

# TOWTHORPE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



In association with Strensall with Towthorpe  
Parish Council

## CONTENTS

	Page
1 Introduction	2
2 Location and Context	3
3 Topography and Setting	4
4 Historical Development	5
5 Conservation Area Boundary	6
6 Character	7
7 Future Management Suggestions	9

*\*The name of designated area has been amended from Towthorpe Village to the Towthorpe Conservation Area.*

## APPENDIX A - Listed Building Descriptions

This document was prepared in November 2010 by Woodhall Planning and Conservation on behalf of the City of York Council. The format and content were agreed with the Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development Section of City of York Council, and the document was approved by the Council on the 24th March 2011.

## I INTRODUCTION

I.01 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 or appearance of which) is desirable to preserve or enhance. Section 69 of the Act requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and designate conservation areas within their geographical boundaries and to formulate, in conjunction with the public, proposals for their preservation and enhancement (section 71 and 72 of the Act). The Act places a duty upon Local Planning Authorities to review the extent of the conservation areas.

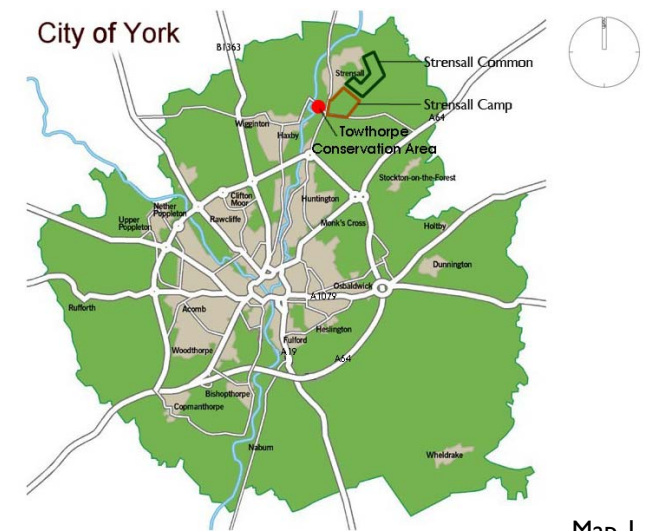
I.02 Although the Conservation Area was named as “Towthorpe Village \*”, Towthorpe is actually a small agricultural hamlet, located to the north of York (see Map 1). The Towthorpe Village Conservation Area was designated in 2001, with the boundaries as shown on Map 2 within Appendix A. The whole area is less than 9 hectares.

I.03 This document sets out the findings of a character appraisal of the Towthorpe Conservation Area and can be regarded as being in four parts. The first part

(Chapters 1-4) sets the scene by analysing the history and baseline factors of the conservation area. The second part (Chapter 5) reviews the extent of the Conservation Area as originally designated and explains the reasons for the proposed revision of its boundaries. The third part, (Chapter 6) describes the general character of the area as revised. The final part (Chapter 7) contains suggestions for future management.

I.04 The assessment is based on field work in August and September 2010 and is limited to the buildings and areas visible from the public domain.

I.05 Towthorpe Conservation Area Appraisal was approved as a supporting document to the conservation policies included in the City of York's draft Local Plan (incorporating the fourth set of changes) by the Planning Committee of City of York Council on the 24th March 2011. The Conservation Area Appraisal will also be used to inform the emerging Local Development Framework.



Map 1

## 2 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.01 The Towthorpe Conservation Area lies approximately 5 kilometres north of York city centre. Towthorpe sits to the east of the River Foss and is positioned between Haxby, approximately 1 kilometre to the west, and Strensall which is approximately 1.5 kilometres to the north east (see Map 1).
- 2.02 The designated area sits on both sides of Towthorpe Road and is focused around a small agricultural hamlet of long standing (see Plate 1). The designated area around and surrounding land forms part of the City of York Green Belt, and is recognized in the emerging Local Development Framework as an area preventing coalescence (Policy G1).
- 2.03 It is estimated that approximately 15 people live within the Conservation Area.



Plate 1 Aerial view

### 3 TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.01 Towthorpe occupies part of an open area to the east of the River Foss. The buildings appear to be set on a slight rise in the landscape when viewed from the west. This topography has contributed to the north/south alignment of the settlement and caused the sharp bends of the approach roads. The hamlet itself is surrounded by fields. These areas of open ground enable long distance views towards the village from the north, south and west.

3.02 The immediate setting of the designated area is dominated by open agricultural land (see Plate 2). To the north side of Towthorpe Road there is an unusual mounded field which appears to be man made. To the east, along the south side of Towthorpe Road, there are a number of modern residential properties that are outside the Conservation Area. To the east of Towthorpe village is Strensall Army Camp. To the north-east corner is a heavily wooded area beyond Low Farm.



Plate 2 View towards the Conservation Area looking north along Towthorpe Road



## 4 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.01 Information about the early history of Towthorpe is limited. It was a well-established settlement by the eleventh century but may have much earlier origins as there is evidence for pre-historic and Roman activity in the wider area.

4.02 The township of Towthorpe was owned by the Count of Mortain in 1086 and at the beginning of the fourteenth century was held by the de Mauleys. The moat on the western edge of the Conservation Area is probably the site of the early manor house, which may have made use of the River Foss for protection. There is evidence of ridge and furrow (indications of medieval ploughing) to the north-west of the hamlet. There appears to have been a change in land tenure by the early fifteenth century, which may indicate a significant reduction in the size of the settlement.

4.03 The size of the hamlet may have remained relatively unaltered since this late medieval period, although there was a substantial period of rebuilding in the eighteenth century, probably linked to agricultural improvements. Most of the farm houses appear to date from this period, although the associated farm buildings are generally later.

4.04 The location of Grange Farm, away from the road and the other farms may suggest that it had a different function or status (see Plate 3). The 1854 Ordnance Survey Map suggests that it was a focal point at the south end of the hamlet.

4.05 There have been few developments within Towthorpe during the twentieth century. The farm complex north of Manor Farm (see Plate 4) appears to have been absorbed by one of the other farms towards the beginning of the century as by 1911 its house had been sub-divided into three cottages. During the latter half of the twentieth century the cottages have been altered to storage accommodation. One bungalow (Beith Acre - now massively extended) was erected in the 1920s to the south of Low Farm and other similar properties were created to the east of Grange Farm (outside the designated area).

4.06 The farmsteads catered for a mixed agricultural economy. In the last few decades agricultural activity has reduced within the hamlet and many of the buildings have become derelict. However, within the past two years, the farmhouses at Manor Farm and Low Farm have been restored. (see Plate 5).



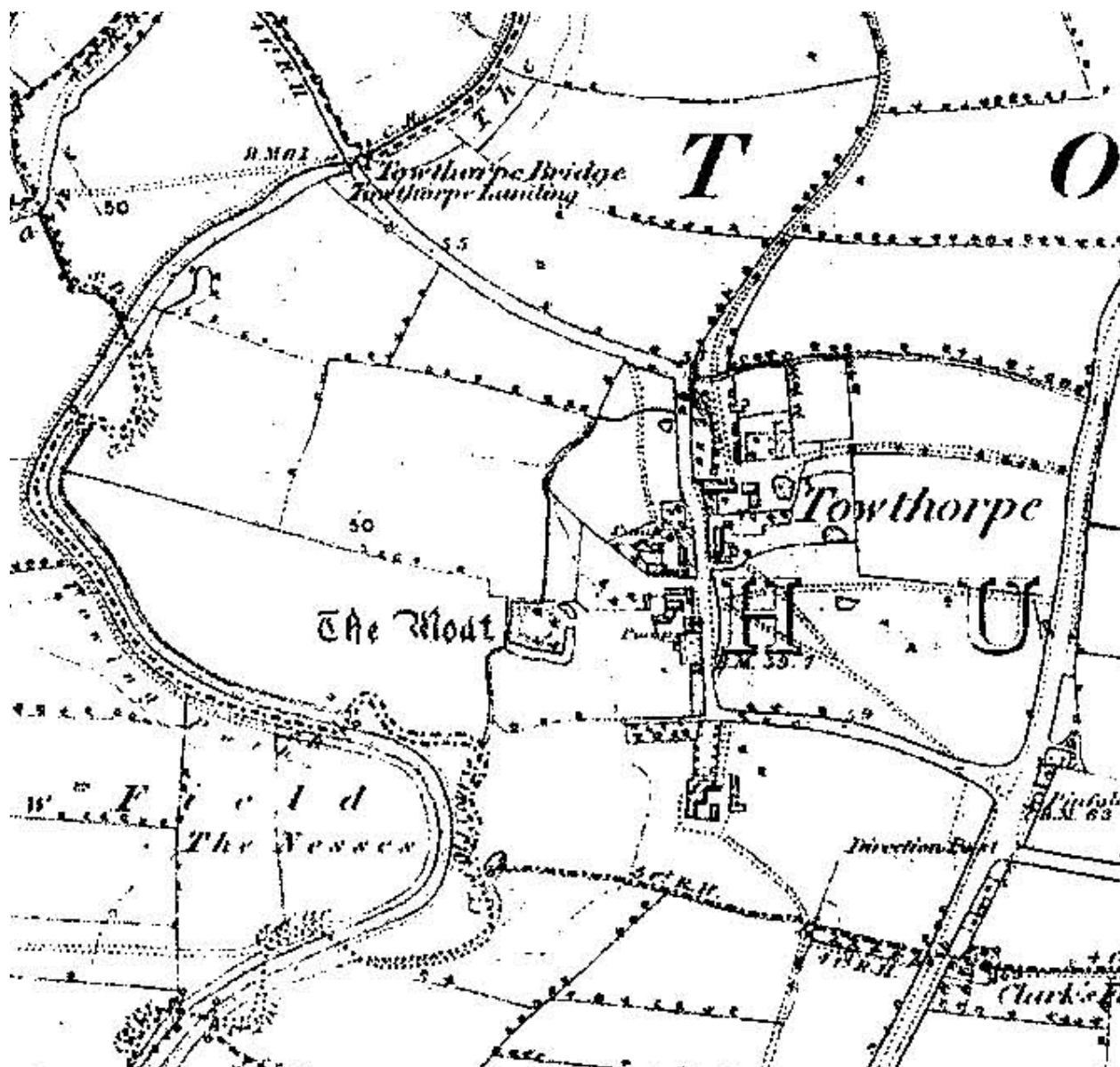
Plate 3 View towards Grange Farm



Plate 4 Farm buildings at Manor Farm



Plate 5 Manor farmhouse



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1852 Ordnance Survey Map



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1930 Ordnance Survey Map



## 5 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

5.01 One of the requirements of an appraisal is a review of the Conservation Area boundaries to establish whether it would be appropriate for there to be any changes. Therefore the extent of the existing designated area has been reviewed and areas around the existing Conservation Area have been studied to ascertain whether any new areas should be included or existing areas excluded.

### Existing boundary

5.02 The current boundary of the designated area is illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A. The Conservation Area is focused around five farm complexes most of which are no longer in agricultural use (see Plate 6). Grange Farm stands in a relatively isolated location to the south of a bend in Towthorpe Road (see Plate 7) but the other four former farm complexes, together with one other property, form a group on either side of the road further north. The designated area also includes open land on the west side of the road.

### Possible alterations and additions

5.03 There are no areas which are considered to be included inappropriately and no further additions to the boundary are recommended.

### Recommendations

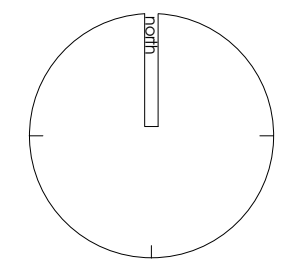
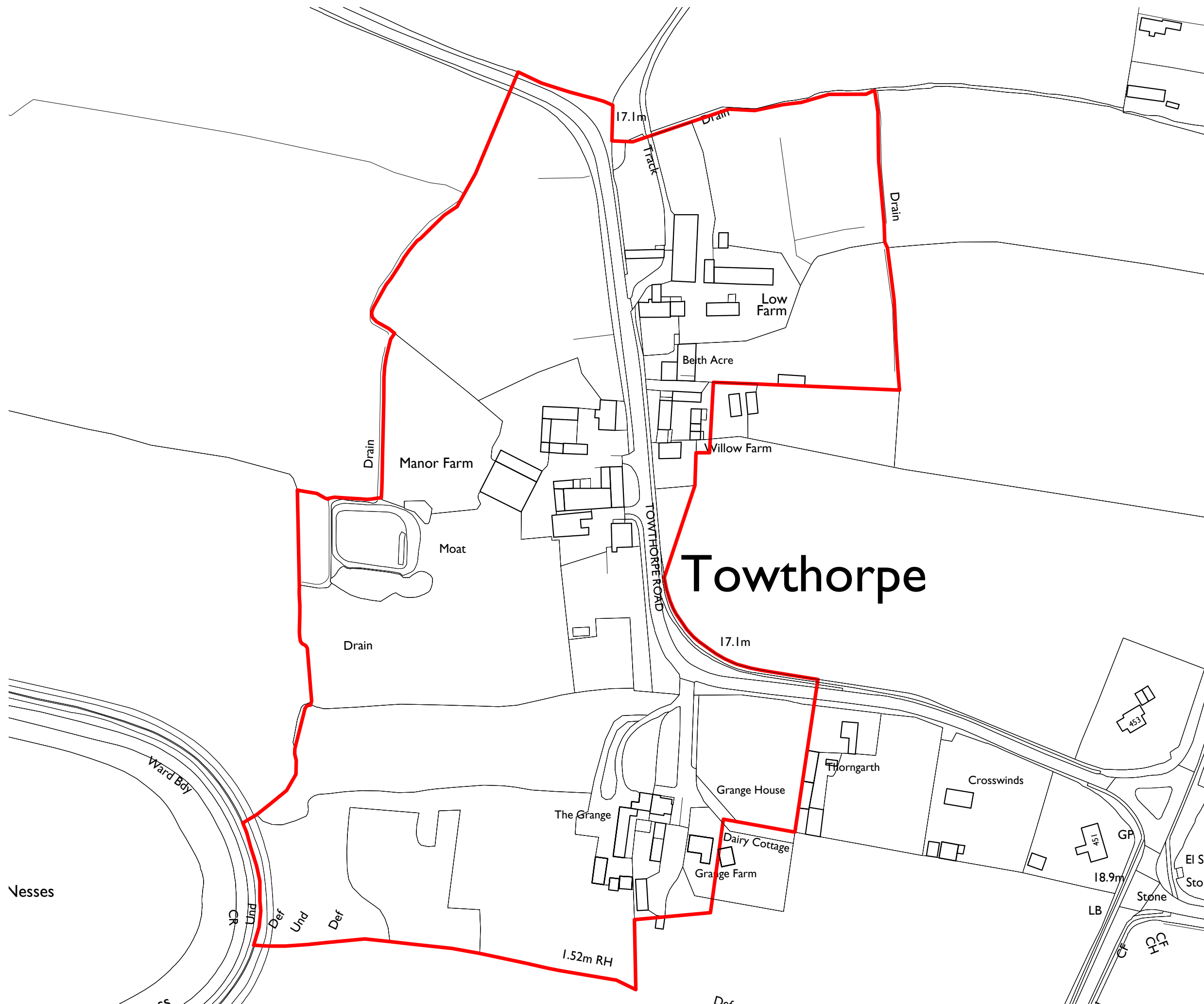
5.04 In view of all the above, it is considered that the existing boundaries of the area are appropriate and no alterations are recommended.



Plate 6 View towards Manor Farm



Plate 7 View towards Grange Farm



— Conservation Area boundary

Map 2 - Conservation Area boundary

## 6 GENERAL CHARACTER

6.01 This section considers the general character of the whole of the Conservation Area.

### Use

6.02 The predominant use of the buildings within the area are residential and agricultural (see Map 3). The agricultural and related employment uses have declined and as a result many of the farm buildings are vacant and derelict. The small number of properties and the limited level of activity within the Conservation Area is an essential aspect of its character.

### Qualities of the Buildings

6.03 The buildings tend to be large in scale and grouped to form enclosed yards. These clusters are separated by generous open space associated with the agricultural use. A number of the buildings retain evidence of height increase or sub-division demonstrating continuous adaptation of the buildings over a period of time.

6.04 Within the Conservation Area there is only one listed building (see Map 4 and Appendix A). This is Low Farmhouse which is a mid eighteenth century farmhouse constructed of red clamp brick under a pitched pantile roof with its

principal elevation facing south. This is a typical farmhouse of its period, with a simple form, small horizontal sliding sash windows, stepped eaves courses and raised gables (see Plate 8). The other farmhouses display similar form and detailing, although window types have been changed to vertical sliding sashes. The farmhouse north of Manor Farm appears to be earlier and may well be of special interest, although it has been altered and is currently derelict.

6.05 The farmhouses have different relationships with the road. At Low Farm and Willow Farm the houses are at right angles to the road. Manor Farm has a house that faces east across the road, while Grange farm is located well away from the road and is accessed by a long drive.

6.06 All of the farms had ranges of agricultural buildings to either house livestock or to store materials, such as hay. Some buildings have been re-used as workshops. The earlier buildings are constructed with brick under a pitched roof whilst the later buildings are portal framed structures covered with metal (see Plates 4, 9



Plate 8 Low Farmhouse



Plate 9 Barn at Manor Farm



Plate 10 Barns at Low Farm

&10). Most of the traditional buildings within the Conservation Area make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. Due to their former agricultural use many of the buildings are surrounded by open yards which results in a low density of built form.

- 6.07 Beith Acre was originally constructed as a modest, hipped roof bungalow but a very large two-storey extension has been added, which makes the building appear incongruous (see Plate 11).

### **Spaces and views**

- 6.08 Within the designated area the defined spaces are limited to the immediate curtilages of the farmhouses and other dwellings. These spaces are typically garden areas or yards associated with former agricultural uses (see Plate 4). Along the southern section of Towthorpe Road there are sections of modern tarmac pavements, but elsewhere there are just grass verges.
- 6.09 Views within the designated area are predominantly along Towthorpe Road to either end of the Conservation Area (see Map 5 and Plate 12). Significant views into the designated area are possible from across the open areas to the north, south and west. Also, as a result of the low density of the built form and the open

layout the area, many views are possible between the buildings.

### **Soft Landscaping**

- 6.10 The streetscene along Towthorpe Road is softened by many trees and hedges (see Plate 12 and Map 5). As noted above, grass verges exist on both sides of the northern section of Towthorpe Road.

### **Neutral and Negative factors**

- 6.11 Within the designated area there are a number of neutral factors and negative factors (see Map 4). Beith Acre has is an untypical bungalow which is made more obvious by the contrasting mass of the rear extension. In addition, the loss of a the front boundary enclosure also creates a gap in the streetscene. Also, some of the modern farm buildings are negative factors as a result of their scale and non-traditional materials.

- 6.12 The recent boundary walls erected at Manor Farm and Low Farm (see Plates 5 and 13) are inappropriate to the area as a result of their design and detailing. The cumulative impact of such small-scale changes can quickly undermine the special qualities of the Conservation Area.



Plate 11 Beith Acre

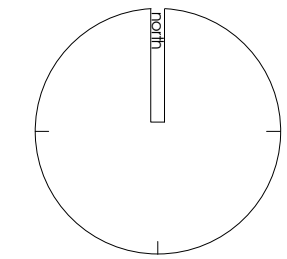
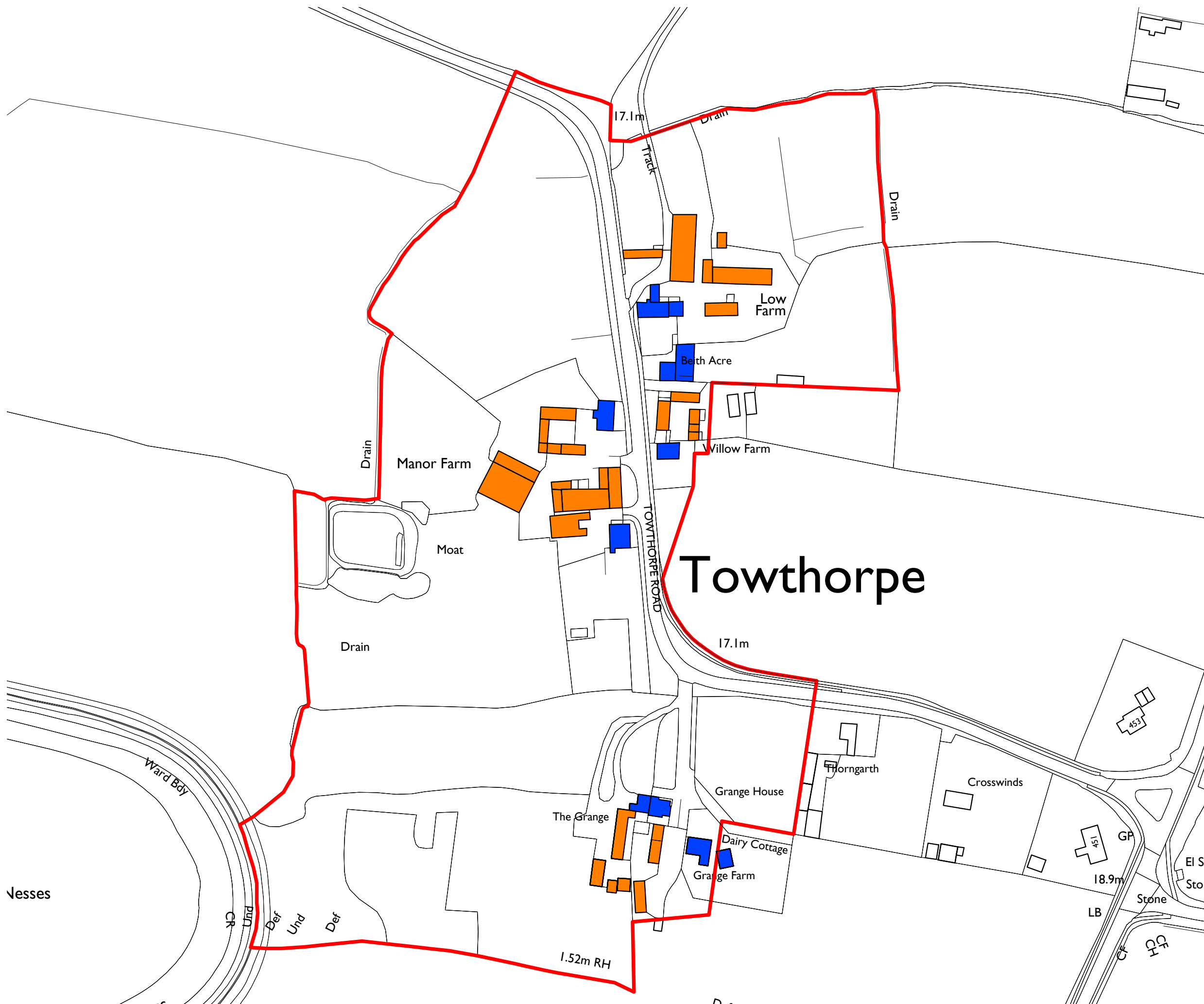


Plate 12 Trees and hedges in the streetscene



Plate 13 Boundary wall at Low farmhouse

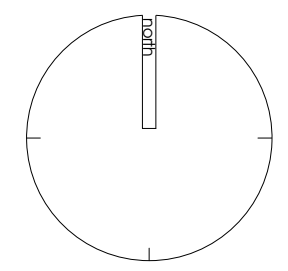
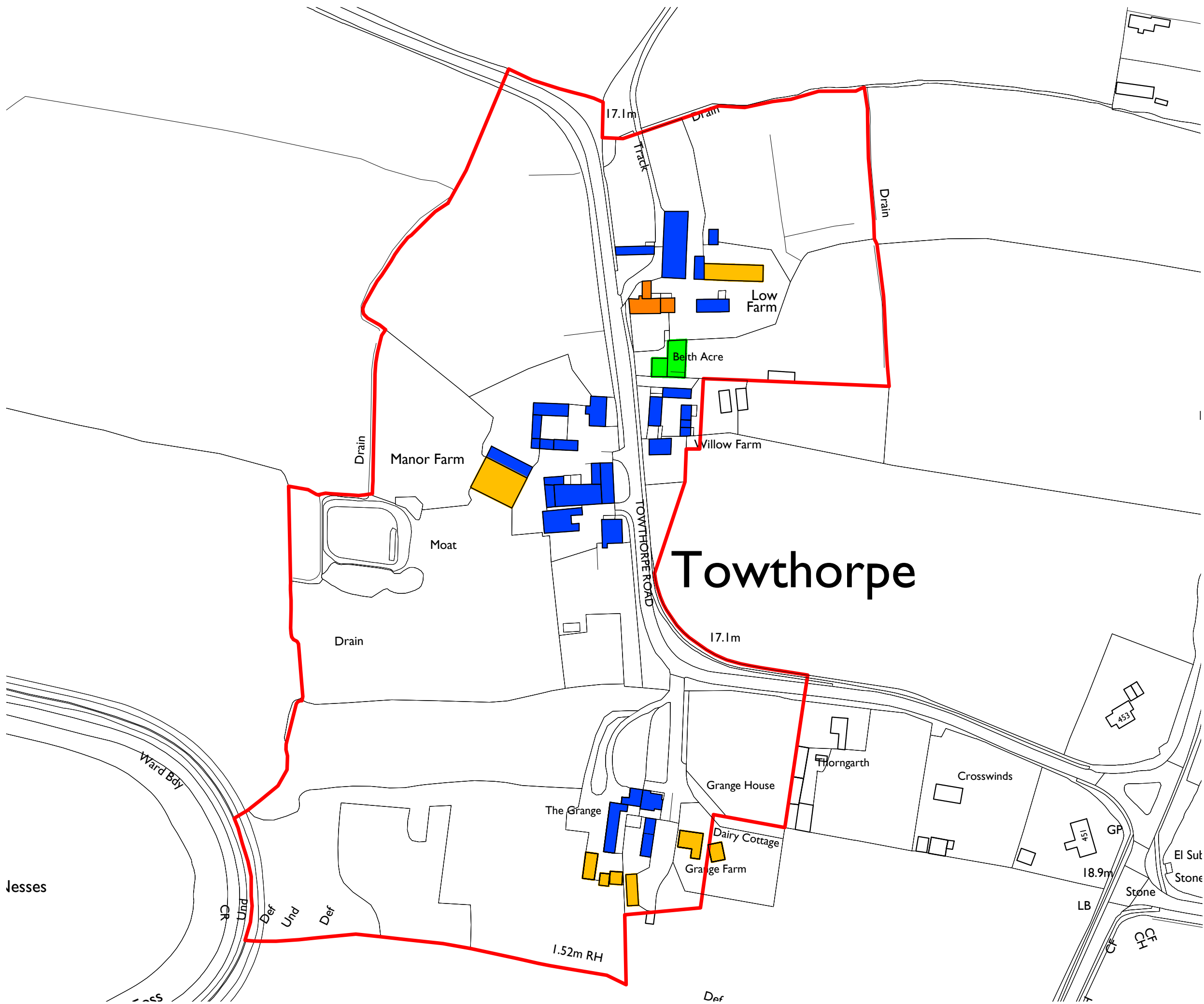




- Conservation Area boundary
- Residential
- Agricultural

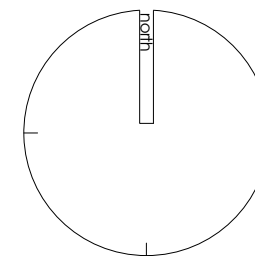
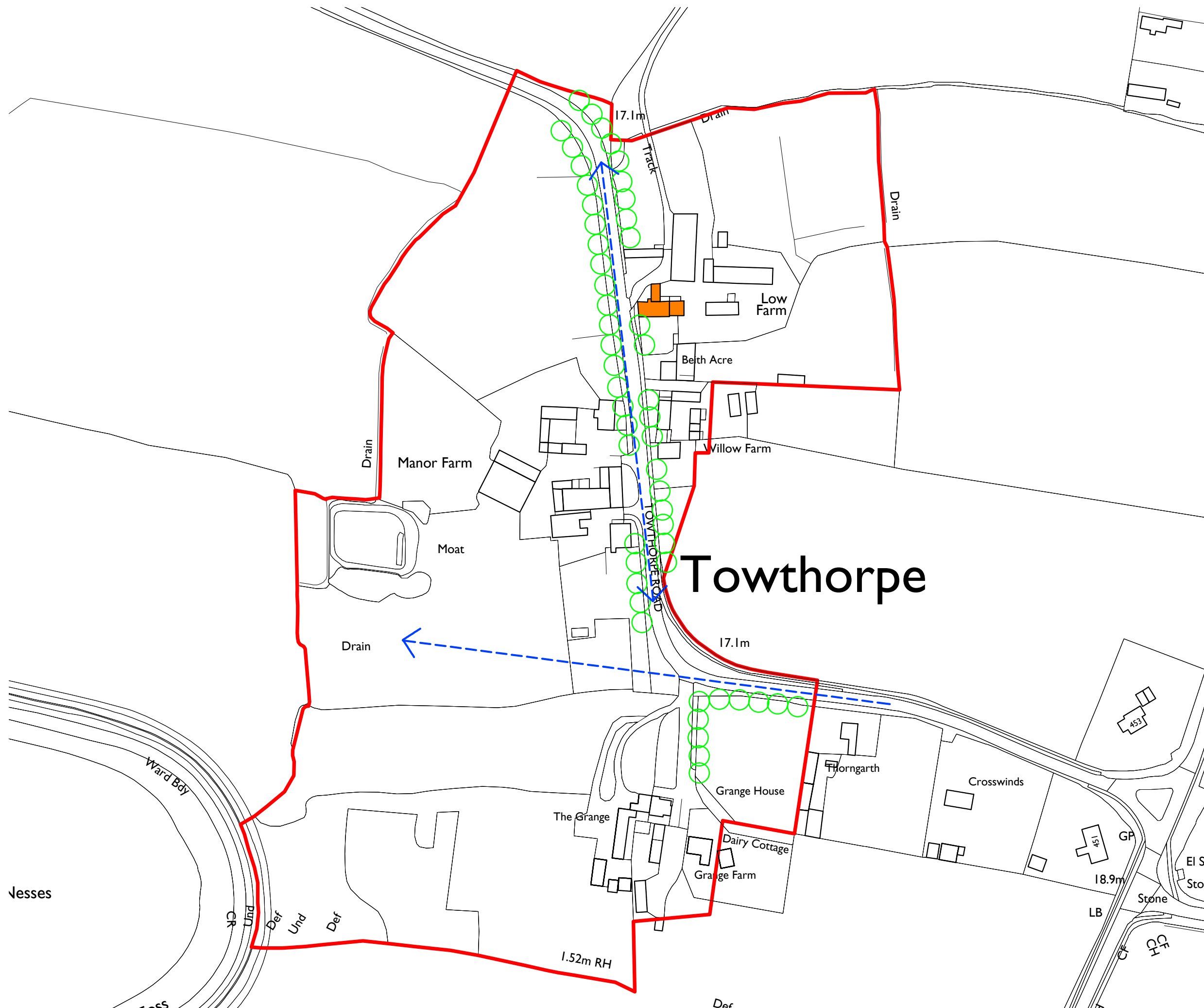
Map 3 - Existing uses





- Conservation Area boundary
- Listed buildings
- Buildings which make a positive contribution
- Buildings which make a negative contribution
- Buildings which make a neutral contribution

Map 4 - Building Assessment



- Conservation Area boundary
- Long distance views
- Trees
- Landmarks

Map 5 - Spatial analysis

## 7 FUTURE MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- 7.01 The following issues should form the basis for a management plan for the Towthorpe Conservation Area. However, all aspects of the area identified in the appraisal should be subject to measures for preservation or enhancement, particularly when considering applications for planning permissions within or adjacent to the Conservation Area.
- 7.02 The major issue for the Towthorpe Conservation Area is the future of the derelict buildings, particularly the many traditional farm buildings. This would lead to pressure for the future of these buildings to be secured by residential use. However, this is likely to lead to a substantial increase in the number of dwellings within the hamlet, which would destroy its essential character. Alternative employment uses should be encouraged because of the close proximity of the York ring road. Although the relative isolation of the hamlet may mitigate the viability of such proposals and sustainable transport issues would need to be addressed. Otherwise such uses may lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic within the hamlet. One alternative is to encourage the development of a few very large residential units that can make use of both the traditional farmhouses and their associated farm buildings.
- 7.03 It is recommended that the Council suggest to English Heritage that the farmhouse north of Manor Farm should be considered for inclusion on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
- 7.04 Article 4 (2) directions should be introduced to cover roofs, doors, windows, porches, boundary walls and gates. This would provide additional protection to the essentially agricultural character of many unlisted buildings within the designated area. It would also prevent the use of unsympathetic materials/styles and allow control over design and materials used against the highway.
- 7.05 Regular tree and hedge maintenance is important and there should be encouragement for reinforcing the hedges that make a key contribution to the Conservation Area. In addition, it is recommended that the Council re-survey the designated area and its immediate setting to establish if any further Tree Preservation Orders would be appropriate.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS**

**Towthorpe Road  
(east side)**

**Low Farmhouse**

**Grade II**

House. Mid C18. Brick with pantile roof. Direct entry, 3-cell plan. 2 storeys, 3 first-floor windows. 2-light casement beneath flat brick arches throughout. C20 half-glazed door to left; window in blocked doorway to right. Stepped eaves course. Raised gable ends. End and ridge stacks, that to left rebuilt. Interior contains chamfered spine beams, C18 panels doors throughout, an C18 splat baluster staircase and a C19 range in the kitchen.