**  
Large mature trees should be retained wherever possible in order to preserve the character of the conservation area. Opportunities should be taken as appropriate to plant young trees in order to ensure the continued existence of large trees in the future.



Trees make an important contribution to Boston Spa's character.



## References

### Publications:

- Caffyn, L. *Workers Housing in West Yorkshire 1750-1920* London 1986
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## Where to find out more

Boston Spa Archaeology and Heritage Group is an active local society with a broad range of interests. Wetherby & District Historical Society is also active and has a long history of study of local historic buildings and people. A wide range of original documents, public records and books can also be found in the following locations:

- Central Library (Local & Family History Section), The Headrow, Leeds.

Website: [www.leeds.gov.uk/library](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/library)

- West Yorkshire Archive Service, Chapeltown Road, Sheepscar, Leeds.  
Website: [www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.archives.wyjs.org.uk)
- West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service, Newstead Road, Wakefield  
Website: [www.arch.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.arch.wyjs.org.uk)

In addition, much information is available on other websites:

- [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk) includes all listed building descriptions and some photos
- [www.leodis.net](http://www.leodis.net) has archive photos of the Leeds district
- [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) has early Ordnance Survey maps.

### How to find out more about historic buildings

Leeds Central Library has a large architecture collection which includes books on historic buildings. A useful general book on understanding historic houses is *How Old is Your House?* by Pamela Cunnington (most recent publication 2002). Shire Books also publish a range of excellent short books on historic buildings.

There are a wide range of national societies devoted to the study and conservation of historic buildings. Many of these national bodies have regional groups in Yorkshire.

- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) [www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk). A good source of practical information about looking after buildings of all periods.
- Ancient Monuments Society [www.ams.org.uk](http://www.ams.org.uk). Devoted to the study and conservation of ancient monuments, historic building and fine old craftsmanship, with a particular interest in church buildings.
- Georgian Group [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk) Interested in the study and conservation of 18th- and early 19th-century buildings.
- Victorian Society [www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk) Interested in the appreciation and conservation of 19th and early 20th century buildings of all types.
- 20th Century Society [www.c20century.org.uk](http://www.c20century.org.uk) Active in promoting appreciation and protection of 20th century architecture.



## Finding Out More

### What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is '*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### What does conservation area status mean?

Conservation area status provides the opportunity to promote the protection and enhancement of the special character of the defined area. Designation confers a general control over development that could damage the area's character. The details are complex but can be summarised as:

- Most demolition requires permission and will be resisted if the building makes a positive contribution to the area.
- Some minor works to houses are no longer "permitted development" and will require planning permission. Examples are rear dormer windows, external cladding and most satellite dishes on front elevations.
- Advertisement controls are tighter
- Most work to trees has to be notified to the Council which has six weeks in which to decide to impose restrictions.

- Generally, higher standards of design apply for new buildings and alterations to existing ones.

Change is inevitable in most conservation areas and it is not the intention of the designation to prevent the continued evolution of places. The challenge within conservation areas is to manage change in a way that maintains, reinforces and enhances the special qualities of the area.

### What is the purpose of this appraisal?

This appraisal provides the basis for making informed, sustainable decisions about the positive management, protection and enhancement of the conservation area.

It provides a clear understanding of the special interest of Boston Spa by:

- assessing how the settlement has developed
- analysing its present day character and
- identifying opportunities for enhancement

This appraisal follows the current guidance set out by English Heritage in the 2006 publication *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*.

The appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space

should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

### Planning policy context

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the wider national, regional and local planning policy and guidance. Relevant documents include:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning
- The Yorkshire and Humber Plan (The Regional Spatial Strategy) May 2008, particularly Policy ENV9 Historic Environment
- Leeds City Council, Unitary Development Plan Review 2006, particularly Chapter 5 Environment and Appendices A3 Building Design, Conservation and Landscape Design and A4 Archaeological Policies
- Leeds City Council, Local Development Framework, emerging document that will ultimately replace the Unitary Development Plan.

### Community involvement and adoption

This draft appraisal went through a public consultation process. A six week period of public consultation included:

- An exhibition at the local library, with access to a paper copy of the appraisal
- A public meeting to discuss the proposed changes
- The appraisal was made available through the Council's website
- Leaflets were delivered to all homes affected by the proposed change to the conservation area boundary.

The consultation responses were evaluated and the appraisal amended in light of comments received. This document was approved by Leeds City Council in September 2009. Once adopted, the appraisal is a material consideration when applications for change within the conservation area or its setting are considered by the Council.