



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**  
Environment

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

**RETFORD**

**Prepared  
for**



**ENGLISH HERITAGE**  
**Extensive Urban Survey Programme**

# **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

## **RETFORD**

**GILL STROUD, 2001**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 The Assessment**

This assessment has been produced through the Extensive Urban Survey Programme, an English Heritage funded initiative to assist local planning authorities with the conservation of their urban archaeological resource. Retford is one of 18 small towns in Nottinghamshire selected for such assessment.

The assessment is a desk-based survey, the scope of which includes both above and below ground archaeological remains of all periods, using information from the County Sites and Monuments Record, local histories, early maps and plan form analysis, with the results presented as a series of maps generated by GIS. It provides a foundation for the development of an archaeological management strategy that could be adopted by the local planning authority as supplementary planning guidance.

#### **1.2 Overview of the town**

The town of Retford, in the north-east of Nottinghamshire, has its origins in two distinct settlements, East and West Retford, separated from each other by the River Idle. East Retford was one of only two royal boroughs in medieval Nottinghamshire, probably being founded in the early 12th century, although West Retford was probably the earlier of the two settlements. As a medieval market town, East Retford developed slowly at the centre of a fairly self-contained local area. However, its prosperity and importance increased considerably with the diversion of the Great North Road through the town in 1766, followed shortly afterwards by the completion of the Chesterfield Canal. It continued to prosper through the first half of the 19th century, but declined somewhat once the coaching trade had been superseded by the railways. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the suburbs spread southwards to include the neighbouring villages of Ordsall and Thrumpton, both with pre-Norman origins. For the purposes of this report, however, the southern boundary of the area under consideration has been drawn along the line of the railways.

### **2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Retford is situated on the alluvial deposits of the river Idle, with its eastern suburbs lying on a north-south band of glacial sand and gravel. The solid geology beneath consists of Bunter Pebble Beds with Mercian Mudstone further east. At a height of only 14-15m AOD, the centre of the town was particularly vulnerable to floods prior to the drainage schemes which were undertaken at the end of the 18th century.

### **3. ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT**

Retford lay in Bassetlaw wapentake at the time of the Domesday Survey. The River Idle formed the boundary between two of the three divisions of Bassetlaw, and consequently West Retford lay in the Hatfield division and East Retford in the North Clay division. As the settlement of East Retford grew, it expanded into the neighbouring parishes of Clarbrough and Ordsall, a situation which was formalised when the boundary of the borough was redrawn in 1878 to include the suburbs. Retford now lies in Bassetlaw District.

## 4. SOURCES

### *Primary sources*

Many Corporation records are said to have been lost when the church spire fell down in 1651, as they were stored in the church, while others may have been destroyed in the early 19th century around the time of the investigations into borough affairs. Nevertheless, some surviving records are held in the Nottinghamshire Archives Office, together with a variety of other material, including deeds, wills, land tax assessments and parish registers, the earliest of these being 1573 for East Retford and 1754 for West Retford. The Archives Office also holds manor court rolls for West Retford from 1719-1730 and suit rolls for 1726-1741, although they do not form a complete run. The Trinity Hospital holds its own historical documents.

### *Secondary sources*

The earliest town history was written by Piercy and published in 1828. He was a young man when it was written, and he continued to collect information relating to Retford throughout his life, probably intending to publish a more complete edition of his history. Although this was never produced, his papers survive and are held by a firm of lawyers at Retford. It appears that he was able to consult Corporation records which have since been lost and consequently his notebooks form an important archive, albeit one which was not consulted for this report. A number of monographs on local history were produced by Biggs, who also amassed a collection of photographs lodged with the Denman Library in Retford and published a selection of 100 documents and extracts relating to Retford. However, the first fully referenced town history was that produced by Jackson in 1971, who drew on a wide range of sources including Piercy's manuscripts. More recently Marcombe (1993) published a book examining life in the town between 1520 and 1642.

### *Cartographic evidence*

As the area under study includes part of several parishes, a number of surviving historic maps, held by Nottingham Archives, were consulted. The earliest of these is the 1774 Parliamentary Enclosure Map of West Retford. A map of the same date showing land belonging to Trinity Hospital, West Retford, shows a part of East Retford in outline also. There is a map of the hamlet of Moorgate in the parish of Claborough in 1806. For the borough of East Retford itself there is a small-scale and incomplete map of 1820 and another rather stylised map of the mid 1830's, produced at the time when proposals for enlargement of the borough boundary were being made. However, the earliest large-scale map is the Tithe Map of 1848, which shows property boundaries although the majority of buildings are not shown in any detail.

### *Archaeological evidence*

There are 20 sites recorded in the Nottinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) within the built-up area of Retford under consideration here. Of these, eight are associated with the Chesterfield Canal, consisting mainly of canalside buildings and bridges. Records on the SMR for the surrounding area are derived mainly from stray finds and from aerial photographs, the area to the west being particularly rich in cropmarks.

The only archaeological work known to have taken place in the town was a watching brief at Bridgegate in 1995 (Ross & Davies 1995). In addition, a considerable amount of material was recovered from the River Idle in 1988 following dredging of the river bed (Dolby pers. comm.).

## **5. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

### **5.1 Prehistoric (Figure 1)**

There is no evidence of prehistoric activity from the settled area of Retford. However, a few artefacts of prehistoric date have been found in the vicinity.

Just to the south a Mesolithic flint artefact was found in 1950 (SMR 5733) while further south-west, near Little Morton, a Neolithic stone axe was recovered (SMR 4490). To the north, in Hayton parish, a Neolithic polished flint axe was found on the east bank of the River Idle at Tilne in 1970, having probably been brought up from the river bed during dredging (SMR 5948).

Three bronze axe-heads have been recovered from different sites to the south of the town. The find-spot of one of these (SMR 5735) is not known, beyond being from Ordsall, and consequently is not marked on Figure 1; the others come from Gamston parish, found in 1934 (SMR 5734) and from Morton Grange (SMR 4560).

### **5.2 Roman (Figure 1)**

The only evidence of Roman date from the town of Retford itself is a coin of Trajan found in 1922 in Carolgate (SMR 5769). There is evidence of a considerable degree of Roman activity in the vicinity, however. To the west of the town, Roman coins are said to have been found, according to a report of 1953, although no further information about them is known (SMR 5564). To the south-west, near Little Morton, a Roman coin hoard consisting of more than 3000 coins of the 3rd century, together with the base of the pot that contained them, was discovered by metal detector after the field had been deep ploughed for the first time (SMR 5529). To the north, a 3rd century marble bust, possibly of Balbinus, is said to have been found by a labourer in Clarborough parish in the mid-19th century (SMR 5768), while another 19th century find came from further north, at Tiln, consisting of an amulet thought to be of Roman workmanship (SMR 5767). Neither of these find-spots is known with any accuracy, and therefore they are not marked on Figure 1.

Also in the Tiln area, a piece of Roman pottery (SMR 5562) and some sherds of Roman grey ware (SMR 5563) were found in adjacent fields, while nearby two groups of cropmarks have been identified from aerial photographs, one including enclosures and double-ditched linear features (SMR 4966), the other showing sub-rectangular enclosures (SMR 4967). These are largely Roman in date, belonging with an extensive network of cropmarks making up the so-called “brickwork plan” field system, a late prehistoric and Roman landscape on the Sherwood Sandstones in the region around Retford. Excavation of a cropmark enclosure within this landscape at Dunston's Clump in Babworth parish in 1981 uncovered the remains of five timber buildings, with Roman pottery of the 1st to 3rd centuries being recovered.

### **5.3 Early Medieval**

The Domesday survey of 1086 indicates that a settlement was present by that time, although the interpretation of the Domesday entries is not straightforward (see below). Nineteenth century assertions that Retford was the site of a battle in the early 7th century have no basis in fact (Jackson 1971) and at present there are no known remains from the early medieval period either from the vicinity of Retford or from the town itself.

## 5.4 Medieval

### 5.4.1 Domesday Book, 1086

There are three entries in Domesday Book refer to Retford. The first is included among the lands of the Archbishop of York:

*... in RETFORD 1 mill belongs to Sutton ...*

The other two are included with the lands of Roger de Busli:

*S. In 'ODSTHORPE' and RETFORD 1½ b. of land taxable. Land for 4 oxen. Jurisdiction in Clumber. Waste.*

*S. In 'ODSTHORPE' and RETFORD ½ b. of land taxable. Land for 4 oxen. 1 villager. The fourth part of 1 mill; meadow, 4 acres.*

The references to Retford in Domesday Book are believed to refer to what later became known as West Retford. 'Odsthorpe' is unlocated, but may be the site on which East Retford later developed (see below).

### 5.4.2 Place-name evidence

The earliest reference to either East or West Retford comes from Domesday Book in 1086, when it is written as *Redford(e)*, meaning 'red ford', thought to refer to the red clay of the area either tinging the water red or being exposed around the area of the ford due to the passage of traffic and animals (Jackson 1971).

### 5.4.3 The borough and manor

East Retford is known to have achieved some form of borough status by 1225, this being the date of an agreement between the burgesses of Nottingham and the burgesses of Retford over rights of toll. There is some confusion about Retford's charters, it having generally been claimed that one of 1246, of which the original copy has been lost, is the first fully-authenticated one. However, according to Dolby (1997) the earliest recorded charter is actually one of 1259, granting a fair. This was followed by a series of charters confirming and extending rights and privileges. In 1276 the burgesses were given the right to hold the town at a fee farm rent of £10 and to elect bailiffs yearly or 'when expedient'. Successive charters of 1313, 1329, 1353, 1372 and 1423 refer among other things to the market and fair, with the latter also giving the bailiffs and burgesses the right of a court of record (Dolby 1997).

West Retford, on the other hand, formed part of Roger de Busli's estates in 1086, later coming into the hands of the Hercy family, lords of the manor of neighbouring Grove, with whom it remained throughout this period.

### 5.4.4 Communications

Possibly the earliest route of importance in this area was that going to Lincoln via Littleborough. Travellers from further west would cross the Idle at Retford, pass along what is now Bridgegate and Chapelgate, go up Spital Hill and on to Littleborough via North Leverton. Neither the Gainsborough nor the Dunham bridges across the Trent had been built in the medieval period (Roffey 1991).

### 5.4.5 The settlement and its environs

The *Redeforde* of Domesday Book is thought to refer to West Retford. East Retford, however, appears to have been a deliberate plantation, probably by Henry I in c. 1105. The land may have been royal property from an early date. Two entries in Domesday Book (see above) link Retford with the unidentified *Odsthorpe*, a place which is also included with royal property at Babworth and Ordsall. It seems likely, therefore, that *Odsthorpe* was adjacent to Retford and Ordsall, and that East Retford was

established there to exploit the market opportunities of north Nottinghamshire and to consolidate the king's holdings in the area (Bishop 1978).

Much of the land in the immediate vicinity of the settlement was swampy and low-lying, while the River Idle tended to flood. In 1252, Henry III ordered that the river should be dredged 'in regard that by their obstructions with sand, weeds and the like, the lands and meadows of divers persons have been overflowed and drowned', with another similar situation being recorded in 1388 (Jackson 1971). The choice of the east bank of the river, by the ford, rather than the west, for the foundation of the borough may have been partly because it was already in royal ownership and partly because it lay just outside the boundaries of an area subject to Blyth Priory's rights of toll (Bishop 1978).

While West Retford was surrounded by relatively large areas of open fields and commons, East Retford consisted of a small area only which had been carved out of the existing parish of Claborough. It was separated from the hamlet of Little Gringley by the Beck, which was granted to the burgesses in 1282:

'All that Foss which is called the Beck between my Fee of Grenelay and the Fee of the Lord the King, and of the Burgesses of Retteford, with all its length from Est-croc-sich unto the water of the Yddel ...' (quoted in Piercy 1828, 168)

In 1260 the burgesses were granted a common called Mickelmore, thought to be the Far Common, on the south-eastern side of the borough, this grant being confirmed in 1320 so that they had

'their common pasture with all manner their cattle in the Mikelmore of Retteford and in Dallcroft and in the marsh which is called Retteford Karre and in the Holmes which are between the waters, as they have hitherto been accustomed to have' (quoted in Biggs 1973, 9).

This land appears to have originally been part of Little Gringley manor. The same deed also grants the burgesses 'their Gates in all places in the circuit of the town of Retteford ... with free ingress and egress to their gates'.

Although East Retford had no large open arable fields within the borough boundary, there is a reference in a document of 1260 to 'that part of errable land at the marsh of Retford' (Biggs 1973, 8). It is highly likely that some of the inhabitants farmed in the fields around neighbouring settlements, such as West Retford, Claborough and Little Gringley. A surviving terrier of all the 'lands' in Gringley fields, probably dating to around 1547/8, includes East Retford church and the chantries within it among the proprietors in the open fields, with the latter's lands being purchased by the corporation after the dissolution (Tate 1939).

Fragments of possible early boundary crosses occur at both East and West Retford. According to tradition, one formerly stood 'on an eminence to the south-east of the town', at a place once known as *Est Cros Sic* but as Dominie Cross by the 19th century. This cross is assumed to be that later known as the Broad Stone, now in the Square, and traditionally associated with the plague in Retford, when markets were supposedly held near the cross on the outskirts of the town. According to Stapleton (1912) the remains in the Square appear to come from more than one cross, one of them possibly being an unrecorded market cross to which the Broad Stone was added in an inverted position. Another stone of similar size and shape was found in the churchyard wall at West Retford, said to have formerly stood on an elevated piece of ground in West Retford field, near the road leading to Barnby Moor (Piercy 1828).

Several of the existing streets are mentioned in medieval deeds, including *Briggate* in 1340 and *Kyrkgate*, Chapelgate and the market place in 1392 (Biggs 1973). The market place is mentioned again in 1474 in regard to a tenement 'abutting upon the market-stede, and the west head abutting upon the water of Idill' (Piercy 1828).

A moot hall was erected in 1388 following an agreement between the bailiffs and commonalty and 20 burgesses, together with

'one stockhouse, for stocks to be set under the steps of the hall aforesaid, which said hall, chamber and stockhouse should be daily exercised for the use of the bailiffs for the time being, when need should require' (Piercy 1828, 18).

Some indication of the relative importance of the town can be gained from the Lay Subsidy of 1334. East Retford was assessed at £10 13s 10d compared with Newark at £26 0s 2d and Nottingham at £37 1s 0d. However, if Moorgate and West Retford are taken into account, the figure for 'Retford' increases to £16 7s 6d, making it the third most prosperous conurbation in the county after Nottingham and Newark (Marcombe 1993).

#### **5.4.6 Markets and fairs**

The earliest surviving charter to refer to a market in East Retford, held each Saturday, is that of 1313, although markets would have been held there from early in the town's history (Dolby 1997).

The charter of 1259 granted an annual 8-day fair to be held on the eve, day and morrow of Holy Trinity and the five days following. This was a movable date and, possibly for this reason, a later charter, that of 1329, changed the fair to a fixed date, namely the eve, day and morrow of St Gregory and the five days following May 11-18). The date was changed again in 1372, with a six-day fair to be held for four days before the feast of St Margaret, the day of the feast and the following day (July 16-21), and a further time in 1423, changing to a four-day fair to be held on the eve, feast of St Matthew and two days after (September 20-23) (Dolby 1997).

Part of the grant of 1319 recorded that the men of Retford should 'have and hold their fair in Dallcroft as usual without impediment'. This is believed to be the Spa Common, or at least a part of it formerly adjoining Carolgate, on the site of New Street (Tate 1935b).

#### **5.4.7 Religious buildings**

##### *The church of St Swithun (East Retford)*

The earliest reference to the church at East Retford is in 1258, when it was given by the Archbishop of York to his 'new founded Chappell of St Mary and Holy Angells near the Minster of York', the vicarage being endowed at the same time (Piercy 1828). By 1392 there were two chantries located in a chapel at the back of the chancel, one dedicated to St Trinity, the other to St Mary; this chapel was demolished in 1528 and the church supposedly repaired with the old materials. Much of the present day church is the result of 19th century restoration.

##### *The church of St Michael (West Retford)*

The first recorded reference to the church is in 1227, when there were joint rectors, one being responsible for the Chapel of St Oswald in the south aisle. This situation continued until 1307 when the moieties were consolidated (Biggs 1968). The oldest surviving feature in the building today is the 14th century western tower.

#### **5.4.8 Education**

There appears to have been a school in Retford by 1318, as indicated by a quitclaim referring to 'Master Henry, schoolmaster of Retford'. A writ of 1393 refers to 'John de Carleton, rector of the grammar schoole of Retforde'.

#### **5.4.9 Trade and industry**

Retford's economy was based on agriculture and on the ability of its markets and fair to serve its region. There is little specific information regarding trade and industry at this period. A deed of 1260 mentions John the tanner of Retford, indicating the existence of an industry which was to continue in Retford until the 20th century, while another deed, of 1392, mentions Thomas Ropere and John Barker, Cordwayner (Biggs 1973).

The only other specific references to industry are those which relate to the mills. A mill was present in 1086, and at the beginning of the 13th century there is a mention of the moiety of the mills of Retford, with the suits, works, fishing and all customs, this moiety later being given to Welbeck Abbey in return for an annual payment (Piercy 1828). In 1265 and again in 1276 efforts had to be made to force the people of Retford to use the mills, the tithes of which were donated by the vicar to the poor of the town (Jackson 1971).

In 1995 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken on land fronting Bridgegate and adjacent to the River Idle. In one area, to the west of the bridge, fine black silts were found which may have been laid down in a mill pond and which contained 14th century pottery *in situ* as well as other material, indicating some dumping of garbage. Below Bridgegate itself wooden pilings were found, thought to represent either mill workings and water management or early attempts to protect the bridge or the ford. One pile was suitable for dendrochronological analysis, and yielded a probable date of felling and use in the mid-late 11th or the early 12th century. Three timbers which had been recovered during dredging in 1988 had been provided different felling dates, namely after AD 1207, AD 1283 and AD 1627. The fact that none of these four appeared to be contemporary suggested a complex of timber structures (Ross & Davies 1995).

A piece of slag was also recovered from a 14th century context on the site. This was a smithing 'hearth bottom', the size and condition of which indicated that smithing (although not necessarily smelting) had taken place nearby.

### **5.5 Post-medieval (16th -18th centuries)**

#### **5.5.1 The borough and manor**

East Retford continued to be granted charters in the early part of this period, receiving them in 1510, 1548, 1556 and 1562. Finally in 1607 James I issued a charter of incorporation to the town. This confirmed the concessions in previous charters, and placed the running of the town in the hands of two chief magistrates or bailiffs and twelve aldermen, holding office for life (Seddon 1972).

Sir John Hercy, lord of the manor of West Retford, died without issue in 1570 and the estate was divided amongst his eight surviving sisters. West Retford went to Anne, married to Nicholas Denman and remained in the family, later passing by marriage to the Darrells. The endowment of the church went with the manor until it was sold to the Corporation of East Retford in 1668 who in turn sold it to a private patron in the 19th century (Biggs 1968).

#### **5.5.2 Communications**

##### *Rivers*

East Retford would have looked enviously at Bawtry in the early 18th century. Bawtry stood both on the Great North Road and on the navigable Idle and acted as the chief centre of exportation for the Derbyshire and Sheffield region, with transportation to Hull and beyond, while functioning also as the distribution centre for goods coming in via Hull. The River Idle between Bawtry and Retford was not navigable for anything other than small craft; consequently in 1720 Retford Corporation sponsored an Act of Parliament to make the Idle navigable for large craft to Stockwith. However, nothing happened beyond the building of a lock at Bolham on a by-pass channel near the watermill, probably due to insufficient capital. In 1757 the question was raised again, but again did not proceed (Biggs 1968).



## *Roads*

In 1757, in addition to discussing the Idle navigation, the Corporation decided to try to get the Great North Road to pass through the town. As a result of their efforts, an Act of Parliament in 1765-6, turnpiking the road between Bawtry and Twyford Bridge, caused it to be diverted from Markham Moor through Retford to Barnby Moor, utilising roads which had previously been comparatively little used (Cossons 1934).

In 1787 the Retford to Gainsborough road was also turnpiked and Gainsborough bridge was built, so providing a better route eastwards over the Trent than had existed previously (Cossons 1934). The road to Gainsborough gave easy access to the port of Hull which 'may be said to open the way to every part of the globe' (Piercy 1828).

## *The Chesterfield Canal*

The Chesterfield Canal was begun in 1771, with the first boats reaching West Retford in 1774. At that point the embankment had to be raised and three aqueducts built to carry the canal over the River Idle and its adjoining marshlands. The canal then skirted East Retford on the south, before turning north towards the Trent at Stockwith. In 1775 it was resolved that money be paid by the Corporation to the Chesterfield Canal Company to enlarge the canal between Retford and Stockwith, so that it could be navigated by larger vessels than would otherwise have been the case. As a consequence, locks were built double the width of those between Chesterfield and Retford although in fact there is no record of any wide-beamed boats using the canal (Roffey 1991).

Retford Corporation sold part of the town's common land to the Canal Company and enclosed an area at the southern end of Carolgate for a wharf; they also imposed restrictions that prohibited the opening of any other wharves or warehouses on the waterfront in the town. However, the monopoly was challenged early in the canal's history, and a second wharf opened to which access was gained by a short arm off the main line near Spa Common (Roffey 1991).

Once the canal was fully open through the whole line in 1777, packet boat services for both goods and passengers were operated to Chesterfield, Lincoln, Boston and intermediate places daily, with connections to ships sailing to Hull, London and overseas (Roffey 1991).

### **5.5.3    *The settlement and its environs***

During the 16th century East Retford suffered a series of disasters. In 1528 there was a fire which is said to have destroyed a large part of the town and some of the parish church. Leland's description of the town in c. 1540 implies that both East and West Retford may have been affected by the fire: 'Retford hath beene burnt but both be sins that reedified'. He also notes that 'Ther is a goodly house or More Hall lately buildid in Redeford ...' which has been taken to be a reference to a new moot hall built following the destruction of the 14th century moot hall in the fire (Biggs 1973). Edward VI's Chantry Commissioners in 1545-6 noted that the chantry priests' houses 'about 20 yeres paste were burnt with the hole towne' (quoted in Leach 1910). An outbreak of plague in 1558 is suggested to have killed as much as half the population, and this was followed by another fire in the early 1580's (Jackson 1971).

Other indications, however, suggest that, despite these setbacks, East Retford continued to grow and develop at this time. In 1546 it was described as a market town, greatly inhabited and of much resort, with 500 communicants. The acquisition by the corporation of the mills, together with the paving of the market place towards the end of the 16th century, were taken by Jackson (1971) as 'an indication of some civic prosperity'. According to Piercy (1828), during the 16th century

'many buildings were erected to accommodate the wants of an increasing population, and the numerous transfers of property which were effected, give ample proof of the growing importance which this part of the country was at that time acquiring'

He concluded that

'it appears during the latter part of the 16th century that a very considerable increase had taken place in the population of the town and persons of wealth and importance had taken up their residence therein ...'

However, it might be equally possible to interpret this activity as the result of land becoming available in the borough following a period of contraction due to fires and plague. Nevertheless, East Retford was again able to send representatives to Parliament in 1571 and the privilege of representation was regained, thanks to the efforts of the third Earl of Rutland (Seddon 1972).

East Retford was apparently listed as a spa in *'The Mineral Spas of England'*, written in 1734. The old spa well was said to be in the north-east corner of Spa Common, and was either enclosed in a 3-sided stone building (Ableson 1988) or had a pyramid of decorated stone erected over it (Jackson 1971) with a metal drinking cup chained to it. By 1815 the well had fallen into disuse and was filled in, with the water being piped to an open drain. It was reopened some years later, cleaned out and repaired, with a pump built which was in operation in 1857.

The town was visited in c. 1725 by Defoe, who described it as follows:

'Then we saw Rhetford, a pretty little borough town of good trade, situate on the River Idle; the mayor treated us like gentlemen, though himself but a tradesman; he gave us a dish of fish from the River Idle, and another from the Trent ...' (Defoe 1724-6).

However trade, although good, was essentially no more than regional, as the town was 'no thorough fare and chiefly subsists by hops, markets and fairs' (Richard Pococke in 1750, quoted in Jackson 1971). All this changed in the second half of the 18th century, firstly with the diversion of the Great North Road and secondly with the arrival of the Chesterfield Canal, providing much improved access to growing home and overseas markets. There was an immediate beneficial effect on the town, with new inns opening and existing ones expanding to serve the coaching trade and with warehouses and mills being constructed near the canal.

This new prosperity is reflected in the erection or rebuilding of houses in what is now known as Georgian style. Traditional building materials would have been timber frames, with wattle and daub filling and thatched roofs, hence the 16th century fires. By the end of the 17th century, new buildings would increasingly have been in local brick with roof tiles, slate becoming accessible via the canal from the 1770's (Biggs 1968).

In 1754 the old moot hall was demolished and a new one built the following year on the same site, its corner supports and other parts of its walls resting on millstones because of the poor ground. The town's streets were all repaired in 1777 and lit with oil lamps in 1782 (Smith 1991). A workhouse was present by 1744, a theatre was built in 1789, and a new gaol and stock-house was built on the canal wharf in 1779, with the old gaol in the market place being demolished in 1796 (Jackson 1971).

Another important feature of the second half of the 18th century was the improvement of the land through drainage schemes, assisted by the fact that the Chesterfield Canal enabled lime to be transported to improve the clays of the area. To the south of the town, around Ordsall, the 'barren wilderness became metamorphosed into a blooming landscape' from the mid-18th century, while in 1778 it was agreed to spend money on the drainage of East Retford's cars and commons, an area of some 50 acres. As a result

'instead of a bog, they present a fine open space to the south and west, and as they will not be built upon, they are likely to embellish the environs of the town ...' (Piercy 1828, 167)

Despite the drainage schemes, Retford still continued to suffer flooding on occasions, with one particularly damaging flood occurring in 1795, when the water stood over three feet deep in the market place and considerable damage was done in West Retford (Piercy 1828).

West Retford probably remained relatively small throughout this period. In 1605 the manor was recorded as having 12 messuages, 8 cottages, 8 tofts, 500 acres of land, 150 acres of meadow, 50 acres of pasture, 500 acres of furze and heath and 300 acres of moor. The old manor hall had been converted into a hospital, or almshouse, in or soon after 1664 (see below) and in 1665 the new West Retford Hall was built to the south-west (Wilmshurst 1908). In 1774 an Act of Parliament was passed to enclose West Retford's common lands, consisting of open arable fields, meadow and stinted pastures. The Award was made in 1776, with just under 877 acres being allotted and enclosed (Tate 1935a).

#### 5.5.4 *Population*

Few sources give any indication of population before the 1801 census. A visitation of 1603 required the number of recusants and communicants in each parish to be provided. In response, the incumbent of West Retford church recorded no recusants, 140 communicants and 80 non-communicants (under the age of 16). This gives a figure of 220 for the population of the parish at that time, although the rounded numbers suggest this is an approximation rather than an accurate figure (Wood 1942). For East Retford, again there were supposedly no recusants, with 564 communicants. The number of non-communicants was not recorded. Wood (1942) assumes that they would have made up some 60% of the population, and consequently estimated a total of 902 inhabitants of East Retford at that date.

Wood (1937) used burial registers to look at the population of six Nottinghamshire towns from the mid 17th to the mid-18th century, and came up with the following figures for East Retford (assuming a 'fairly stable' death rate of about 32 per 1000, or 1 in 31 and taking 10-year periods to lessen the influence of any single abnormal year):

Period	Burials	Av. Ann. Rate	Estim. Pop.
1654-1663 inclusive	303	30½	945
1690-1699    “	199	20	620
1730-1739    “	275	27½	852

Wood notes that five of the six registers examined in this way showed a drop in population at the end of the 17th century and that even 40 years later the same five towns, of which Retford was one, had failed to regain the population figures they had attained in the mid 17th century. This may have been at least in part the consequences of the plague, as 66 people died between May and October 1664 in West Retford alone (Jackson 1971).

In 1743 East Retford is recorded as having 215 families while West Retford had 68, together making one of the largest settlements in the area, especially if Moorgate, counted with Clarborough, were to be included. In comparison, Tuxford had 100 families, Blyth 200, Misterton 240 and Worksop 358 (*Archbishop Herring's Returns*, quoted in Jackson 1971). Multiplying these figures by 4 and by 5 to arrive at a population estimate gives a total of 860-1075 for East Retford and 272-340 for West Retford. Towards the end of the century, East Retford held some 1800 people and West Retford 500 (Throsby 1790) indicating a considerable increase in population. In 1798 the figures 'taken from house to house' were 1910 in East Retford and 524 in West Retford (Lowe 1798).

#### 5.5.5 *Markets and fairs*

East Retford's Saturday markets continued to thrive, aided in 1776 by the lifting of the tolls of corn and fruit and also of the bridge (Piercy 1828).

By the end of the 18th century two fairs were being held, in March for cattle and in October for hops (Throsby 1790). Sheep fairs had also commenced in 1753 and in later years were held on Spa Common where they continued until the 1970's (Jackson 1971).

### **5.5.6 Religious buildings**

#### *Methodist Chapel, East Retford*

By the late 18th century a simple single-storeyed Methodist meeting house had been built in Rosemary Lane (later Meeting House Lane and Spa Road/or Lane?, branching off Carolgate). It was licensed for worship in 1781 but soon proved inadequate and a new chapel was built on the same site in 1789 (Roffey 1991). This remained in use until 1823 when it, in turn, was replaced by a larger building at the east end of Grove Street. To the rear was the vestry and schoolroom, with a house on either side of the chapel for the accommodation of preachers and a burial ground to the rear (Piercy 1828). The Grove Street chapel was rebuilt and reopened in 1880, although the burial ground went out of use around 1873 (Biggs 1968).

#### *Independent Chapel, East Retford*

An Independent Dissenters Chapel, described as a plain brick building, was built on the south side of Chapelgate by the end of the 18th century. It had originally been 'dedicated solely to the worship of those dissenters who had embraced the tenets of the Countess of Huntingdon'. A schoolroom adjoined the southern end of the chapel (Piercy 1828).

#### *Baptist Chapel, West Retford*

A Baptist chapel was certainly in existence at West Retford by 1774 as it is shown on a map of that date, Baptists having been active there since the end of the 17th century.

### **5.5.7 Almshouses**

#### *Sloswicke's Hospital, East Retford*

In his will of 1657, Richard Sloswicke asked that his house on Churchgate be used 'for the maintenance of six poore old men of good carriage and behaviour to the end of the world'. By the time his wishes could be carried out the estate was not worth enough, however, and consequently the old house was demolished and a hospital for three men was opened on the same site (Biggs 1968). In 1806 this was in turn demolished and new premises for four men erected, with two further tenements added in 1819, so raising the number to that desired by the founder although by this time the inhabitants were invariably burgesses, something which Piercy (1828) felt was almost certainly not the founder's original intention.

#### *Holy Trinity Hospital, West Retford*

John Darrell, under his will of 1664, founded and endowed the Holy Trinity Hospital for sixteen 'poor and impotent men'. For a while the funds only enabled ten men to be maintained, but as the value of the estate increased, the number was raised to sixteen, in accordance with the original bequest (Piercy 1828). The Old Hall in West Retford, one of Darrell's residences, was converted for the purpose.

#### *Corporation Almshouses, East Retford*

The original almshouses, of unknown foundation, stood on the west side of Carolgate, and consisted of either six or seven dwellings. By 1823 they had become dilapidated and were consequently demolished and the site sold (Piercy 1828). A new site on the edge of town was acquired for their replacement and a brick-built terrace of nine houses was erected in what became Union Street, with each house initially housing two poor women, although this was later reduced to one (Biggs 1968).

### **5.5.8 Education**

In 1518 the parson of Babworth paid for the costs and expenses of building 'in timber' a school-house in East Retford (Piercy 1828). This school may have been destroyed in the 1528 fire, although in the 1540's certain chantry revenues were employed to pay a schoolmaster in the town. This ceased on the dissolution of the chantries (Jackson 1971)

### *Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth, East Retford*

Following a petition by local residents, a royal charter was granted in 1551 establishing a free grammar school, to be known as the Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth, and endowing it with the lands of the dissolved chantries of Sutton in Loundale, Tuxford and Anysley. A master and undermaster (or usher) were appointed, and free houses provided for them. The schoolhouse was built on the north side of Chapelgate near the vicarage garden. It was rebuilt on the same site in 1779. In 1797 a new house was built adjoining it for the master, while in 1810 a new usher's house was built on the site of the old houses previously occupied by the master and the usher (Piercy 1828).

After a successful suit against the Corporation for misappropriation, the school received enough funds to enable it to construct a new building. This was opened on London Road in 1857, with room for 120 pupils, although numbers fluctuated and by 1886 there were only 33. During the second half of the 19th century, the numbers rose to almost 200, and the building expanded accordingly. Further expansion has taken place during the 20th century (Biggs 1968).

### *The Free School, West Retford*

Under his will of 1691 Richard Brownlow bequeathed a sum of money for the building of a Free School for the inhabitants of West Retford although this was only completely fulfilled some years later. In 1828 the building was in poor condition, with the school room being far too small (Piercy 1828).

### **5.5.9 Trade and industry**

Marcombe (1993) analysed the trades and occupations indicated by 16th and 17th century references, particularly from probate inventories. Malting was clearly important from at least the 16th century, there being not only professional maltsters in the town, but also ordinary dwellings with kilnhouses attached to them. The trades of baking, brewing and candle-making were all restricted to prescribed places, probably due to the fire risk. Approximately 70% of specialised occupations related either to processing of animal products (for example butchers, tanners, shoemakers, glovers) or to textiles (for example spinsters, weavers, drapers, tailors). Inventories of the late 16th and early 17th centuries provided considerable evidence of spinning and weaving as a cottage industry, in addition to some professional weavers who owned 'workhouses'. Consequently,

'the evidence suggests that the spinning and weaving of linen and woollen fabric was a considerable industry in Retford, largely concealed from formal record because it was conducted by women, by the poor, and by those whose primary occupational description might be quite different' (Marcombe 1993, 105).

Several bills had been introduced into Parliament in the second half of the 17th century to make the Derwent navigable, and although all were dropped or failed to pass, they aroused both support and opposition, with East Retford being one of the towns who 'squealed vigorously' in the face of such a threat, arguing that their livelihood, which at that time lay in sending malt to surrounding areas and bringing back lead from Derbyshire, would certainly be destroyed (Wood 1950). In addition to barley for the maltings, corn was also grown in the surrounding area, requiring a number of corn-grinding mills, both water- and wind-powered.

During the 18th century, hops became an important crop. Lowe (1798) recorded them as 'a considerable article of produce' on the clays north of the Trent, principally around Retford. They were known by the name of North Clay Hops, and were said to be much stronger than Kentish hops, although with a ranker flavour.

Attempts were made in the latter part of the 18th century to develop the textile industry in Retford on a larger scale than it had existed previously. The manufacture of coarse cloth for hop-bags was established by 1772, and sail-cloth, made from flax, was also an important product, supplying boats on the Trent and the canal, as well as the windmills (Roffey 1991). In 1788 Revolution Mill, a steam-powered wool spinning and weaving mill, was built on Spital Hill near the Chesterfield Canal. Although no trace of it remains, sketches indicate that it was 240 by 24 feet with warehouses at each

end, and had a 30 HP engine installed. It could employ over 600 people, although there were problems in hiring sufficient skilled labour. In addition, it had been expensive to build and the large engine required considerable amounts of coal. Consequently it failed, was put up for sale in 1798 and finally auctioned off in separate lots in 1805 (Jackson 1971).

Retford compensated for its failure to develop a textile industry by the growth of paper manufacture. A paper mill was erected on the west side of the Idle in 1794, although paper was being made in the Retford area before that, since Throsby (1790) refers to it as one of the principal 'manufactories' of the town, along with hats. There had also been a candlewick manufactory, but this went out of business.

Bricks and tiles were made to supply the local market; however the market for the latter was aided by the Chesterfield Canal, as Retford tiles were lighter and of better quality than the coarse slate Chesterfield tiles (Jackson 1871).

At the very end of this period, in 1798, Clark's dye-house was established in 1798 in Little Lane, off the eastern side of Moorgate. It became an important firm, with operations continuing there until the mid 19th century before moving to other premises (Dolby & Sluman 1990).

## **5.6 19th century**

### **5.6.1 The borough**

The borough continued to be governed according to the 1607 charter until just after the 1826 election when moves began to remove East Retford's privilege of returning two MP's, with the situation developing into a national scandal. Politics in East Retford, and other similar boroughs, were run by and for the burgesses and corruption was rife:

'money, wrapped in plain envelopes and delivered by unknown hands, arrived after the election, but for all the burgesses claimed to know it was manna from Heaven' (Preston 1974, 95).

East Retford, along with the obscure Cornish borough of Penryn, 'was the most rotten of the stinking fish dragged out of the net' (Preston 1974, 99) and the borough was disenfranchised in 1830. The system itself was altered with the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835.

In the same year the boundary commission proposed the extension of East Retford borough to include West Retford and the most heavily populated parts of Clarbrough and Ordsall parishes, namely Moorgate, Spital Hill, Thrumpton and South Retford. Nothing was done until 1878, when an Act of Parliament created the new enlarged borough, increasing its area from c. 118 acres to 4660 acres (Jackson 1971).

### **5.6.2 Communications**

#### *Roads*

In 1822 the road between Worksop and Retford was turnpiked, opening up a good line of communication with Manchester. This turnpike was extended two years later from Retford to Littleborough Ferry (Cossons 1934), described as having previously been 'almost impassable at any season of the year'. Although the cost of improving it 'through the admirable system promulgated by Mr McAdam' made it 30% more expensive to travel along, it was 75% better (Piercy 1828, 8).

By 1828 there were as many as 19 scheduled coach services a day, with destinations of London, Leeds, York, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Stamford, Doncaster, Nottingham, Gainsborough, Glasgow. However, by 1850 competition from the railways was beginning to be felt and revenues from the turnpikes were decreasing. By 1861 there were neither coaches nor long distance carriers, although local carriers continued.

## *Railways*

Two railways opened for traffic in 1849, the first being the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire on July 16 and the second the Great Northern line on September 4. Both used the former's station at Thrumpton until 1852, when the Great Northern opened the present station. A few months later a connecting loop was made between the two railways and the Thrumpton station was closed (Roffey 1991). This short-lived building was made of red and white brick with mountings of Anston Stone, and had a bus connection to the market place (Dow 1959). The railway worked in conjunction with the Chesterfield Canal until 1892, but ultimately brought about its demise (Biggs 1968).

### **5.6.3    *The settlement and its environs***

While West Retford's commons and waste had been enclosed in 1774, it was not until 1845 that enclosure of East Retford's common land took place although, as noted above, some of the commons had already been taken for the Chesterfield Canal and associated buildings and wharves. This enabled settlement to expand beyond earlier limits of the town during the course of the 19th century.

A new Workhouse was erected in Grove Street in 1818. However, in 1838 a new and larger building was erected at the top of Spital Hill which could house 200, with the earlier premises being converted into a police station. The 18th century Town Hall had also become inadequate, and was also inconveniently sited as both the market and through traffic had increased. Consequently a new town hall was erected in 1868 on a site on the south side of the Square, having a corn exchange and a meat market to the rear, the latter also facing onto Carolgate and still being called The Shambles. A new road, Exchange Street, was also constructed at the same time.

In 1828 the west side of The Square was chiefly private residences, while the majority of the rest were 'respectable shops' (Piercy 1828). Not all of the town was as fine, however. A local doctor reported that

'in Retford most of the thickly-populated parts of the parish are huddled together in narrow passages to which the rays of the sun are strangers, or erected in confined rows, to which ventilation and cleanliness are unknown' (quoted in Jackson 1971, 62)

Much of this poor and cramped housing lay within yards and courts to the rear of the street frontages. In Sutton's Row, for example, 25 houses had no privy and another 13 shared a single one. Crawshaw's yard in Wellington Street was only 12 feet wide and contained 14 houses sharing two privies. The Mermaid Yard in West Retford was particularly bad, containing 21 tenements, a stable, an open cesspool with three privies above, and an adjacent piggery. Of the three public wells, only the one in the market place provided good water, drawing as it did from a deep artesian well (Jackson 1971). Proper waterworks were set up in 1880 by the Borough Council.

In addition, several open ditches ran through the town, one of the worst of which was The Beck, separating East Retford from Claborough parish.

#### **5.6.4 Population**

The following population figures for East and West Retford are derived from the 10-yearly census:

Year	East Retford	West Retford
1801	1948	483
1811	2030	542
1821	2465	571
1831	2491	593
1841	2680	618
1851	2943	653
1861	2982	637
1871	3194	691
1881	3414	816
1891	3438	821
1901	3436	782

It should be remembered that over the course of the 19th century the town's suburbs expanded further into the parishes of Claborough to the north, to include Moorgate, and Ordsall to the south, so increasing the numbers for the settlement as a whole well beyond those listed above. Population in Ordsall parish in particular expanded particularly rapidly after the arrival of the railways to the south of East Retford proper. As a result, in 1891 the total population of the relatively new Retford borough was 10,603 and in 1901 it was 12,340 of whom 5199 resided in Ordsall (Jackson 1971).

#### **5.6.5 Markets and fairs**

The weekly market for agricultural produce continued, and included fish from Hull and eels from the Idle. It was attended by hucksters from Sheffield and other parts of south Yorkshire, with their practice of 'forestalling', buying up fruit, butter, fowls and eggs 'to the great injury of the inhabitants' (Piercy 1828). The cheese market was held in Cannon Square during the second half of the 19th century (Dolby & Sluman 1990).

The two fairs recorded by Throsby in 1790 were still taking place in the early 1830's, namely the cattle fair on March 23 and the cheese and hops fair on October 2. Piercy (1828) also refers to a hop market having been established 'a few years back', held on the first Saturday in November.

In 1841 three new fairs were established, one for lambs on the last Thursday in July, and two for cattle, sheep and horses on the first Thursday after June 11 and the second Thursday in December. In 1848 a fortnightly cattle market was established and by 1865 there was a three acre site near the railway station controlled by the Retford Cattle Company. Sheep were sold on the common, while Grove Street was used for the sale of horses (Jackson 1971). The sale of livestock had become a specialised feature of market activity in the 19th century, and the cattle market at Retford was described as the second largest cattle market in the kingdom during the Parliamentary hearing of the Mansfield to Retford Railway Bill (Smith 1965)

By the end of the 19th century, however, there had been something of a decline. The town had reverted to holding only its March and October fairs, mainly for sheep (Jackson 1971).

#### **5.6.6 Religious buildings**

##### *Primitive Methodists*

The Primitive Methodists were holding meetings in Retford by 1818, although at first these were held in the open. In 1841 they purchased a former theatre in Carolgate, which became known as the Swingboat chapel because of its unusual shape. This was demolished in 1870 and a new building erected, although that too no longer survives (Roffey 1991).



### *St Saviour's*

This church was built in 1829 to serve Moorgate. In the 19th century, Moorgate had developed into a populous suburb, technically in the parish of Clarbrough which already had a church; St Saviour's was therefore originally designated a chapel of ease. A school associated with the church was opened at approximately the same time, as was the vicarage, which originally had a projecting servants' wing (Biggs 1968). The area continued to expand during the course of the 19th century, and in 1894 a new civil parish of North Retford was established, although the ecclesiastical parish of St Saviour's was not constituted until 1934 (Jackson 1971).

### *Congregational Church*

The Congregationalists had a chapel on Union Street, which they sold to the Wesleyan Reformers in 1851, opening a new one in Carolgate which included a schoolroom and library. After going out of use as a church it was used for a while as a nightclub and then as a carpet warehouse.

### *United Methodists*

The Wesleyan Reformers were founded in 1851 and acquired a chapel on Union Street from the Congregationalists. In 1868 they became part of the United Methodist Free Church, and later built a new chapel on the site of the old one (Jackson 1971).

### *Roman Catholic church*

There does not appear to have been a chapel for Roman Catholics before 1875, when a hall was purchased in Albert Road. By the 1880's, however, mass was only being celebrated once a month in a cottage in West Street. The congregation must have increased, since in 1895 a church, built of corrugated iron, was opened in Queen Street (Jackson 1971).

### *Retford cemetery*

In 1849 Retford's burial facilities were condemned, churchyards apparently being so overcrowded that bones lay on the surface. A new town cemetery with a mortuary chapel was therefore opened in 1854 (Jackson 1971).

## **5.6.7 Education**

Several of the dissenting communities had opened schools associated with their chapels which provided elementary education. The Wesleyan School in particular, which started as a Sunday school in Union Street in 1823, moved to Grove Street as a public elementary day school, and had 400 pupils by 1885, with a separate 120 place infant school being opened in 1895. Other private establishments also existed, and in 1832 there were 13 academies, five of which were boarding schools (Jackson 1971).

The National School in East Retford was opened in 1813 on a site at the corner of Union Street and Chapelgate, with accommodation for 160 boys. In 1841 an infants' school was opened in Grove Street. In 1857 it was decided to build new schools on a neighbouring site to replace the Chapelgate school. A master's house was built in the centre of the new building, with a school for 190 boys to the west and a school for 120 girls to the east. It was extended in the mid-1860's. The original school building was still standing in 1968, having been used for various purposes (Biggs 1968).

In 1832 a school of industry, maintained by subscriptions, was opened next to the newly built St Saviour's church. It was later enlarged and accommodated 230 pupils by 1885, being extended again in 1894 (Jackson 1971)

## **5.6.8 Gas Works**

In 1831 a gas works was built and soon afterwards a cast-iron pillar and pedestal, 22 feet high, holding five gas lamps, was erected in the Square. The gas works was substantially expanded in 1862 and was purchased by the corporation in 1879 (Jackson 1971).

### **5.6.9 Trade and Industry**

By 1828 the trade in barley, for malting, was in decline. Retford having been superseded by Worksop for this commodity (Piercy 1828, 10). Nevertheless in the 1880s eight malthouses were still in existence in Retford, the majority standing adjacent to either the canal or the railway.

Several windmills were also standing at that time, at least some of which probably had earlier origins. Two are shown on a map of 1820, one to the west of Lidget Lane, which was probably present in 1795 (Biggs 1978), the other to the south of Caledonian Road (previously Pottery Lane). The latter was destroyed by fire in 1904 (Roffey 1991). South Retford windmill had been erected by 1827 and stood between Caledonian Road and the railway. Steam machinery was installed in the 1880's, but it had ceased milling by 1929 and was demolished in 1937 (Dolby & Sluman 1990).

Those trades and industries which had been in existence in the late post-medieval period continued into the 19th century. Piercy (1828) records a paper mill and a sailcloth manufactory, with other important trades being in hats and shoes. There was a strong relationship between those running the town and certain trades, to the extent that, according to Preston (1974, 95) 'shoemaking was less a trade than a way of creating burgesses ...'.

The main concentration of industries lay to the south of the town, around the canal and the railway. In 1884 there were at least 13 major active industrial sites in the canal zone while a separate zone developed towards the railway (Smith 1965). The Carr Iron Foundry was established on Albert Road, adjacent to the canal, in 1867, and developed into one of Retford's leading industrial concerns (Dolby & Sluman 1990). Next to it was the Albert Paper Mill, erected in 1866, a steam-powered mill using coal brought by canal. Although it suffered a serious fire in 1887 it continued in operation throughout the 20th century. The West Retford mill also had been converted to make paper, although this had ceased to work by 1881 (Roffey 1991).

Several engineering works were set up to produce and repair machinery. The most successful of these was the Beehive Works to the south of the railway (Roffey 1991). Maps of the time also show a further iron foundry and the Northern Rubber Works, which employed over 200 men by 1895, in the area between the canal and the railway, and a pottery just to the south-east of the latter. Another iron foundry was located at Moorgate, having been established there in 1836 (Jackson 1971).

In addition to these industries were the whole range of trades to be expected in a market town, some of which declined over the course of the 19th century, while others increased. In addition to the decline of malting, mentioned above, the hop growing and wholesaling industry also dwindled, from 21 hop growers and merchants in Retford in 1832, to thirteen in 1861 and only four in 1861. The hat and straw-hat makers declined from thirteen to three between 1832 and 1879, and the number of brick and tile makers halved. Many of the newer trades which prospered indicate the increase in general living standards while by the end of the 1870's there were as many as 56 hotels, inns and taverns in the town, indicating its importance not only as a market town but also as a transport junction (Jackson 1971).

## **5.7 20th century**

The 20th century has seen continued expansion at Retford, with housing developments and associated service facilities extending both to the north and the south, and affecting West Retford as well as East Retford. At the same time, some of the streets which had been densely packed with houses in the 19th century were demolished and redeveloped.

By the 1950s Retford had become a notorious bottleneck for north-south traffic. As a result, the Great North Road was diverted in the 1960s to run between Markham Moor and Blyth, and a ring road was constructed. Markets continue to be held in The Square, while Carolgate has been pedestrianised.

## 6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RETFORD

The town has been divided into plan elements, or components, based on map evidence and documentary sources. These plan elements have been subdivided below according to the earliest date of their assumed occurrence, although these divisions are tentative only, and need to be confirmed by further work. Subsequent major changes are briefly summarised, together with the degree of survival of early features to the present day.

### 6.1 Medieval components (Figure 2)

#### ***Component 1 Church of St Michael and cemetery (W. Retford) (SMR 5018)***

The church, which dates from the 14th century, was in poor condition by the 17th century, when it was recorded that 'The Iles and South Quire are not even paved ... The windoes are not sufficiently glazed. There are divers loose stones in the church ... The east side of the church yarde is unfenced ... North Porch is in decaye' (quoted in Biggs 1968, 8). It was re-roofed in 1686 but had fallen into a poor state again by the 19th century. Only in 1863 was a large-scale restoration undertaken, while in 1890 the chancel was extended by eight feet.

In 1872 old houses and land just to the south-east of the church, shown on the 1774 map of West Retford, were bought and the land used for the extension of the churchyard.

#### ***Component 2 Settlement block bounded by Tenterflat Walk north-east, the Idle south-east and Bridgegate south-west (W. Retford)***

A row of properties fronting Bridgegate with boundaries running back to a back lane, Tenterflat Walk. Although this lane does not appear to be marked on the 1774 map of West Retford, it is traditionally said to have led to the ford. The rear yards of these tenements had become densely occupied by the end of the 19th century. The Bridgegate area was extensively rebuilt by the Trinity Hospital Trustees in the 19th century (Roffey 1991). The western end of this component has been destroyed by a large roundabout.

#### ***Component 3 Settlement block bounded by Bridgegate north-east, Hospital Road north-west and Rectory Road south-east (W. Retford)***

Properties fronting south-western Bridgegate and Rectory Road, the latter with property boundaries running back to Hospital Road. This may originally have been a back lane, as Rectory Road once continued further south-west before joining Babworth Road, as is indicated on the 1774 map. The rectory used to be on the site of Warmborough House. According to an inventory of 1578 it comprised at that time a hall, two parlours, a kitchen and buttery on the ground floor, with three chambers and a servants' chamber on the first floor. In addition there was a store, a corn chamber, a milk house, a kiln house and a stable.

#### ***Component 4 Settlement block bounded by Bridgegate north-east, Rectory Road north-west and the Idle south-east (W. Retford)***

Properties fronting south-eastern Bridgegate and Rectory Road. The extent of medieval settlement along the line of Rectory Road is not known and a property boundary shown on the 1774 map has been taken as the limit of this component.

#### ***Component 5 Bridge, ford and mills***

Evidence points to there having been a succession of mills in this area since at least the 11th century (SMR 6076). The function of the mills had varied over time, including corn grinding, fulling and paper manufacture. The ford is believed to have been downstream from the bridge, the latter being present by at least as early as the 13th century.

In the 17th century, a stone bridge, 13 feet wide with five arches had been built across the Idle, replacing the earlier wooden bridge. With the greatly increased traffic brought by the Great North

Road this became inadequate, and in 1794 it was widened from 13 to 31 feet, made 18 feet longer and largely rebuilt (Jackson 1971). A new bridge was constructed in 1868 and further improved in the 1890s, when iron girders were added to the framework (Jackson 1971).

#### ***Component 6 Church of St Swithun and cemetery (SMR 5017)***

The existing building is largely the result of 19th century restoration work, although the church had been badly damaged and required partial rebuilding on several occasions, firstly by fire in 1528 and again in 1585, and then by the collapse of the crossing tower in 1651. The minutes of the Corporation, November 4 1652, records the fact that

'the greatest part of the church of East Retford, by the fall of the steeple, and other parts, had become very ruinous and made a heap of stones, and the remainder was much shaken and injured' (quoted in Piercy 1828, 99-100).

Money was raised by the sale of land, and repairs to the structure were completed in 1658. Victorian restoration began in 1852, with the repair of the south porch. During 1854-5 the length of the chancel was doubled and its height increased to include a clerestory, the nave and south aisle were re-roofed, the north aisle was demolished and rebuilt and an organ chamber and vestry were attached to the south side of the chancel. The chantry chapel was rebuilt in 1873.

The extent of the medieval cemetery not known - that shown is its extent in the 19th century.

#### ***Component 7 Cannon Square***

This is the probable site of the original market place, still used for the cheese market in mid-Victorian times. The cannon, captured from the Russians, was installed in 1859, taken for scrap in 1940 but returned in 1946.

#### ***Component 8 Market Place***

At the end of the 17th century the Market Place was unpaved, and a ditch or common sewer was open from north to south, by the side of which stood five old trees; however, the sewer was covered in , the trees removed, and the market place paved.

Within the market place stood the Moot Hall, in existence from the 14th century. It is not clear whether it had to be rebuilt in the 16th century after the fire. Piercy describes it as being built on the same site as the later Town Hall, but smaller in size,

'chiefly of wood, in the post and pan style; the roof very long, and covered with heavy slates; the windows, of which it contained six, were totally devoid of glass, its place being supplied by iron stanchions, with doors of wood inside to prevent the intrusion of the weather; the main front was to the east, with the entrance in the centre, its approach being by a flight of very broad stone or wooden steps. The roof was surmounted by a small cupola ... Underneath the hall, were the shambles ...' (Piercy 1828, 143).

When its replacement was constructed in the 18th century its corners, as well as some other parts, are said to have been laid upon old millstones 'in consequence of the defective state of the sub-soil' (Piercy 1828). Its entrance lay at the north end and the shambles were still below. One of the maps of 1774 shows a second structure to the south of the Town Hall, which may have been the gaol.

#### ***Component 9 Settlement block bounded by the Idle north-west, Bridgegate south-west and Cannon Square south-east***

Probable burgage plots fronting Bridgegate and the south-western end of Churchgate. By the end of the 19th century the long narrow properties had become considerably built up to the rear of the street frontages, with yards containing outbuildings and terraced houses. The lines of many of the plots are still visible in this area.

***Component 10 Settlement block bounded by the Beck north-east, the Idle north-west, Churchgate south-east and component 9 south-west***

An area of possible burgage plots as indicated on the earliest maps, approximately twice the width of those closer to the market place. The area to the rear of the buildings appears to have remained relatively undeveloped, still shown as gardens at the end of the 19th century. The buildings themselves include Sloswicke's Hospital and what is now the Denman Library. The property boundaries which originally ran back from the street frontage to the Idle have been destroyed, however, with the construction of Amcott Way and a car park.

***Component 11 Settlement along the south-western frontage of Moorgate***

A series of narrow strip plots running down to the river from the street frontage. In the second half of the 19th century this area contained two tanneries (SMR 4996), which may well have had earlier origins, as well as a malthouse (SMR 4999) and an iron foundry. On the sale of one of the tanneries in 1837, in addition to the tan yard and bark mill it was advertised as having steam power which could be converted into a flour mill (Biggs 1978). The lines of a few of the plot boundaries are still visible, but the character of this area has been largely lost.

***Component 12 Settlement along the south-eastern frontage of Moorgate***

Early maps show a row of tenements with slightly curving property boundaries, the plots becoming narrower towards the north, and sharing a common back boundary. A path is shown running along this back boundary on a map of 1806, presumably providing access; by the 1880s this was a lane known as Back Pad which ran into Spital Hill along the line of modern Wellington Street. Much of this area has been altered by the construction of modern roads and by new housing to the rear of the earlier properties.

***Component 13 Settlement along the north-eastern frontage of Churchgate***

A small densely occupied area of settlement to the north of the church and the vicarage.

***Component 14 Vicarage and school***

This area was the site of the post-medieval vicarage and school and is assumed, therefore, to have been the site of the medieval vicarage. An inventory of the vicarage in 1640 indicated that it comprised a hall, parlour, kitchen, butter, three upstairs chambers and a stable. A glebe terrier of 1687 describes it as 'One Dwelling house containing three Bays of Building, one Layth containing two Bays of Building & one Garden with a Yard butting upon ye Church Yard on the West ...' (quoted in Piercy 1828, 101). In 1743 it was 'intirely in ruins', due to an absentee vicar who lived in York. Following the demolition of the school, a mid-Victorian vicarage was built towards the centre of the whole plot. A modern vicarage and a surgery are now on the site (Dolby & Sluman 1990).

***Component 15 Settlement block bounded by Bridgegate north, the market place east and the Idle west  
and including The Square***

An area of dense occupation along Bridgegate and the market place. As a result of the later construction of The Square, the existence and extent of any burgage plots in the southern half of this area is not known, nor is the line of the earlier frontage with the market place.

Prior to the erection of the War Memorial in the Square in 1921, a lamp standard stood in the centre. In its original form it had five gas lanterns and was erected in 1831. The Broad Stone stood close to the centre of the Square in 1828 having been moved there from the Market Place in 1818. It now stands close to the southern side, in front of the Town Hall which was erected in 1868.

***Component 16 Settlement block bounded by Chapelgate north, Grove Street south, St John Street east and the market place west***

A densely occupied area of probable burgage plots, the original eastern extent of which is not known. A ditch marking the southern boundary of the 12th century settlement is said to run in an approximately east-west direction close to the northern side of Grove Street, indicated at its western end by the slumping of a building into it (no. 11 Market Place), visible in the line of the upper windows of the facade (Dolby pers. comm.).

***Component 17 Settlement along the south-western frontage of Grove Street***

Area of town plots fronting Carolgate and Grove Street. No clearly early boundaries can be identified from the earliest maps, and the extent of medieval settlement in this area is difficult to determine at present. The road itself may have been widened in the 18th century.

**6.2 Post-medieval components (Figure 3)**

***Component 18 Trinity Hospital, W. Retford (SMR 5002)***

Site of the Elizabethan manor hall of the Darrell family, which was converted to form the first hospital, later extended by two forward-projecting wings in 1794. In 1832 the whole building was demolished and a new one erected on the same site (Biggs 1968). This contained a small chapel and sixteen red brick gothic residences, each with a garden. In 1872 a tower and a large upper room were added (Jackson 1971).

***Component 19 Baptist Church and burial ground, W. Retford***

A Baptist chapel was certainly in existence at West Retford by 1774. It was repaired and substantially enlarged in 1836, being replaced by the present larger chapel in 1872 (Jackson 1971). Late 19th century maps show a burial ground to the rear.

***Component 20 Settlement at corner of North Road & Hospital Road, W Retford***

Several buildings were present on this corner by 1774.

***Component 21 North Road/Hallcroft Road, W. Retford***

Three buildings are shown in this area in 1774, one of which was known as West Retford House in the 19th century and is now a hotel as well as a Grade II listed building. A building shown on the plot of ground between Hallcroft Road and Cricket Field Lane on the early map may have been the school founded in West Retford in 1691, since it is marked as a school on the later 19th century maps.

***Component 22 West Retford Hall and adjacent area***

Settlement fronting the south-western end of the earlier course of Rectory Road, and which includes West Retford Hall, built in 1665.

***Component 23 Settlement fronting the west side of Carolgate***

Area of properties with boundaries all running back to a strong curving rear boundary which separated the enclosed land from the unenclosed carr until the early 19th century. It was bisected by West Street prior to the early 19th century, with Exchange Street cutting through in the second half of the 19th century and Coronation Street in the 20th century, and included the Victorian Corn Exchange and Shambles towards its northern end, as well as the Primitive Methodist Chapel and a malthouse. The southern end of this area had become very densely occupied by the end of the 19th century.

#### ***Component 24 Settlement fronting the east side of Carolgate***

Unlike Component 23, it is not possible to identify a common back boundary to the properties fronting the east side of Carolgate (perhaps because it was easier or preferable to encroach onto Spa Common to the east than onto the carrs to the west). The southern end of this area included a brewery and a manure works at the end of the 19th century, as well as a wharf adjacent to a canal basin.

#### ***Component 25 Settlement fronting the central south side of Grove Street***

This area includes Amcott House, now the Bassetlaw Museum, a building of c. 1770-80 with a large garden to the south. Restoration work indicated that an earlier house had stood on the site in the 17th century. By 1820 Beardall's Row, with its terraced housing, ran along the western and south-western side of this area, but the houses have since been demolished.

#### ***Component 26 Settlement fronting the east side of St John Street***

A map of 1820 indicates that St John Street was in existence by that date, although its eastern frontage was not fully developed.

#### ***Component 27 Settlement along southern side of Spital Hill***

Settlement extending eastwards along the southern frontage of Spital Hill.

#### ***Component 28 Settlement along northern side of Spital Hill***

Settlement extending eastwards along the northern frontage of Spital Hill, the rear boundary of this block being demarcated by a curving field boundary indicative of enclosure from open arable fields.

#### ***Component 29 Settlement along Moorgate***

Irregular plots are shown on a map of 1806, possibly originating as encroachments at the margin of the road and the open fields.

#### ***Component 30 Corporation wharf***

Most of the warehouses, workshops etc. which had been present on the Corporation wharf have since been demolished.

#### ***Component 31 Chesterfield Canal (SMR 4814, 4815, 4948-53)***

The Chesterfield Canal, opened in 1777, with a basin immediately south of component 30 and another at the south-eastern end of component 24. Much of the former is now a boatyard, while the latter is no longer present. This component also includes the occasional canalside buildings which may not have been contemporary, but are associated with the canal, in particular a malthouse and adjacent buildings to the south of West Retford, and two malthouses to the east of East Retford.

### **6.3 19th century components (Figure 4)**

#### ***Component 32 Railways***

In addition to the railway tracks (Great Northern, 32a, Great Central 32b), this component includes marshalling yards and sidings, passenger and goods stations and a cattle market area.

#### ***Component 33 Cemetery***

The area to the north of the canal had been laid out as a cemetery with a central mortuary chapel by 1888. By 1900 the cemetery had been enlarged to include an area south of the canal.

#### ***Component 34    Glue works (SMR 5000)***

These were present by 1888 and were connected with Bolham tannery to the north of Retford. They closed in 1919.

#### ***Component 35    Buildings opposite West Retford House***

These may be kitchen gardens, as there appear from the 19th century maps to be greenhouses as well as a fish pond.

#### ***Component 36    Brick and tile works***

A brick yard was present on this site by 1888 which, by 1900, is shown on the map as a brick and tile works.

#### ***Component 37    Workhouse***

A new workhouse was constructed on this site in 1838. In the course of its life additional buildings were constructed, including a laundry, a new ward for women and staff quarters. By the late 19th century there was also a smallpox hospital in the north-eastern corner of the site. The building ceased to function as a workhouse in 1948 and became an old people's home before being demolished in 1975 to be replaced by housing.

#### ***Component 38    Gas Works***

The Gas Company was formed in 1831 and purchased by the Corporation in 1879. It was extended several times, although it exploded in 1955. The site was later occupied by a coach operator.

#### ***Component 39    Brick yard***

A brick yard with a wharf adjoining the canal was present by 1880 and still in existence in 1900, but had become a recreation ground by 1920.

#### ***Components 40-43        Settlement along Moorgate***

Development extending north-eastwards along Moorgate. The land on the north side had become available for development following the enclosure of the commons in 1806.

#### ***Component 44    St Saviour's Church (SMR 5019)***

The church was constructed in 1829 to serve the Moorgate area; the adjacent vicarage and school buildings were erected around the same time.

#### ***Components 45-48        Settlement to the east***

Development of a largely residential nature had extended eastwards by the end of the 19th century, infilling between the 18th century limits and the canal, and beginning to extend beyond the canal in this direction. Alma Road (component 45) was in existence by 1836 and by the 1880s the land on either side had been divided into relatively large regular plots and a number of mainly detached houses had been built along it. Union Street (component 46) was being planned in 1828 when Piercy was writing his history. The Methodist Chapel of 1880, on the site of an earlier chapel of 1823, together with its disused burial ground, lies within this component. The southern side of Grove Street was mainly gardens in the first half of the century. It later included two schools, as well as three small streets leading south, with terrace housing. These are now gone and a new road has been cut through. Beyond the Chesterfield Canal lay further gardens in 1836, the area becoming increasingly developed for housing over the course of the century.



#### ***Component 49 Settlement between Chancery Lane and component 23***

Land on the East Car became available for development following enclosure of the commons in 1845, with Chancery Lane (previously Carr Lane) being laid out as part of the Award.

#### ***Components 50-55 Settlement to the south***

Infilling of the land between the Chesterfield Canal and the railway with a mixture of development, including villas, terrace housing and industrial buildings. Component 50 included the Congregational church, currently used as a carpet warehouse, and component 51 included the Britannia Works adjoining the canal and the King Edward VI grammar school. Components 53-55 included several industrial areas, such as the Albert Paper Mill, two iron foundries, a saw mill, flour mills, windmill, rubber works and malthouses, as well as several streets densely packed with terraced housing and the occasional larger building set in garden areas, such as White Hall (later Retford Hospital) and West Grove.

#### ***Component 56 Settlement to the south-west***

An area of infilling between the Chesterfield Canal and the railway, mainly but not exclusively housing ranging from small terraced houses along the southern end of Cobwell Road to large properties on The Crescent.

### **6.4 20th century development (Figure 5)**

Twentieth century development is represented by a single un-numbered component. It should be noted that the occasional earlier feature or building, such as an isolated farm, which was at a distance from the core of medieval and post-medieval settlement may occur within this component if it has been engulfed by modern housing development.

### **6.5 Discussion**

The earliest evidence for Retford is the reference to *Redforde* in Domesday Book. It is likely that this pre-conquest settlement, with its mill, was established by a ford across the Idle and it seems generally accepted that it would have been on the western side of the river, where the ground is a little higher. The nucleus of the settlement would presumably have been around the church and along the road leading to the river crossing. Whether the original ford was on the site of the later bridge or a little distance downstream from it, at a site where a ford was still in use in the 18th century, is not certain, but the location of the church (component 1) suggests that by the beginning of the 13th century at least, the main route to the river crossing was along the line of the current Bridgegate. Tenterflat Walk gave access to the ford at its eastern end and to the open fields and commons at its western end, as well as acting as a back lane for properties fronting the northern side of Bridgegate (component 2). Possibly for this reason, Common Lane runs into West Retford at a junction with Tenterflat Walk rather than with Bridgegate.

The earliest available maps indicate that the street pattern in the southern part of West Retford has altered from its earlier, possibly medieval, form. The Babworth Road into West Retford from Worksop originally continued further east than it does today before turning north-east to join what today is Rectory Road. It may even have carried on eastwards to a ford connecting it directly with East Retford on approximately the line of Chancery Lane; such a connection appears to be shown on Carey's map of Nottinghamshire, 1787. Hospital Road, which now carries the Worksop traffic, may have its origins as a back lane to properties fronting Rectory Road. The West Retford enclosure map shows the present day course of Rectory Road, with the earlier southern section marked as an allotment to the then owner of West Retford Hall. This may indicate the date at which the diversion occurred or simply be confirming an earlier arrangement; certainly it was not uncommon for large landowners to take advantage of the works being carried out upon enclosure to divert public roads away from their houses.

The River Idle itself had been diverted at some point, probably in 1638 (Biggs 1973), its earlier course indicated by the borough boundary which follows the Idle as far as West Retford Hall and then veers away to the west along Carr Dyke before rejoining the Idle to the south of the Chesterfield Canal. The straightening of the river at this point was almost certainly carried out in an attempt to improve drainage.

On the eastern side of the river there is no clear evidence for the continuation of a route from the ford on the same line as Tenterflat Walk, although the strong property boundary between components 9 and 10 might indicate its course. Once Bridgegate was in existence it could have returned along the river bank to the southern side of the bridge, a route still followed by a footpath today.

Around 1105 a borough was founded on the eastern side of the river, probably on the east-west road which led to the river crossing and a north-south local route. The earliest plan is thought to have consisted of Bridgegate, Churchgate (leading to Moorgate and Clarborough and from there towards Gainsborough) and Chapelgate, which may have been known as Kingsgate and which led to Littleborough. The church was sited at the point where the road forked (component 6), with a triangular or Y-shaped market place next to it (component 7).

The settlement may originally have been bounded by a ditch along the line of the Beck to the north and east, and along the northern side of Grove Street to the south, its existence at the north-western end of Grove Street indicated by the facade of a building fronting the eastern side of The Square which shows that slumping of the building has occurred (Dolby pers. comm.). By 1260 the settlement had expanded, as there are references to Newgate (now Grove Street), which would thus have been developed beyond the earlier limits of the borough and parallel to its southern boundary.

At some point the original market place by the church was either supplemented or superseded by a new market place (component 8), within which a moot hall was erected in 1389. The form of this market place is not known at present, since its western and southern sides were destroyed with the building of The Square, assumed to be a later development. It is possible that Newgate was constructed to enter this later market place at or near its southern end. A reference of 1474 suggests that plots might front the market place and run back to the river, since a tenement at that time is described as 'abutting upon the market-stede, and the west head abutting upon the water of Idill' (Piercy 1828).

There is no documentary evidence for Carolgate prior to the 16th century, and it may therefore not have been settled until the post-medieval period, although there would certainly have been a road connecting Retford with Ordsall and Thrumpton, both pre-conquest villages. Piercy considered that the road between Retford and Ordsall, referred to in a deed of 1260 as 'the kings way leadinge between the howses of Raph Chate and the towne of Retford, which way extendeth it selfe toward Ordesall and a ditch called Suthlabeedike...' lay much further east than present-day Carolgate, and swung round to enter the east end of Chapelgate (Biggs 1973, 19). The grounds for making this assertion are not clear.

Carolgate's importance increased greatly with the diversion of the Great North Road through the town in 1766. Either at this time, or shortly afterwards, its course at the southern end of the town was diverted so that it no longer connected directly with Thrumpton Lane.

It is not known with any certainty when the northward expansion of Retford took place. There is a reference to *Wellome Morgatte* in 1426 and that, together with the long relatively regular narrow plots which are shown on the earliest map of the area (1806), have led to this area being included as part of the medieval town (components 11 and 12). As such, it may indicate early suburban development northwards along a principal road, taking advantage of East Retford's prosperity.

As far as The Square is concerned, there is neither documentary nor architectural evidence to show that it is any earlier than the 18th century, and it is possible that it came about following the greatly increased traffic through the town with the arrival of the Great North Road. Assuming that it was a deliberate creation, it does seem somewhat surprising that no documentation at all appears to have survived, and possibly its origins are earlier.

While there was some new development on the periphery of the town under the stimulus of the Chesterfield Canal, it was only with the arrival of the railway that expansion really began. The evolution of the settlement pattern over the course of the later 18th and the 19th centuries was largely

controlled by site conditions, particularly the existence of a high water table and the liability to flood, as well as the surrounding network of canal and rail communications. The previously nucleated pattern degenerated into one of intense fragmentation, while development in several areas had to wait for extensive pumping schemes (Smith 1965). Industrial activity tended to be concentrated to the south of the town, with housing of various types, but particularly terraces, to the south, south-east and south-west. In contrast, there was virtually no expansion of West Retford in the 19th century as far as the area of the settlement is concerned. However, comparison of the map of 1774 with late 19th century maps indicates considerable development within existing plots, with rows of buildings being erected in yards to the rear of street frontages. Plots in the centre of East Retford around the market place became similarly densely occupied.

Over the course of the 20th century Retford has expanded both to the north, across earlier fields and commons, and to the south to incorporate Ordsall and Thrumpton. Infilling of open land within the earlier settled area has also taken place.

## **7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES**

### **7.1 Research Questions**

1. Nothing at all is known of early medieval settlement at Retford, but it is generally assumed to have been on the western side of the river. Is this assumption correct? Where was the river crossing at that time and how did it relate to the site of the mill referred to in 1086? Does the *Odsthorpe* of Domesday Book refer to a settlement on the site of the later East Retford?
2. What was the size of the original borough as founded at the beginning of the 12th century? The ditch said to run along the north side of Grove Street needs be confirmed archaeologically and dated. Was it a boundary ditch, and if so what was its course in the area of The Square?
3. The extent and development of medieval East Retford is not fully understood. What were its limits, particularly in the Moorgate and Carolgate areas? When was the market place laid out, assuming Cannon Square to have been the site of the earliest markets? How was access gained to the ford and was Piercy correct in his suggestion that the original route into Retford from the south lay further east than modern Carolgate until the 17th century?
4. The street name Spital Hill implies that there was once a hospital in the area; however, nothing is known about it.
5. Tanneries are known to have existed in post-medieval times in the Moorgate area, but was medieval tanning carried out here also, or elsewhere? Were any other early industries associated with the river?

### **7.2 Archaeological potential**

#### **7.2.1 Existing Protection**

##### *Scheduled Ancient Monuments*

Certain nationally important archaeological sites and monuments enjoy special protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. This protection ensures that the case for preservation is fully considered should there be any proposals for development or other work which might damage the monument. Any such proposals are subject to Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent, administered directly by the Secretary of State. They include not only demolition, damage or removal, but also restorative works. There would normally be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation of the monument. However, there are at present no scheduled ancient monuments within the settled area of Retford.

### *Archaeology in the Local Plan*

Bassetlaw Local Plan, Deposit Draft April 1995, contains the following policy relating to archaeology:

**POLICY 6/12** Permission will not be given for development that would destroy or detrimentally affect a scheduled ancient monument, a site of major local archaeological or historic interest or the setting of such features.

### *Conservation areas (Figure 6)*

The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* required all Local Planning Authorities to determine which parts of their areas were of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas, in order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. It is also their duty to review them from time to time, and to determine whether any further parts of their areas should also be designated as conservation areas.

Retford's conservation area encompasses parts of both East and West Retford and was drawn to include the areas in which the most significant development of the last 200 years was considered to have occurred. It takes in the majority of listed buildings as well as including others which, as a group, contribute significantly to the character of the area. This character comes, at least in part, from the sequence of spaces formed by Cannon Square, Market Place and The Square, as well as from the construction of the buildings themselves in the distinctive red brick and pantile tradition of Nottinghamshire, with Bridgegate forming a strong link between the two sides of the river.

### *Conservation areas in the Local Plan*

Bassetlaw Local Plan, Deposit Draft April 1995, contains the following policy relating to conservation areas:

**POLICY 6/11** Within conservation areas, planning permission will only be granted for development if it:

- a) would not detract from the special character or appearance of the area; and
- b) contributes, where reasonably practicable, to the enhancement of the area

### *Listed buildings (Figure 6)*

A listed building is one recognised by the government as being of special architectural or historic interest, as specified by the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. Listing is made at three levels of importance, Grade II, Grade II\* and the most important, Grade I, and listed building consent is required, in addition to normal planning consent, before any alterations, extensions or demolitions can be made to a listed structure which might affect its character.

There are 111 listed buildings in the built-up area of Retford. Of these, six are Grade II\*, namely the three churches of St Michael's, St Swithin's and St Saviour's, Sloswicke's Hospital, Amcott House and no. 25 Grove Street. The remainder are Grade II, and all can be broken down according to their earliest structural phase as follows:

Earliest structural phase	C16 or earlier	C17	C18	C19	C20
Number of structures	3	2	51	54	1

Planning Policy Guidance 15 allows the creation and maintenance of a list of buildings of local historic/architectural interest, although this does not confer a statutory obligation. In Retford there are 23 buildings considered to be of local interest, of which seventeen are 19th century and six are 18th or early 19th century.

### *Listed buildings in the Local Plan*

Bassetlaw Local Plan, Deposit Draft April 1995, contains the following policy relating to listed buildings:

- POLICY 6/10 Planning permission and listed building consent for development affecting listed buildings or their settings will only be granted when:
- a) any proposed alterations are fully in sympathy with the buildings' existing character;
  - b) any proposed extension to a listed building does not detract from the character of the buildings as a result of its appearance, scale or nature; and
  - c) the setting of the listed building is not adversely affected.

#### **7.2.2 Above ground remains**

The prosperity that the diversion of the Great North Road brought to Retford also brought about a period of rebuilding of houses, as is indicated by the number of listed buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries both in the centre of the town and in the suburbs. In such cases there can be the potential for survival of earlier features where buildings have been refronted rather than essentially rebuilt. Even after substantial rebuilding certain features may remain which point to the existence of an earlier structure, as was the case at Amcott House, where restoration work on a Georgian building uncovered evidence for a house on the site in the 17th century.

Although there has been some demolition of Victorian housing, particularly the smaller and more insanitary terraces, areas of more substantial late 19th century housing have survived, particularly to the east and to the south-west of the town. In addition, some buildings of an industrial nature are still in existence, while the Chesterfield Canal itself forms an important resource.

#### **7.2.3 Below ground remains**

The only archaeological excavation known to have taken place in Retford is that carried out in 1995 on Bridgegate, West Retford, on a site next to the river. Material recovered from dredging in 1988 had already indicated the wide variety of material contained in the river, which included a whole range of pottery from the early 12th century to the present day as well as more unusual finds such as a 12th century stirrup (Dolby pers. comm.). Large numbers of wooden piles and other organic remains had also been dredged up. However, the excavation showed the potential of the ground adjacent to the river and even below the existing street. The excavators noted an organic layer which was waterlogged on discovery and which showed 'excellent preservation of bone and organic materials' (Ross & Davies 1995).

It is highly likely that good preservation of remains associated with waterside industries such as tanning will occur. Tanneries in the 19th century were sited at the rear of properties on Moorgate, downstream from the mills, bridge and centre of town to minimise the offense. It is possible that earlier tanneries would have been in this area also, for the same reason. Tanning was certainly being carried out at Retford by the 13th century. Comments from Piercy suggest that remains could be found upstream of the bridge also:

'It will be found on digging rather deep in all the gardens lying along the margin of the river Idle, from Bridgegate to the Car, that the land is full of hooves and horns and in many instances the hair of animals has turned up as fresh as when it was first buried' (quoted in Marcombe 1993, 101).

Similarly, it is possible that areas adjacent to The Beck have the potential for environmental work. The Beck was described in the 19th century as a 'receptacle for the decomposing refuse of a large portion of the town', and this may have been the situation in earlier periods also.

One area of potential is the church and churchyard, the latter in its own right, containing as it does evidence of past populations, but also because it may preserve earlier phases of the church. When the

chantry chapel was rebuilt in 1873, for example, remains of the original chantries, extending further east, were apparently found (Biggs 1968).

Remains of structures can be preserved below widened streets, or in the front gardens of modern buildings which, unlike earlier ones, tend to be set back from the road. In component 14, for example, structures shown on early maps stand on the street frontage, whereas later ones are set well back. That material can be preserved in this way is indicated by Biggs (1968) who noted that at Sloswicke's Hospital in Churchgate 'gardeners of recent years have come across old foundations in the present front garden and so it is likely that the new building [ie that of 1806] was set back further from the road'.

The degree to which earlier material may be preserved can depend to some extent on the depth of deposits and on the presence of cellars in later buildings. The incidence of cellars at Retford is not known; however given the high water table, they are probably relatively uncommon. It is possible that the high water table and the susceptibility of the town to flooding may have acted to preserve archaeological information by requiring the ground to be built up. Some indication that this may be the case comes from Piercy's comment that

'There is, however, no doubt but that it [the market place] had been paved at some antecedent period, as a pitched pavement, about three feet below the present one, has been found in several parts of the town' (Piercy 1828, 141).

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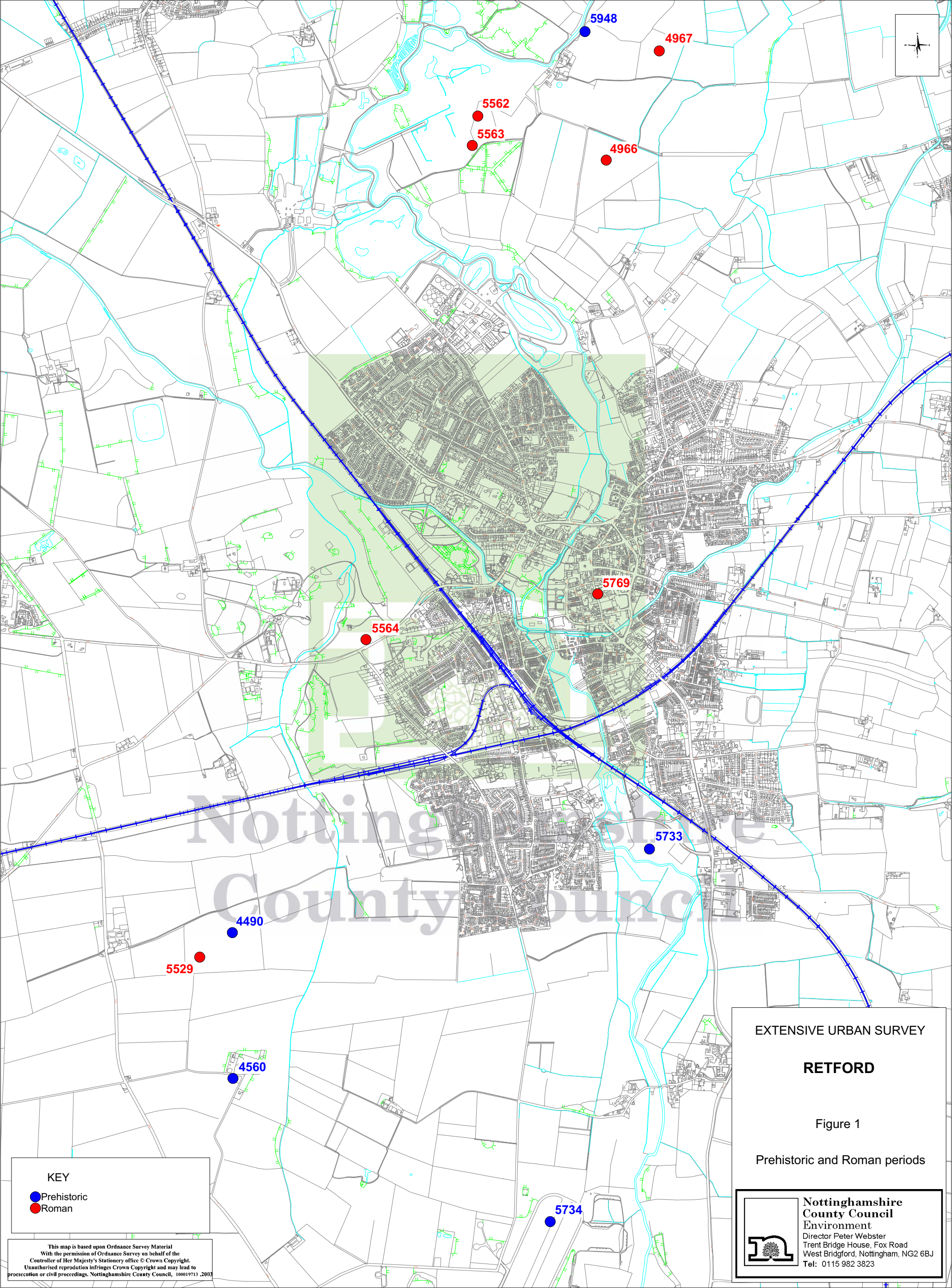
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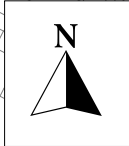
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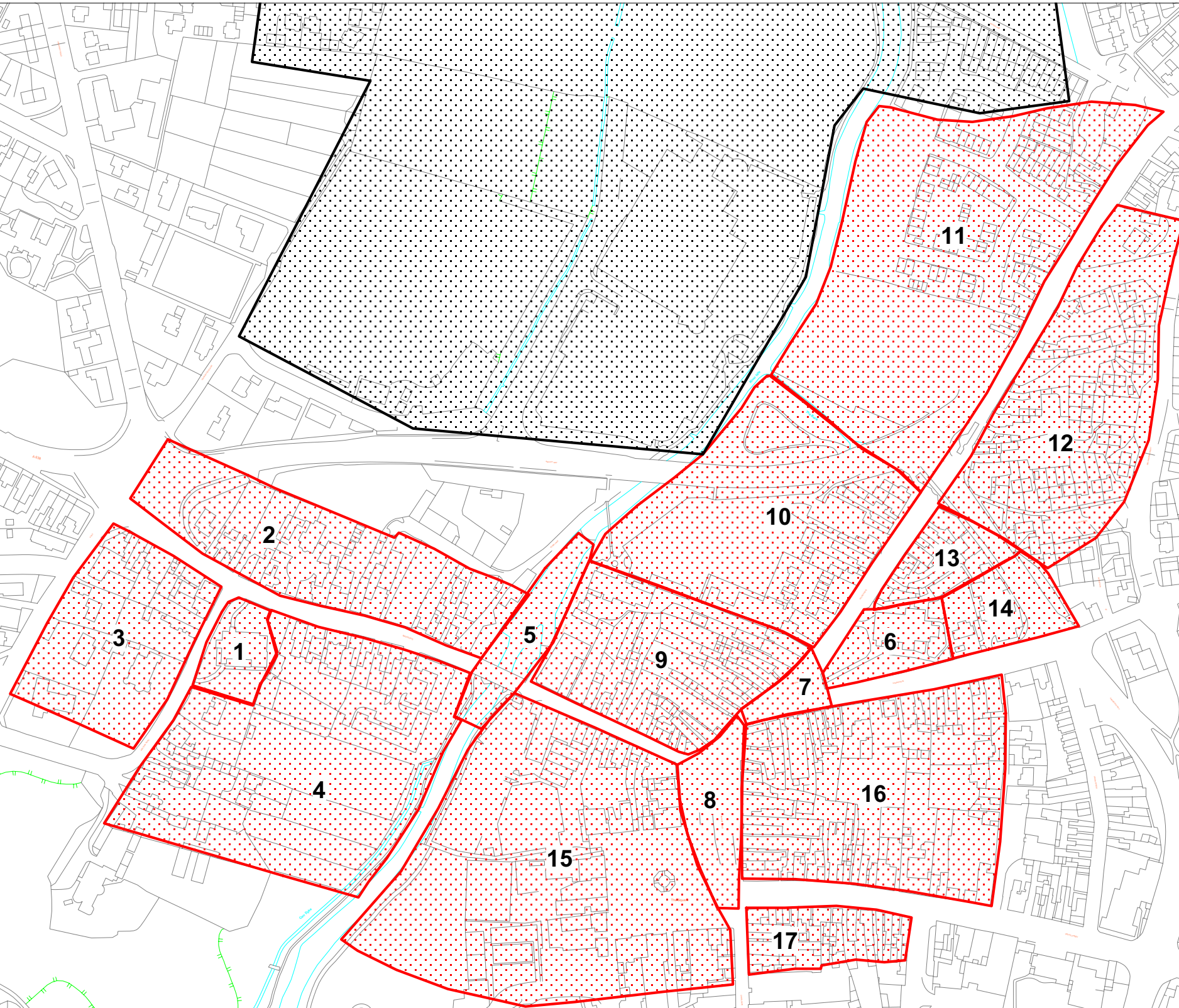






**KEY**

	Medieval component
	Area excluded from EUS



**EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY**

**RETFORD**

**Figure 2**

**Medieval Components**

	<b>Nottinghamshire</b>
	<b>County Council</b>
	<b>Environment</b>
	Director Peter Webster Trent Bridge House, Fox Road West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ Tel: 0115 982 3823

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