

TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

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Caistor Townscape Heritage Initiative – Project Summary

HISTORIC CAISTOR

Caistor is an historic and attractive Georgian market town with a history dating back to Roman times and beyond. It is unique in its architecture and location and is regularly described by experts as a 'jewel'. It is ideally situated for residents and business alike with easy access to the whole of the North Lincolnshire area being located on the north western edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds, an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), on the Viking Way just off the A46 between Lincoln and Grimsby at the A46 / A1084 / A1173 / B1225 Junction. Humberside International Airport is only 7.5 miles away, M180: 9 miles, Port of Immingham: 12 miles, Grimsby: 13 miles, Scunthorpe: 17 miles, Lincoln: 25 miles, Hull: 26 miles, M18: 35 miles, M62: 42 miles, A1(M): 46 miles, M1: 58 miles.



The original Roman wall can be seen on the southern boundary of the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul which dates back to saxon times.

The town has 3 excellent schools: Caistor Yarborough, Caistor C of E & Methodist Primary School and Caistor Grammar School founded in 1631 which is one of the most highly respected in the country.



The original town was ravaged by fire in 1681 and the present buildings in the town centre date from that time. The Sessions



House previously occupied by the WRVS was built in 1662 and was one of the few buildings which survived the fire. The town centre consists of a street pattern based on a series of interconnecting squares; Market Place, Butter Market, Cornhill and Horse Market.

The largest sheep fairs in England were held in Caistor in 1858 when 60,000 sheep were sold.

An Act of Parliament in 1793 authorised the construction of the Caistor Canal for exporting the surplus agricultural produce of North Lincolnshire. The canal ran from the New River Ancholme near Creampoke in Kelsey Carrs (4 miles south of Brigg) in an easterly direction to Moortown (3 miles west of Caistor). It is 4 miles long and has 6 locks. The canal never reached Caistor but was opened about 1800. It was not used after 1855 and was officially abandoned in 1936. Navigation Lane which was to be the route of the canal is now a road which serves a number of housing developments to the West of the town.

Caistor was for many years the administrative centre for the whole North Lincolnshire area and was head of a rural district and county court district and also a petty sessional division, instituted in 1890. All births, deaths and marriages for the Great Grimsby, Caistor and Market Rasen Districts were registered here until 1936. The Registrar still carries out that function for the Caistor area from their office in South Dale. Caistor Rural District Council had its offices in the building presently occupied by the Magistrates Court before it moved to the purpose built offices in South Dale where it remained until local government re-organisation in 1974 when it became West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) and its headquarters moved to Gainsborough, some 27 miles away.

During the second world war from 1940 - 45, Caistor was an RAF base firstly being used by 264 Squadron flying Defiant night-fighters and later undertook a training role under the control of the RAF Flying College at Cranwell. Between 1959 and 1963 the station was occupied by the American Airforce and was the home to Thor missiles.

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The town has a current population of approx 2,600. Market day is Saturday and early closing day is Wednesday although many shops do not adhere to this any more.

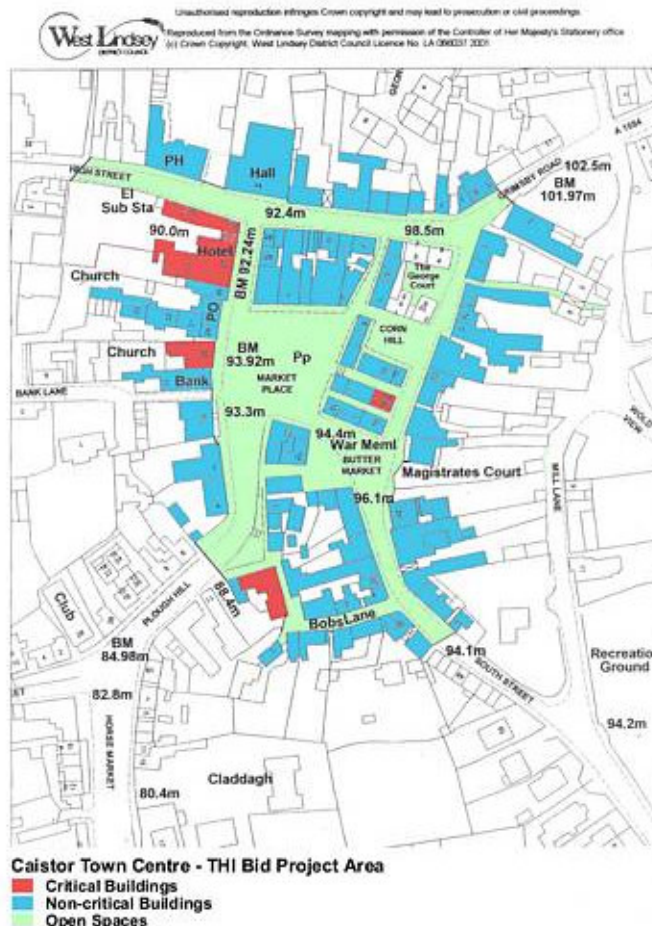
TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

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A THI Stage 1 bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in May 2002 and received a Stage 1 pass in October 2002. The final bid which was submitted at the end of March 2003 now includes:

- results from the Economic Revival study being carried out by the University of Lincoln relating to the future economic sustainability of the THI area;
- a reassessment of the Critical buildings and potential year 1 projects;
- design opportunities for the revitalisation of the public realm with implementation recommendations;
- results of further public consultation work carried out;
- a revised funding package which has been drawn up following detailed discussion with the Sub-regional Strategic Partnership, Lincolnshire Enterprise, and East Midlands Development Agency.

THE THI AREA



The THI area has been defined to include the most significant buildings in the heart of the town and comprises 105 buildings in and around the Market Place. It extends from 20 High Street to 3/5 Grimsby Road to 31 South Street to 9 Plough Hill.

Four buildings have been defined as critical to the project (shown in red) and are:-

- Red Lion Hotel, 27/27a Market Place
- 20 Market Place
- 14/16 South Street
- Westgate, 7 Plough Hill

The remaining 101 qualifying properties are shown in blue.

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THE PARTNERSHIP

A consortium of partners comprising Caistor Development Partnership, Groundwork Lincolnshire and West Lindsey District Council has developed this Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). The THI bid is part of an integrated strategy for regeneration which has been developed for the town, "A Strategy for Caistor" was published in May 2001 by the Caistor Development Partnership.

The Strategy recognises the requirement for a coordinated approach to the issues facing the town and that a degree of economic revival is required for a genuinely sustainable regeneration to occur. There are three main objectives:

- Improving the appearance of the town centre through conservation and refurbishment of the historic fabric of the town.
- Encouraging business revival both retail and other types of business.
- Promoting the attractions of Caistor.

The objectives are mutually dependant; the Townscape Heritage Initiative would provide the impetus for the improvements to the historic fabric of the town. In order for the physical improvements to be sustainable the Caistor Development Trust has commissioned the Caistor Economic Revival Study which will provide research and analysis work together with a Business Plan focussing on the economic revival of the town.

The University of Lincoln are undertaking the Economic Revival Study which has been funded by East Midlands Development Agency. The brief for the Economic Revival Study and the First Report can be found on the www.caistor.net web site together with a range of other documents relating to this project.

THE THI WORKING GROUP

A Working Group comprising of Groundwork Lincolnshire, West Lindsey District Council and Caistor Development Partnership will be responsible for the co-ordination of the scheme. The group will consider all grant applications and will have the authority to resolve any issues raised during the period of the initiative through appropriate action by each of its member representatives and will include officers from the Council with statutory functions that may be applied to ensure successful implementation of the initiative. The Working Group will consist of two officers from Groundwork Lincolnshire, two members of Caistor Development Partnership and two officers from West Lindsey District Council representing the Economic Development Unit and Planning Services. An officer of Groundwork Lincolnshire as the coordinating organisation will chair the Group. In Summary:-

- Groundwork Lincolnshire will undertake responsibility for the coordination and implementation of the scheme together with the employment of a dedicated THI Project Conservation Officer. They will also be responsible for public consultation and participation within the project.
- Caistor Development Partnership will undertake responsibility for integration of the THI within the overall Strategy for Caistor and provide community representation and coordination for the scheme.
- West Lindsey District Council will be responsible for enforcement of statutory legislation and specialist conservation and planning functions.

CAISTOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Caistor Development Partnership is a working group of volunteers formed after a series of public meetings in the town. Membership includes a wide representation from local organisations, businesses and residents including the Caistor Society, Caistor Town Hall Committee, Caistor Sports and Social Club, Caistor Town Council, West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council, AONB Countryside Service, local schools and a number of private businesses from the town.

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GROUNDWORK LINCOLNSHIRE

The Groundwork movement has been working to deliver sustainable regeneration to communities for twenty-one years. The organisation operates on the principle of establishing partnerships between local communities, local authorities, and funding partners. The UK Government and Regional Development Agencies support the work of the Groundwork Trusts and the Groundwork movement enjoys established relationships with other funding bodies and the ability to generate a funding package from a wide spectrum of partners.

Groundwork Lincolnshire is one of 46 trusts operating throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland, each trust is, in part, owned by the local authorities within its areas of operation, and the national federation of Groundwork. Each participating local authority provides core funding towards the operations of Groundwork within their area and together with Groundwork establishes the sphere of operations which will meet the needs of its local communities. West Lindsey District Council are represented on the Board of Groundwork Lincolnshire by a Member of the Council.

THI PROJECT OFFICER

A THI Project / Conservation Officer will be appointed as soon as the HLF grant is agreed. He/she will work full-time on the THI and have desk space in Caistor within the Townscape Heritage Initiative area, a 'hot-desk' space in both Groundwork Lincolnshire's office and the Conservation Section at West Lindsey DC and will be able to work closely with other local agencies - the Caistor Development Partnership and Lincolnshire County Council.

SUMMARY OF TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

Within the proposed THI area as a whole, the spatial and townscape quality and integrity of the area is very high. Although the intrinsic quality of the public realm, in respect of surface materials, street furniture etc, is not particularly good, its impact is relatively neutral due to the minimal presence of street clutter such as unnecessary signage, obtrusive street lighting, service poles and cables and street furniture generally. This has been achieved through the selective and constrained use of signs and the use of good quality light fittings, many of which are discretely and directly fitted to buildings. The weakest aspect of street furniture is the use of railings adjacent to steps and significant changes in level. These are generally crude, unattractive and poorly maintained.

Overall however, the relative neutrality of the public realm results in the visual focus of the area being directed towards the buildings themselves. Whilst their character is generally not grand, collectively they maintain the impression of the prosperous market town that Caistor once was.

It is principally the lack of maintenance that is preventing the buildings, and the area as a whole, from fully reflecting their former glory days.

In parallel with the THI, it will be essential to improve and enhance the significant public realm. The form and use of the important squares and spaces which do much to establish the townscape of the Caistor THI area requires a detailed assessment to create an appropriate heritage setting for the historic building improvements.

KEY ISSUES

The economic problems faced by Caistor Conservation Area and its residents have resulted in:

- empty properties
- semi-derelict buildings
- loss of historic buildings
- loss of heritage details and materials
- low quality repairs

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- low property values
- failing shops and businesses

The consequences of the economic problems faced by the town has been the lack of pressure for major redevelopment throughout much of Caistor Conservation Area and the consequent retention of significant areas of the 18th and 19th Century townscape.

HERITAGE IMPORTANCE AND NEED

Caistor Townscape Heritage Initiative Area provides a good example of a thriving market town of the 18th century with relatively little damage to the integrity of its appearance. The original and restored shop fronts reflect the rich heritage of the town and the surrounding area. The concern now is that the economic problems of the town will result in further deterioration leading to the loss of the historic built fabric and the consequent changes to the integrity of the heritage townscape.

Of particular importance is the ability to understand the stages of growth during the 18th and 19th Century from its built heritage in an area that has been little changed by 20th Century redevelopment.

Though much of the heritage urban structure and buildings of the Conservation Area remain, significant damage to the townscape of the THI area has been caused in recent years by the replacement of traditional materials and details, in particular:

- inappropriate shop fronts and ground floor developments;
- the replacement of bay windows;
- the removal of heritage mouldings;
- tiled roofs replacing slate;
- the removal of chimney stacks and pots;
- the replacement of wooden sash windows with aluminium and UPVC frames with different window bars;
- new front doors;
- pebble dash and other non heritage wall finishes

Together these changes have a significant impact on the overall heritage townscape and it is important to reverse these trends in order to retain the traditional character of the area.

The heritage need in Caistor Conservation Area can be identified under the following categories:

- the number of prominent buildings requiring significant building works to ensure their future sustainability;
- the many traditional buildings, though not in immediate danger, that are suffering from gradual deterioration through neglect and under investment;
- the inappropriate alterations and replacements that are changing the heritage character of the area – particularly windows, doors, shop fronts and signs.
- the levels of vacant floor space that often leads to neglect and deterioration. In many cases, the economic problems have led to the lack of investment.

Specific issues and criteria that have a detrimental impact on the quality of the heritage townscape include:

- Building maintenance so poor that the appearance of the building has a significant detrimental impact on the area as a whole.
- Buildings boarded up / redundant giving an ambience of economic degradation and contributing to a downward spiral of the local economy.

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- Prominent buildings which, due to their lack of maintenance, fail to capitalise on their potential to positively lift the townscape quality of the area.
- Listed buildings where the use of UPVC windows to replace timber sashes has damaged the integrity and visual balance of the façade.

To protect the future of the heritage townscape of Caistor Conservation Area and to overcome the problems faced during its current economic difficulties, it is important that an appropriate system of grant aid is available with pro-active encouragement and support together with continuing protection and management of the urban fabric. This must ensure that implementation really does occur and the qualities of the Town Centre are retained and improved to assist future economic regeneration.

THE THI STRATEGY IN CAISTOR TOWN CENTRE

The THI aims to retain, conserve and regenerate the historic character and buildings of the remaining historic core of this North East Lincolnshire market town. The selected area provides good examples of a traditional Georgian and Victorian town centre with a few examples of fine early 19th Century buildings. The 19th Century building stock and medieval street pattern dominate the townscape to create an area of significant heritage interest.

The THI scheme is intended to support the costs of building conservation throughout the selected area as part of the area's economic regeneration. As such, it is important that the THI integrates with other physical, economic and social initiatives to ensure that the identified projects really will be implemented.

The key elements of the Strategy are to concentrate on conservation costs related to:

- architectural heritage detail
- structure and fabric
- reuse of vacant floor space in heritage buildings.

It is anticipated that grant levels will range from 60% to 90% according to the work proposed in each grant application.

FUNDING

A 'common fund' of £1.62 Million is being provided by:-

- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
- East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA)
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)
- West Lindsey District Council (WLDC)

The fund will provide for:-

- The Cost of the administration of the scheme
- Grants to owners of the 105 identified properties within the THI area.