



## **Retford**

**Regeneration Workshop  
10 December 2014**

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**Appendices:**

- 1 - Map showing the Town Centre boundary
- 2 - Map of the key heritage buildings
- 3 - Map showing those areas already improved
- 4 - Map showing the areas earmarked for improvement

## **1.0 Introduction**

Bassetlaw District Council (BDC) invited The Prince's Regeneration Trust (PRT) to chair a Workshop to review the existing character of the townscape of Retford and to explore opportunities for future enhancement.

The format of the Workshop began with a walking tour of the town led by representatives of Retford Civic Society (RCS) and BDC. This looked at the key buildings and spaces, the sites already enhanced or developed, and the sites where there is the potential for improvement and in some cases new build.

There then followed a meeting in the Town Hall attended by a larger number of Elected Members and BDC Officers. This meeting was introduced by Cllr Jo White, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and chaired by Edward Holland, Senior Projects Adviser at PRT.

This report captures the principal conclusions of the tour and discussions. It does not seek to duplicate a historical account of the town as this is well written up elsewhere but it does offer an overview of opportunities for enhancement of the townscape.

Towards the end of the report, three Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes (THI) have been included as case studies, as they are similar in nature and location. These can act as a reference guide for BDC, highlighting management, achievements and shortfalls of the respective THIs.

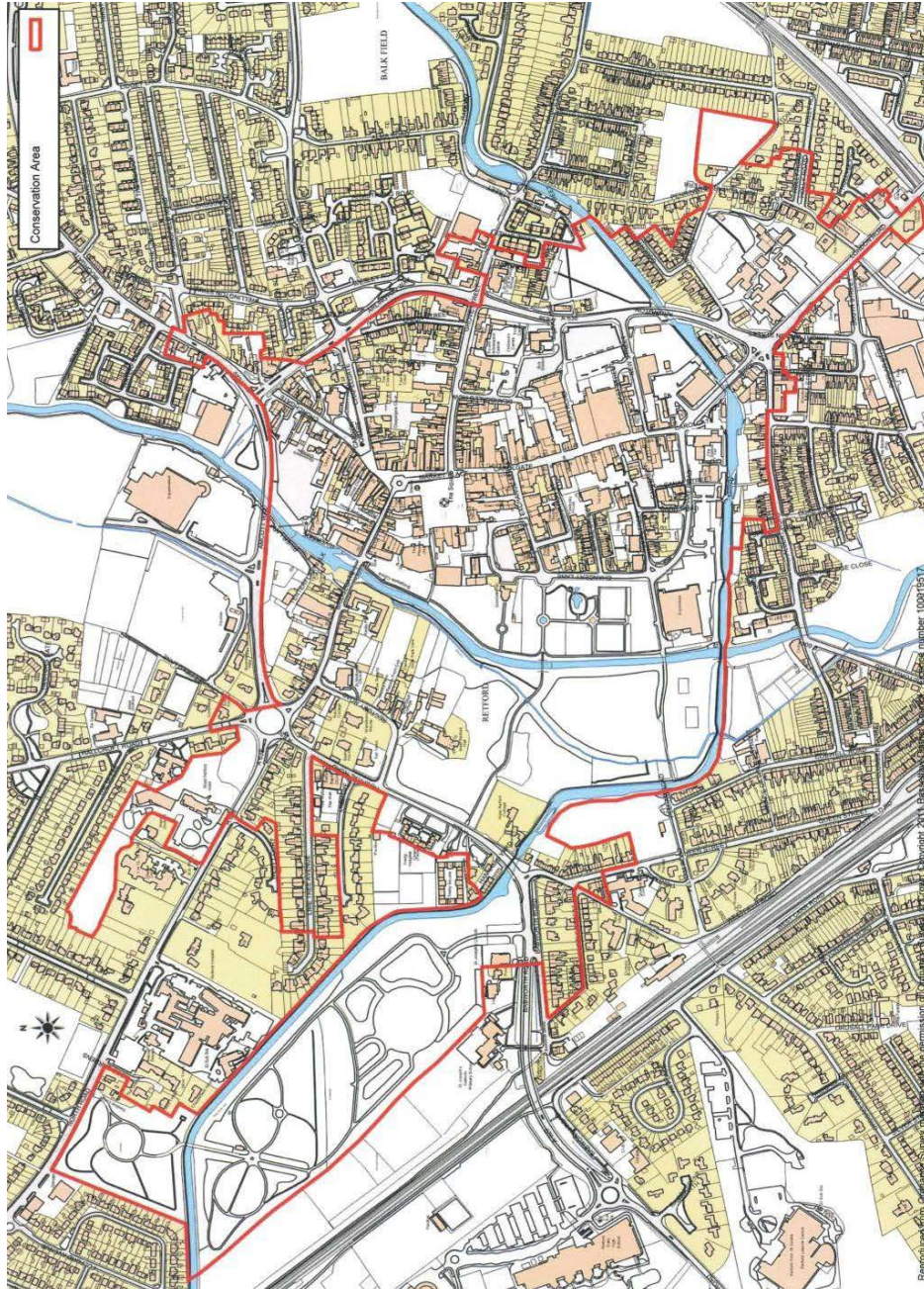
The report will conclude with a summary of next steps and recommendations.



*Fig. 1 The Market Square © PRT*

## 2.0 Retford Conservation Area

This report should be read in conjunction with the detailed Conservation Area Appraisal issued in May 2012. The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1973 and was enlarged in 2011.



Map 1: Retford Conservation Area Map © BDC

Within this area there are essentially four character areas – West Retford and King's park, East Retford and Market Place, Canal and Wharf and the London Road.



### 3.0 Achievements to date

While there is significant opportunity for development and regeneration within the town centre, a number of improvements and schemes have already been successfully implemented. The Conservation Area appraisal and enlargement highlighted above is only the first. Funding from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in conjunction with BDC, has enabled significant improvements to the main square.

There are a number of examples within the town centre where consideration of the historic environment has proven successful. For instance, the Town Hall remains in use and the internal fabric of the building has been preserved (Fig. 2). As well, a modern residential development beyond the river has respected the surrounding historic landscape through the choice of materials and scale.

Attention should lastly be drawn to BDC's successful partnership history which has included, amongst others, RCS and Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC).

As this report will later draw upon, such schemes, considerations and partnerships, can act as a model for further regeneration within the town.



*Fig. 2 Town Hall, Market Place © PRT*

#### **4.0 Walking Tour**

The Workshop began with a walking tour covering the majority of the Conservation Area (Map 1) the boundary. Map 2 also outlines prominent areas of the town visited on the tour.

The route began at the Town Hall across the Market Square, through the back lane to Bridgegate, along to the river crossing and then back to the square. It then continued along Market Place to the Parish Church of St Swithun's, past the Rising Sun pub and across the car park through Dyers Court to Grove Street. Following a quick diversion down to the Grove Street Methodist Church the group then walked down Beardsall's Row past the bus station, through the service lane to Carolgate and on to the potential development site on the West Street car park. Finally, we crossed Wharf Road to see the Canal Warehouse and then back along Chancery Lane to King's Park, the former Police Station and the Theatre, before returning to the Town Hall.

This two-hour tour focused on forming an overview of the essential character of Retford town centre and noting the key heritage buildings and spaces. The character is mainly late-Georgian with some prominent Victorian public buildings and a modernised pedestrian area. The traditional buildings are primarily of red brick with slate roofs. We looked at those projects already completed and at areas which the BDC and RCS had already identified as having potential for development and enhancement. This report aims to capture the key points identified on the tour.





Map 2: Retford Town centre © BDC

## **5.0 Discussion in Town Hall**

The Workshop continued with a discussion in BDC's Chamber with the Civic Society and BDC officers and elected Members. The following themes were discussed:

- What makes good historic character in an urban context?
- What can have an adverse impact on historic character?
- In Retford how can we maximise the benefits to the townscape of the work already carried out?
- Do we need to review the boundary of the Conservation Area?
- Is there potential for a Town Trust?
- Can we prioritise the Buildings at Risk?

## **6.0 Character Elements of the Townscape**

### **6.1 Public Spaces**

Retford has benefitted through funding from the European Regional Development Fund and BDC, which has enabled significant improvements to the elegant main square (Fig. 3), and which now has high quality paving and lighting and a good sense of public realm. It won a Civic Trust Award in 2008. As the Civic Trust's Heritage Trail says 'on market days it erupts into a hurly burly of buying and selling in the long tradition of Retford fairs and markets'.



*Fig. 3 Market Square on market day*

Public spaces such as this give Retford a highly distinctive historic character. The townscape would benefit from these efforts being replicated on the surrounding streets.

The Market Place, on the approach to the Parish Church (Fig. 4), is another key space but adopting the same palette of materials would help to better link Market Square with Market Place and lead the pedestrian through a harmonious townscape. At present the cobbled street surfacing carries the traditional character

through towards one of the most important buildings, but it does not continue all the way. The character would be enhanced if it continued across Cannon Square up to the entrance to the churchyard rather than stopping at the road edge and suddenly becoming more urban and car-orientated.



*Fig. 4 Market Place and Parish Church © PRT*

In Cannon Square the displayed cannon (captured at Sebastopol in 1855) is surrounded by bollards and double-yellow lines though it is a key townscape feature illustrating an aspect of the town's history (Fig. 5).



*Fig. 5 Cannon Square © PRT*



## 6.2 Key Vistas

It is essential that the long view through to the church is maintained (Fig. 4), including the trees.

Views along Churchgate and Chapelgate to the north and south of the Parish Church (Figs. 6 and 7) are also of significance and the streets are lined by buildings with well-preserved character.



*Fig. 6 Churchgate © PRT*



*Fig 7. Chapelgate © PRT*



*Fig. 8 View towards Parish Church from N end of Dyers Court ©PRT*



*Fig. 9 View south along Victoria Road towards station © PRT*

### **6.3 Passageways**

The town plan is characterised by a number of connecting alleys and passageways and it is essential that these are retained and enhanced. They are immediately illustrative of the town's historic origins but also offer good connectivity between different streets. Covered passageways need to feel safe and alive not dark and forbidding.



One notable example of this town plan characteristic and of recent work to enhance it is Dyers Court, off Grove Street (Fig. 10).



*Fig. 10 Dyers Court © PRT*

Here the main shop window facing onto the passageway has been painted to appear occupied (Fig.11). The image created of a traditional Victorian / Edwardian shop is impressively achieved and the references to local people adds further interest. A similar style mural is also at the rear of Dyers Court on the wall of the former laundry (Fig. 12).



*Fig. 11 Shop window in Dyers Court © PRT*



*Fig. 12 Mural on wall of former laundry to rear of Dyers Court © PRT*

#### **6.4 River and Canal**

The River Idle and the Chesterfield Canal are both key arteries for the town and views of, and along both the river and the canal, must be retained (Figs. 13 and 14). There are also two fine road bridges over the river, the one on Albert Road is dated 1892 (Fig. 15).



*Fig. 13 River Idle from Bridgegate Bridge © PRT*



*Fig. 14 Chesterfield Canal at Retford Town Lock © PRT*





*Fig. 15 Albert Road Bridge over River Idle © PRT*

## **6.5 Development Opportunities for the future**

There are some town centre development opportunities that were discussed during the walking tour. These are identified on the Improvements map in the Appendices, though it should be noted that BDC's Improvements map highlights buildings in need of repair and retail areas in need of a facelift as well as vacant sites for new development. On the edge of town it also considered that there was a need to develop the facilities at the station and its associated car parking to enable it to better cater for the volume of passengers it serves.

The development site illustrated in Fig. 16 is near the Bridgegate Centre, close to the main square. Any new build here needs to respect the proximity to historic buildings in scale and materials but it should be noted has potential to improve on the current abandoned appearance of the area. The new development of shops and residential immediately to the west of this site is of unsatisfactory design and should not be seen as a model for the proposed development opposite. The shop fronts are clumsily detailed and the mansard inspired roof appears out of character.



*Fig. 16 Development site near Market Square and Bridgegate © PRT*

Other development sites inspected on the walking tour included the areas discussed under section 8.7 as follows:

- West Street car park;
- Land behind the Police Station;
- Land to the north end of Chancery Lane; and
- Land south of Beardsall Row near the Bus Station.

These are all used for car parking at present but in the short term the townscape would benefit from their appearance being improved, the parking spaces made more ordered and surface materials renewed. Improving capacity would also take the pressure off some areas where it would be good to remove car parking all together, e.g. in front of King's Park entrance.

The land at the north end of Chancery Lane also has some out of character council offices dating from the c.1960s/70s. Regeneration of the town would benefit from the replacement of these with buildings more in character in scale and material.



## **7.0 Retford's Buildings within the Townscape**

### **7.1 Key Public Buildings**

#### **Town Hall**

Foremost amongst the public buildings is the Town Hall, which fortunately is still used for the purpose for which it was built. In an age when local authorities around the country are moving out of their historic town halls and indeed away from their town centres altogether BDC is to be commended for continuing to care for this key building. It was built in 1868 by Bellamy and Hay architects of Lincoln and its façade has definite French Renaissance influence. Internally it retains a fine Ballroom and Council Chamber as well as its grand imperial staircase.



*Fig. 17 Retford Town Hall © PRT*

#### **Parish Church**

The Parish Church (Fig. 18) was founded in 12<sup>th</sup> century although the primary character of the church today is Victorian. It features in the majority of views into, and through, Retford. It was interesting to note that the Parish Church is seeking to let the Lady Chapel – an unusual move but extra income is needed to contribute to the annual maintenance costs.



*Fig. 18 St Swithun's East Retford © PRT*

### **Retford Museum**

Amcott House, one of Retford's finest townhouses, is now the Museum and retains its symmetrical Georgian frontage, c.1780 (Fig. 19). For the sake of the interior detail it is important this remains the museum and is not closed to make local authority savings.



*Fig. 19 Retford Museum © PRT*

### **Majestic Theatre**

The Majestic Theatre is somewhat hidden in the townscape but its façade on Coronation Street is a remarkable piece of Art Deco architecture, designed in 1925 by Alfred Thraves of Nottingham (Fig. 20).



*Fig 20. Majestic Theatre © PRT*

### **Wesleyan Methodist Church**

Wesleyan Methodist Church built in 1880 provides an end stop to this key street and as such makes an important contribution to the townscape. All efforts should be made to ensure it remains in use and if necessary develops appropriate ancillary uses to support viability.





*Fig 21. Wesleyan Methodist Church, Grove Street © PRT*

## 7.2 Buildings that tell their own story

One example is on Grove Street (Fig. 22). The building has changed its use but its original function is clear from the distinctive lettered panel on the front elevation. This is essential historical evidence told through the townscape and must be retained.



*Fig 22. Former Laundry building, Grove Street © PRT*

### **7.3 Buildings at Risk**

Retford currently has four entries on the local authority Buildings at Risk Register for Bassetlaw District. These are:

- 26 and 28 Grove Street
- King Edward VII Grammar School (now converted into residential space)
- Church of St Albans (currently up for sale)
- 23 and 24 Market Square

The English Heritage register in addition lists as at risk the two Grade II\* churches, St Swithun, Churchgate, and St Michael the Archangel, Bridgegate.

In terms of secular buildings the most critical buildings at risk to rescue are those on the register including:

#### **26 and 28 Grove Street**

This is a critical building in the townscape forming the corner of one of the main streets, the building itself is still capable of restoration and has Listed Building Consent for residential and retail conversion. The permission unfortunately has not been implemented. It is said that the difficulty with residential conversion is that it is too large for current demand for single properties and subdivision is necessarily restricted by the need to retain the original staircase which potentially impacts on the viability of refurbishment. On the other hand the need for full subdivision would not arise in, for example, an office conversion, and this should be considered in more detail. The building may have other viable uses.



*Fig. 23     26 & 28 Grove Street on corner of Beardsall's Row © PRT*

As the Register already highlights those buildings that are at particular risk this report will not go into further detail on them but will instead draw attention to some



other buildings that are not on the Register but appear to be either already at risk or should be on a watch list. These include:

#### **Market Square (E side)**

This building on Market Square / Market Place is at risk because the upper floors have been long abandoned and broken window panes mean the building is not wind and weather tight. Its appearance highlights its emptiness and therefore puts the building at risk of vandalism. Although the ground floor has been altered the upper floors retain their Georgian sash windows and moulded architraves.



*Fig. 24 Market Square (E side), building at risk © PRT*

#### **Retford Police Station**

The large police station is architecturally distinctive, intact, and is a prominent building forming the corner of Chancery Lane and Exchange Street (Fig. 25). As is it a positive building within the Conservation Area, there is a presumption for its retention.



*Fig. 25 Retford Police Station © PRT*

#### **Former Canal Warehouse**

The canal warehouse is another empty building of significance to the town's heritage (Fig. 26). It was built in 1882 by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company. The site had planning permission for conversion to six dwellings but there is no sign this has started and so the building remains at risk.



*Fig 26. Former Canal Warehouse at Retford Town Lock © PRT*

#### **7.4 Examples of successful retention of historic buildings**

There are examples in Retford of where historic buildings have been carefully repaired and are continuing in use. It shows that it can be done and offers hope for the remaining buildings at risk:

##### **Poplar House**

One example is the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Poplar House on Grove Street directly opposite the building at risk on the corner of Beardsall's Row (Fig. 27). Here the three-storey house has been faithfully repaired and remains in use as a single dwelling.



*Fig 27. Georgian house on Grove Street © PRT*

##### **White Hart Hotel**

Another is the White Hart Hotel which has recently been restored. Fig. 28 shows the courtyard entrance with the windows repaired or replaced and the jettied upper floor retained.





*Fig. 28 Rear courtyard of the restored White Hart © PRT*

## **7.5 New build and Modern interventions**

There are sites in the town that have already been developed and lessons can be learned:

### **Bridgegate**

The residential development on Bridgegate just beyond the river shows good attention to scale and materials (Fig. 29).



*Fig. 29 Bridgegate development © PRT*



### Grove Street

By contrast the 1990 residential development on Grove Street is weak in design and detracts from the character of the street (Fig. 30).



*Fig. 30 Grove Street development © PRT*

There are also examples of poor quality infill on more constrained sites in the town. Future infill should seek to blend better with the existing character. Whilst the first example just off the Market Square Street is subservient in scale and is set back, its severely modern style actually makes it more obtrusive (Fig. 31).



*Fig. 31 Market Square (E side) © PRT*

Argos has attempted to follow the match the levels of the neighbouring elevations but the style of the fenestration and the scale of the shop front undermines this to leave an unsatisfactory piece of infill development (Fig. 32).



*Fig. 32 Argos in the Market Place © PRT*

## **7.6 Underused buildings**

Ground floor shops are generally occupied but some upper floors are currently vacant. For example in the main square if these upper floors could be brought back into use for either residential or commercial space, it would create more of a sense of life day and night whereas there is a deserted feeling after hours at present.

Under-occupied buildings are also likely to be under-maintained buildings and therefore can quickly become buildings at risk.

One potential solution we discussed at the Workshop was the establishment of a Town Trust. The Council would need to establish a Company limited by Guarantee to provide a focus for regeneration in the town centre. It would operate as a property owner / landlord purchasing, renovating and placing tenants with the aim of returning partially or wholly redundant buildings back to life. It would stimulate inward migration to the town centre. Over the long-term properties could if necessary be resold and the proceeds reinvested in renovating further redundant buildings. A funding package would need to be assembled from the local authorities and potentially HLF and or housing associations. We recommend undertaking discussions with the Empty Homes Agency on this point.

Key underused examples noted on the survey included:



**23 and 24 Market Square**



*Fig 33. Nos. 23 & 24 Market Sq. (on Building at Risk Register) © PRT*

**34 Market Square**



*Fig. 34 Market Square partially occupied buildings © PRT*



**Albert Road**



*Fig. 35 empty home on Albert Road © PRT*

## 8.0 Shop fronts and Signage

### 8.1 Shop fronts

This is one of the most difficult issues to get right in an historic town. It is important for the economic vitality of the town that the shops thrive and to do so they will want to ensure they have highly visible shop fronts. Chains have their own house style that will expect to replicate whether in Retford or any other town. Too often shop fronts are changed without consent and it is left to the local planning authority to decide whether to take enforcement and such retrospective control is always more difficult. Simple considerations can make a big impact. For example shops that are not open at night do not really need much shop front illumination. Good quality hand-written signs, painted onto wood, can be as striking for their individuality as the standard chain store signs, that can be seen everywhere, are for their intrusiveness.

BDC's Guide to Good Shop Front Design and Signage was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in July 2014 and this should be rigorously used to enhance the townscape. This sets out parameters beyond which consent could not be granted and offers guidance on design that if followed will create a more harmonious appearance to the commercial areas of the town.

The following illustrate some examples in Retford that would merit review in future work to enhance the townscape:

#### 36 Bridgegate

Although not overtly illuminated and although on a modern building the depth and flatness of the fascia in Fig. 36 and the heaviness of the end brackets is unnecessarily out of character.



*Fig. 36 Bridgegate © PRT*

### **37 Bridgegate**

This late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian building is severely damaged by the modern shop front which ideally should be wholly replaced. The building appears to have originally been two properties and so a more sensitively designed timber shop front could reflect this for example two doorways into the same retail premises.



*Fig. 37 Bridgegate © PRT*

### **38 Grove Street**

Here the modern shop front fascia has insensitively cut across the terracotta detailing of the Victorian/Edwardian building and compromised the historic character, which in itself could have been a good way of drawing attention to the shop. The new work has potentially done irreversible damage to the historic detailing underneath.





*Fig. 38 Grove Street © PRT*

#### **(Unknown no.) Bridgegate**

By contrast the following shop on Bridgegate is a good example of a whole building intact, with sympathetic shop front and fenestration above.



*Fig. 39 shop building with well-preserved historic character © PRT*

## 8.2 Quantity of Signage

In some areas there is a plethora of A boards, wall signs, banners and other signage (Figs. 40 and 41). These need to be rationalised to avoid the townscape character being undermined. It is especially detrimental to buildings of architectural distinction and too much signage can also be confusing. Ideally signage should be 'as little as possible but as much as is necessary'.



*Fig. 40 Market Square © PRT*



*Fig. 41 Market Place © PRT*

## 8.3 Quality of signage

Signage that is hand painted, bespoke and sensitively lit where necessary can add value to the character of the townscape. By the same token signage that is generic, plastic and illuminated by fluorescent panels or prominent swan neck lamps can be highly damaging to the character of the townscape. Ye Olde Sun Inn (Fig. 42) is to be commended for its hand painted pub sign, though the advertising banner in the middle would be best removed and the lighting rationalised.



*Fig. 42 Ye Olde Sun Inn, Chapelgate © PRT*

#### **8.4 Street Furniture**

It is important to review the quantity and quality of street furniture. The example on Market Place (Fig. 43) creates a feeling of obstruction rather than enhancing movement through and along the street. The challenge is to provide facilities such as litter bins and benches and notice boards in ways that are clearly located but not visually intrusive. A palette of materials and colours helps to achieve this. Following from that it would be good when litter bins need replacing to agree a common style for example those introduced as part of the public realm works around the Market Square.



*Fig. 43 Market Place © PRT*



### 8.5 Litter

To the rear of Carolgate (Fig. 44) there is a particular problem with unguarded refuse bins the contents of which are being strewn across the pedestrian thoroughfare to the main shopping street. Better management of waste disposal by neighbouring shops or night time closure of this area is needed to control adverse effects on the appearance of the townscape.



*Fig. 44 litter behind Carolgate © PRT*

### 8.6 Paving

Decorative paving can add vibrancy to largely modern pedestrianized areas such as Carolgate (Fig. 45) but it can also create, as is the case here, a rather harsh appearance. The surfaces have been degraded by repairs that have not matched the materials. Any new areas of decorative paving in any parts of the town should be in a palette that is easy to maintain and there should be clear instructions to road engineers and service providers that any intervention (e.g. underground cabling) must carefully carry out like for like repairs on completion.



*Fig. 45 Carolgate © PRT*

## 8.7 Parking

In several areas of the town there is a problem of seemingly random car parking and in some cases this mars the appreciation of key buildings and spaces and it creates an untidy character.

The walking tour identified opportunities to rationalise car parking around the bus station area and near Bridgegate (Fig. 46) where there could also be the opportunity for parking to be incorporated into a high quality new development.



*Fig. 46 Bridgegate © PRT*



Fortunately the vista through from Dyers Court (Fig. 47) towards the church is retained and it is important that any amendments to the layout of this parking area in the future should maintain this.



*Fig. 47 end of Dyers Court © PRT*

The car parking at King's Park, however, is obscuring the sense of arrival (Fig. 48). The gated entrance screen is a fine piece of townscape and the entrance to the park needs to be viewed and approached without interruption by vehicles. King's Park was opened in June 1938 to commemorate the reign of George V and the coronation of George VI.



*Fig. 48 Parking in front of entrance to King's Park © PRT*



## **9.0 Town Centre Regeneration Case Studies**

A number of THI projects have been carried out in the surrounding Midlands. Three projects, similar in size and nature to Retford, have been included in this report as case studies. Key information on each project's background, aims, and resources, as well as notes on outcomes and achievements, has been summarised from public reports supplied by the HLF, Amber Valley Borough Council and Bolsover District Council.<sup>1</sup>

Two of these initiatives, Belper (part of the wider Belper & Milford THI) and Creswell, are completed, having ended in 2007 and 2009 respectively. The third case study, Boston, is in its very early stages: Boston Borough Council learned in January 2015 that it had secured a HLF First Round pass. The project is intending to run from 2016-2021.

It is hoped that these case studies can provide useful insight into the processes and management of historic town centre regeneration, and highlight any potential opportunities or obstacles that BDC should be aware of during their own regeneration of Retford town centre.

### **9.1 Belper, Derbyshire<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Background**

The Belper & Milford THI began in October 2004 and ended in May 2009. The project was funded by both public and private sectors. The HLF awarded the project £1,025,000.

Through conserving and regenerating the town centre the project hoped 'to make the area more competitive and attractive to local shoppers and to build on the opportunity of the World Heritage Site status of the area to create a world class tourist destination'. This was to be achieved through:

- Building repairs;
- Reinstatement of architectural detail;
- Bringing vacant floor space into use; and
- Enhancing tourism appeal.

75 individual projects were completed under the scheme: 53 residential and 12 commercial properties, four public realm projects and six feasibility studies.

#### **Management**

For the majority of the scheme, the positions of Project Officer and Administration Assistant were responsible for its smooth running. They also had the support of various departments within Amber Valley Borough Council. The project was

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<sup>1</sup> See Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership, *Belper and Milford Townscape Heritage Initiative: Final Evaluation, 2009*; Townscape Heritage Research Unit, Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, *Creswell: Five Year Review Report, 2007*; Liz Bates, HLF, *Boston Townscape Heritage Project Summary, September 2014*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Belper and Milford, 2009*.

overseen by a steering group, consisting of representatives from the town, borough and county councils; the project Officer for the World Heritage Site; conservation specialists; and local residents.

### **Achievements**

In general, the Final Evaluation highlighted that project had been very successful, with positive reviews received from interviewees. It was particularly noted that the 'environmental and heritage improvements to both residential have had a positive impact on the communities in terms of increasing a strong heritage identity and promoted genuine civic pride amongst its local residents'. Important achievements include:

- The development of the Belper Ritz Cinema has been regarded as one of the project's greatest achievements. It has been partly responsible for developing a 'more diverse evening economy'. The Cinema has collaborated with local eateries to offer more services to the public visiting in the evenings.
- The conversion of the Congregational Church from a church to residential property.
- A better quality tourist experience and economic activity. Figures suggest the THI is likely to have contributed to increased footfall in the town centre.
- Possible responsibility for the reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour. This may have been achieved through increased public activity.
- Improvement of heritage building skills for local builders and craftspeople.
- Of those interviewed, residents found it easy to apply for and receive grants.
- The potential for influencing other properties or businesses in raising standards or carrying out essential works.

### **Arising Issues**

The Final Evaluation highlighted some shortfalls in the project, and offered recommendations on how to avoid such issues in the future:

#### *Funding*

Uncertainty with funding and having numerous funding streams caused delays and loss of momentum. Recommendations:

- When using numerous funding streams, adequate time should be built in to the project programme to allow for decision making. Ideally, funding should be spread over a longer period of time.
- If dealing with government funding, staff should be aware of, and trained, for dealing with the annualised accounting.

#### *Future Investment*

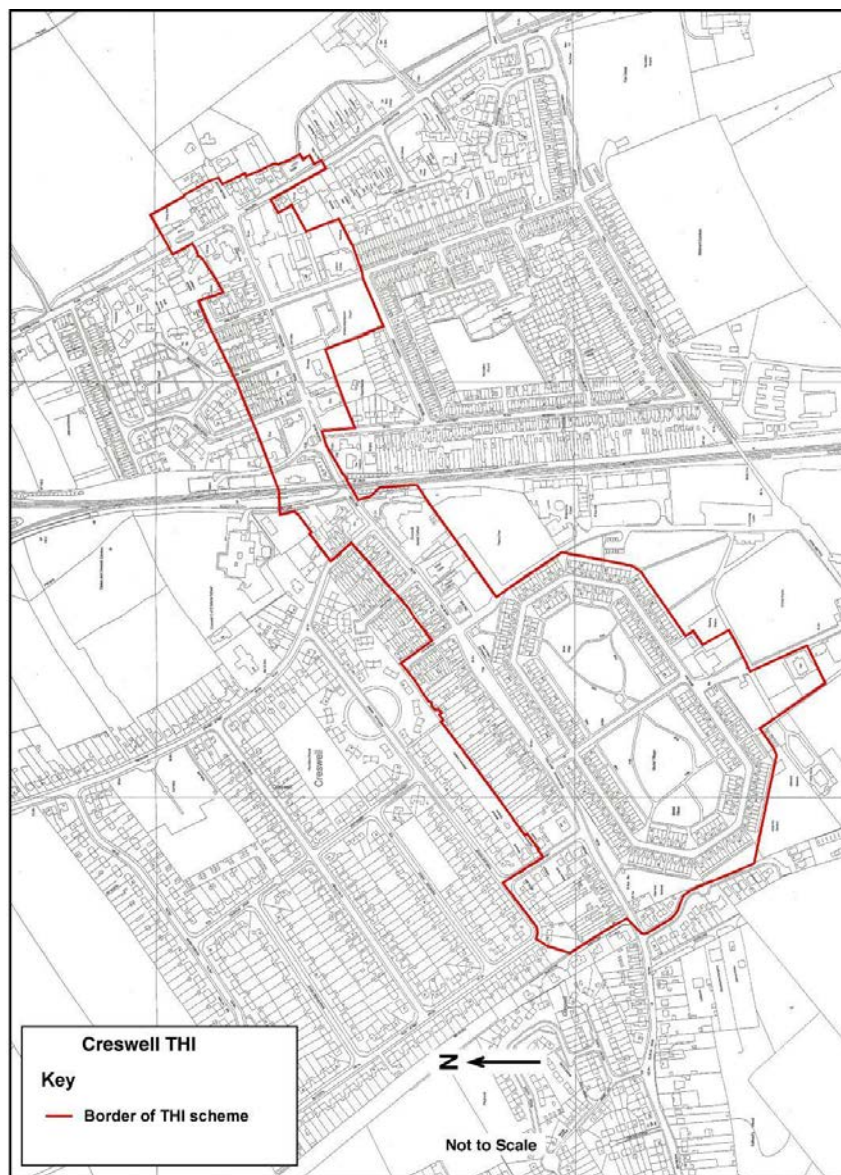
This will be dependent on the willingness of owners to invest, and for the town centre to be kept as the civic focus (there is concern over a proposed Tesco development outside of the town centre). Recommendations:

- The work of the THI is included within future strategies for the town.
- Relationships formed with project partners should be maintained.

## 9.2 Creswell, Derbyshire<sup>3</sup>

### Background

The decline of the local coal industry in Creswell, and the subsequent closure of the colliery, had a severe impact both economically and physically on the village. Creswell was awarded a THI grant of £1,400,000 in 1999 as part of the first phase, totalling £3,426,000. The second and third phases were effectively combined, with 'a completely different and more complex funding mechanism'. The THI grant for this combined phase was £3,210,000, with a total investment of £10,000,000. Map 3 highlights the area covered under the THI scheme.



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*Map 3 Boundary of Creswell THI, taken from 'Creswell, 2007'*

The 4 main objectives of the scheme were:

<sup>3</sup> See *Creswell, 2007*.



- Quality of life enhancement
- Townscape improvement
- Economic regeneration
- Confidence building

While the project covered a wider area, three projects were identified as 'critical' for the THI scheme: the Model Village, the Green, and the redundant grade II listed former Church of England schools. Phase one focused on the repair of 90 properties in the Model Village, while the last combined phase focused on the remaining Model Village properties, as well as the Green and general environment.

### **Management**

A project officer was assigned to provide overall project management, and Bolsover District Council provided additional financial and HR support. The project was overseen by a partnership committee consisting of:

- Bolsover District Council (Members & Officers);
- Derbyshire County Council (Members & Officers);
- Creswell Heritage Trust;
- Elmtown and Creswell Parish Council;
- Villagate Properties (private landowner);
- Creswell Regeneration Trust;
- Representatives of the Creswell Model Village Residents Association;
- Groundwork Creswell;
- Meden Valley Making Places;
- Elmtown and Creswell Local History Group;
- Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust; and
- Creswell Village Company.

If not involved through the partnership committee, the community also had direct involvement with the project through training initiatives.

### **Achievements**

The evaluation report conducted in 2007 highlighted a number of key achievements for the project. In general the report ascertained that there was a positive attitude for the future of Creswell. It particularly highlighted that the specific nature of the THI funding encouraged 'very positive' outcomes, which may not have been achieved otherwise. The evaluation report holds the belief that the Creswell THI was 'very good value for money'. Key achievements, centred on the four project aims, include:

- General optimism about the village's future and prospects.
- Change of opinion on the Council: indication that a 'far greater proportion' of residents now felt the Council was invested in the wellbeing of the village.
- Improvement in the reduction of serious crimes.
- 'Dramatic improvements' to the townscape of the Model Village.
- Fewer derelict and vacant properties: 90 houses restored, and a further 185 from through further investment in the area.
- The creation of a visitor and heritage centre for the village.

- 70% of the employed workforce was drawn from the immediate community.
- The diverse range of funding sought, resulted in a 'very substantial investment'.

### **Arising issues**

While the project produced successful and instilled optimism for the local area, there were a number of issues with the project programme and objectives.

#### *Timescale*

While the project was intended to last five years, work had to be extended to 2009 due to delays with the Model Village, funding, and the acquisition of the former Church of England schools.

#### *Funding*

Funding difficulties caused delays and led to the creation of the combined phase. There had been failure at the start of the project to secure partnership funding for the Model Village regeneration, forcing works to halt. It is noted that this caused a large degree of unrest and criticism locally with regards to the scheme.

#### *Former Church of England Schools redevelopment*

Issues with the owners delayed works and the Council repeatedly served urgent work notices. It is acknowledged that the owners had 'unrealistic expectations' with regards to the value of the properties, which then caused programme delays.

### **9.3 Boston, Lincolnshire<sup>4</sup>**

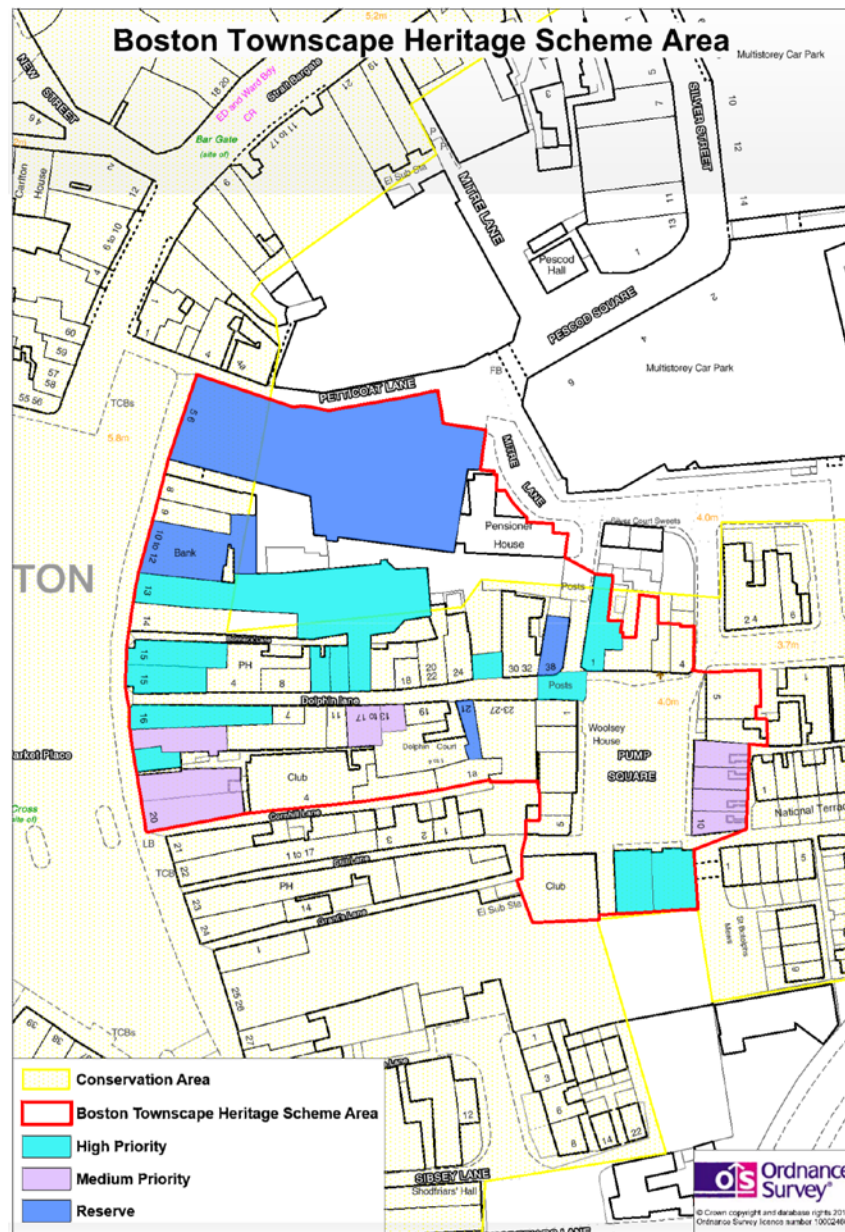
#### **Background and Progress to Date**

Boston Borough Council, in partnership with Heritage Lincolnshire (HL), was awarded a first round HLF pass of £73,000 in January 2014. A second round application will then be submitted in the hope of securing the remaining £996,000 of a £1,069,000 total funding package. This project will be focussing on the conservation and enhancement of the town centre's historic eastern boundary of Market Place, Dolphin Lane and Pump Square (see Map 4).

The project will later apply for EU funding for the delivery phase totalling £385,000, and has secured both public and private donations, totally nearly £500,000. The Council will be contributing £99,500 to the whole project. Eligible property owners will be encouraged to apply for a grant to help with improvement works of their historic property.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Boston*, September 2014.



Map 4: Boundary of Boston THI, taken from 'Boston, September 2014.'

## Management

Boston Borough Council, as the lead applicant, will oversee the project's finances and the employment of a full time Townscape Heritage Project Officer from the beginning of the Development Phase. HL will be responsible for training and supporting the Project Manager, as well as assisting with funding applications, and the community engagement programme. A formal agreement between the two partners was included as part of the HLF application, and a partnership board will be created.

An activity plan for the community will include:

- Training by professional building archaeologists to record historic buildings;



- Workshops on building conservation skills;
- Events such as an annual medieval fair, guided walks, and exhibitions;  
and
- Outreach work by the Project Manager in local schools, colleges,  
groups, to discuss the project.

## **10.0 Workshop Conclusion**

### **10.1 Summary**

Retford has a townscape of considerable historic interest. Much has already been done to preserve and enhance it through the successful partnership of local and regional bodies.

Development opportunities have been identified but they require particular attention to detail, materials and proportions to ensure that the intervention adds value to the townscape and conservation area and does not detract from it. We recommend that a design brief is produced for the area to give guidance on scale, materials and appropriate uses.

The most urgent issues to address are those buildings on the At Risk Register, and those buildings identified as being underused buildings. With regard to underused buildings, the Market Square is almost entirely commercial and so lacks a feeling of occupation at night but if the upper floors could be brought back into use as residential it would change the dynamic of the space giving it greater day and night-time activity. This would also promote security in the town centre at night-time. Buildings that occupy focal positions in the streetscape are especially important to rescue, for example the one on the corner of Grove Street and Beardsall's Row. For the Buildings at Risk, we suggest an open forum with local community members to discuss and consider what uses would be a good first steps towards feasibility work.

As identified earlier in the report, it is essential that the key vistas and street scopes, as well as the river and canalside walks, be not only maintained, but strengthened. A review of shop fronts is also needed to seek to undo some of the poorer changes carried out. It is also recommended that a Presentation Audit is carried out to rationalise signage and street furniture.

The aim of this report has been to provide an overview based on a short survey and follow-up discussion. It is hoped that it can stimulate further work towards the enhancement of the Conservation Area.

### **10.2 Original Discussion Themes**

As mentioned at the start of this report the discussion covered the following issues and this report has sought to capture the conclusions on the day:

- What makes good historic character in an urban context?

*Retention and use of historic buildings, repairs carried out using traditional materials and techniques; good quality public realm; open spaces, long vistas and new buildings respecting the scale and character around them.*

- What can have an adverse impact on historic character?

*Poor design in alterations and new build; buildings out of use and derelict; excessive or untidy street furniture; poor use of materials (e.g. needless stone cladding onto a brick elevation); poor quality shop fronts; key vistas obscured; random parking.*

- In Retford how can we maximise the benefits to the townscape of the work already carried out?

*Continue to enhance the Market Square where great improvement has already been carried out; get the surrounding buildings back into full use and continue the palette of paving materials out onto neighbouring streets.*

- Do we need to review the boundary of the Conservation Area?

*The boundary has relatively recently been reviewed so may not be a priority but there could be an argument for excluding some of lower end of Carolgate where the character is predominantly modern.*

- Is there potential for a Town Trust?

*Yes. This could be a way to address the problem of empty upper floors over shops and businesses. By providing affordable rents it could encourage people back into the town centre.*

- Can we prioritise the Buildings at Risk?

1. 26-28 Grove Street. We feel this site should be considered first. This site is a high priority. It sits in a key location and has had residential planning permission before, and is currently on the English Heritage At Risk register. While there are challenges in refurbishing this site, it does have the potential for residential development. This could be achieved through partnership with the local housing association.
2. 23-24 Market Street. This is a close second priority. This site has a lot of opportunities and could be used for residential or offices. This site has the potential to achieve a lot with relatively little work.
3. Canal Warehouse. While this site is not listed, it dominates the area and has the potential for residential conversion. As it is not listed, installing windows are possible.

### **10.3 Case Studies**

The case studies included in this report have all tackled, or are tackling, similar issues with town centre regeneration in a likeminded way to BDC. If required, PRT would be happy to put BDC in touch with the authors.

### **10.4 List of Report Recommendations**

This conclusion would finally like to draw attention back to the number of initial recommendations made in this report. These should be read in conjunction with the recommendations identified in the conclusion section above, and have been separated into two distinct lists:

#### **Preservation Opportunities**

1. The Market Place: adopting the same palette of materials would help to better link Market Square with Market Place and lead the pedestrian through a harmonious townscape. At present the cobbled street surfacing carries the traditional character through towards one of the most important buildings,



but it does not continue all the way. The character would be enhanced if it continued across Cannon Square up to the entrance to the churchyard.

2. Any new areas of decorative paving in any parts of the town should be in a palette that is easy to maintain and there should be clear instructions to road engineers and service providers that any intervention (e.g. underground cabling) must carefully carry out like for like repairs on completion.
3. It is essential that the long view through to the church is maintained.
4. The town centre is characterised by a number of connecting alleys and passageways and it is essential that these are retained and enhanced.
5. The decorative murals should be retained as they are unique features for the Town. Similarly, original signage such as above the old launderette should be preserved as it provides an interesting insight to the town centre's history.
6. To safeguard the interior, the Museum should remain as is, and ideally should be protected from spending cuts.

### **Development Opportunities**

1. All efforts should be made to ensure the Methodist church remains in use as it holds a significant position in the town landscape. We suggest that secondary uses for the building could be explored so that it remains a vital hub.
2. The site near Market Square and Bridgegate has the potential for development. However, we stress that any new build here needs to respect the proximity to historic buildings in scale and materials.
3. Car parking: improving capacity would take the pressure off some areas where it would be good to remove car parking all together, e.g. in front of King's Park entrance.
4. The land at the north end of Chancery Lane has some out of character council offices dating from the c.1960s/70s. Regeneration of the town would benefit from the replacement of these with buildings more in character in scale and material.
5. A number of upper floors in the main square are currently vacant. These have the potential for redevelopment, and may also benefit the area through increased local activity at night. We recommend undertaking investigations into potential partnerships including the Empty Homes Agency to take this issue forward.



The map displays the Chesterfield town centre with the following features:

- Town Centre Boundary:** Indicated by a dashed purple line.
- Primary Shopping Area Boundary:** Indicated by a solid orange line.
- Primary Retail Frontage:** Indicated by a solid green line.
- Secondary Retail Frontage:** Indicated by a dashed green line.

Key locations and streets shown include:

- Streets:** Bridgegate, Cannon Square, Chapelgate, Market Place, Exchange Street, Coronation Street, Savile Street, West Street, Wharf Road, Canal Street, East Street, New Street, Mill Bridge Close, Albert Road, Whitehall Road, Mill Street, Wright Wilson Street, Wellington Street, A638, A639, A640, A641, A642, A643, A644, A645, A646, A647, A648, A649, A650, A651, A652, A653, A654, A655, A656, A657, A658, A659, A660, A661, A662, A663, A664, A665, A666, A667, A668, A669, A670, A671, A672, A673, A674, A675, A676, A677, A678, A679, A680, A681, A682, A683, A684, A685, A686, A687, A688, A689, A690, A691, A692, A693, A694, A695, A696, A697, A698, A699, A700, A701, A702, A703, A704, A705, A706, A707, A708, A709, A710, A711, A712, A713, A714, A715, A716, A717, A718, A719, A720, A721, A722, A723, A724, A725, A726, A727, A728, A729, A730, A731, A732, A733, A734, A735, A736, A737, A738, A739, A740, A741, A742, A743, A744, A745, A746, A747, A748, A749, A750, A751, A752, A753, A754, A755, A756, A757, A758, A759, A760, A761, A762, A763, A764, A765, A766, A767, A768, A769, A770, A771, A772, A773, A774, A775, A776, A777, A778, A779, A780, A781, A782, A783, A784, A785, A786, A787, A788, A789, A790, A791, A792, A793, A794, A795, A796, A797, A798, A799, A800, A801, A802, A803, A804, A805, A806, A807, A808, A809, A810, A811, A812, A813, A814, A815, A816, A817, A818, A819, A820, A821, A822, A823, A824, A825, A826, A827, A828, A829, A830, A831, A832, A833, A834, A835, A836, A837, A838, A839, A840, A841, A842, A843, A844, A845, A846, A847, A848, A849, A850, A851, A852, A853, A854, A855, A856, A857, A858, A859, A860, A861, A862, A863, A864, A865, A866, A867, A868, A869, A870, A871, A872, A873, A874, A875, A876, A877, A878, A879, A880, A881, A882, A883, A884, A885, A886, A887, A888, A889, A890, A891, A892, A893, A894, A895, A896, A897, A898, A899, A900, A901, A902, A903, A904, A905, A906, A907, A908, A909, A910, A911, A912, A913, A914, A915, A916, A917, A918, A919, A920, A921, A922, A923, A924, A925, A926, A927, A928, A929, A930, A931, A932, A933, A934, A935, A936, A937, A938, A939, A940, A941, A942, A943, A944, A945, A946, A947, A948, A949, A950, A951, A952, A953, A954, A955, A956, A957, A958, A959, A960, A961, A962, A963, A964, A965, A966, A967, A968, A969, A970, A971, A972, A973, A974, A975, A976, A977, A978, A979, A980, A981, A982, A983, A984, A985, A986, A987, A988, A989, A990, A991, A992, A993, A994, A995, A996, A997, A998, A999, A1000, A1001, A1002, A1003, A1004, A1005, A1006, A1007, A1008, A1009, A1010, A1011, A1012, A1013, A1014, A1015, A1016, A1017, A1018, A1019, A1020, A1021, A1022, A1023, A1024, A1025, A1026, A1027, A1028, A1029, A1030, A1031, A1032, A1033, A1034, A1035, A1036, A1037, A1038, A1039, A1040, A1041, A1042, A1043, A1044, A1045, A1046, A1047, A1048, A1049, A1050, A1051, A1052, A1053, A1054, A1055, A1056, A1057, A1058, A1059, A1060, A1061, A1062, A1063, A1064, A1065, A1066, A1067, A1068, A1069, A1070, A1071, A1072, A1073, A1074, A1075, A1076, A1077, A1078, A1079, A1080, A1081, A1082, A1083, A1084, A1085, A1086, A1087, A1088, A1089, A1090, A1091, A1092, A1093, A1094, A1095, A1096, A1097, A1098, A1099, A1100, A1101, A1102, A1103, A1104, A1105, A1106, A1107, A1108, A1109, A1110, A1111, A1112, A1113, A1114, A1115, A1116, A1117, A1118, A1119, A1120, A1121, A1122, A1123, A1124, A1125, A1126, A1127, A1128, A1129, A1130, A1131, A1132, A1133, A1134, A1135, A1136, A1137, A1138, A1139, A1140, A1141, A1142, A1143, A1144, A1145, A1146, A1147, A1148, A1149, A1150, A1151, A1152, A1153, A1154, A1155, A1156, A1157, A1158, A1159, A1160, A1161, A1162, A1163, A1164, A1165, A1166, A1167, A1168, A1169, A1170, A1171, A1172, A1173, A1174, A1175, A1176, A1177, A1178, A1179, A1180, A1181, A1182, A1183, A1184, A1185, A1186, A1187, A1188, A1189, A1190, A1191, A1192, A1193, A1194, A1195, A1196, A1197, A1198, A1199, A1200, A1201, A1202, A1203, A1204, A1205, A1206, A1207, A1208, A1209, A1210, A1211, A1212, A1213, A1214, A1215, A1216, A1217, A1218, A1219, A1220, A1221, A1222, A1223, A1224, A1225, A1226, A1227, A1228, A1229, A1230, A1231, A1232, A1233, A1234, A1235, A1236, A1237, A1238, A1239, A1240, A1241, A1242, A1243, A1244, A1245, A1246, A1247, A1248, A1249, A1250, A1251, A1252, A1253, A1254, A1255, A1256, A1257, A1258, A1259, A1260, A1261, A1262, A1263, A1264, A1265, A1266, A1267, A1268, A1269, A1270, A1271, A1272, A1273, A1274, A1275, A1276, A1277, A1278, A1279, A1280, A1281, A1282, A1283, A1284, A1285, A1286, A1287, A1288, A1289, A1290, A1291, A1292, A1293, A1294, A1295, A1296, A1297, A1298, A1299, A1300, A1301, A1302, A1303, A1304, A1305, A1306, A1307, A1308, A1309, A1310, A1311, A1312, A1313, A1314, A1315, A1316, A1317, A1318, A1319, A1320, A1321, A1322, A1323, A1324, A1325, A1326, A1327, A1328, A1329, A1330, A1331, A1332, A1333, A1334, A1335, A1336, A1337, A1338, A1339, A1340, A1341



