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# LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

FRANCIS HOUSE SILVER BIRCH PARK GREAT NORTHERN TERRACE LINCOLN LN5 8LG

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## **Alford, Lincs.:**

### **Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land Beside The Anchor Inn, Church Street**

NGR: *TF 4555 7618*  
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. **159.96**

Report prepared for Sherwood Vale Developments Ltd.

**November 1996**

Lincolnshire County Council  
Archaeology Section  
13 Friars Lane  
LINCOLN LN2 5AL  
TEL. 0522 575292 FAX: 0522 530724  
13.12.96.

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**Summary**

*A desk-based assessment of a plot of land beside the Anchor Inn, Alford, identified no certain archaeological constraints for proposed development, although this area has been suggested as the site of 7th century occupation of Alford. The plot is thought to be within land associated with the parish church in the 12th and 13th centuries, later held by St. Katherine's Priory, Lincoln.*

*Limited post-medieval development of the site and the repositioning of boundaries may have caused some damage to any archaeological deposits present, as may pits associated with The Anchor Inn and a small smithy.*

**Introduction**

This assessment has been prepared by Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) on behalf of Sherwood Vale Developments Ltd., in advance of a planning application for proposed residential development, comprising the construction of eleven dwellings to the rear of the Anchor Inn, 100m to the north of St Wilfrid's Church (Figs. 1, 2 and 5; Pl. 1).

**Sources Consulted**

The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was consulted, and the locations of previously reported archaeological sites or finds in the close vicinity were noted (Appendix 1). Air photographic cover held at the SMR was inspected but the existing nearby developments meant that this was unhelpful.

Early Ordnance Survey maps (the 25" Second Edition and the 6" First Edition) were examined at the Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO), as well as the 1840 Tithe Map and Award (Figs. 3 and 4). Other maps were inspected but these did not show useful detail of this area of the town. The LAO card index catalogue was checked but no items relating to The Anchor Inn were located. The LAO library of local topographical histories was also referred to but no relevant information was found.

The Local Studies Collection of Lincoln Central Library holds a number of Alford publications and these were consulted. Back issues of Lincolnshire Life were checked.



### **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The earliest Ordnance Survey map (OS 1824) marked a prehistoric burial mound on the site of the John Spendluffe school and another 'tumulus' about 1km to the west; both identifications are uncertain. Prehistoric finds from the vicinity include an Early Bronze Age axe hammer found by a schoolboy in 1962 (about 450m NE of the school), and a polished stone axe found in 1969 (near the Wold Grift Drain); other prehistoric tools are recorded (Appendix 1).

A Romano-British occupation site is known at Bilsby, 1km to the NE, but few contemporary finds have been reported from Alford.

The highest land in Alford, at slightly below 9m AOD, is occupied by the parish church. Beckwith (1972) has suggested that this was the site of the earliest Anglian settlement at Alford, on a gravel ridge. No artefacts or building remains have been found to support this premise, although the church dedication (St. Wilfrid) is early and unusual.

The existing church, is of 14th century date and is thought to occupy the site of an earlier building. No church is recorded in the 1086 Domesday Survey but in 1195 a church at Alford belonging to Gilbert of Rigsby is documented. At that date a dispute occurred concerning the church; it apparently stood on land owned by Robert, son of William (lord of the manor of Well), and he claimed the building and its advowson from Gilbert. This claim was unsuccessful, as was a second attempt in 1220. It has been assumed that this interest in the church site reflected a growth in the economy of Alford as a market town, with the local lord of the manor seeking control over the entire area of the town (Dudding 1930, 82). The land controlled together with the church seems to have been to the north and west of the present church and this may explain the distorted street pattern at this end of High Street and Church Street.

The church and advowson passed to the Gilbertine Priory of St Katherine, at Lincoln by the 13th century, when a document referred to 'part of the house at Alford which had been used by St. Katherine's Priory as a granary for tithe corn' (Baron 1909, 2-3). The site of this tithe barn has not been established.

The antiquarian Leland passed through Alford in the mid 16th century, recording his impressions of thatched or reeded buildings, presumably of mud-and-stud fabric. The earliest known surviving brickwork in the town is at Manor House, thought to be of mid 17th century date.

Local historians have alleged that Alford church was damaged in 1645 during the Civil War, but subsequent detailed research by Haythorne (1991) demonstrated that the scene of the skirmish was in the Scottish Borders.

Within the market square area, many of the buildings have cellars and some sources have reported that these were linked with a network of underground tunnels. Human skeletons have been recorded from the grounds of the Stag's Head and the Three Tuns public houses, and it has been claimed that these



were victims of disputes connected with coastal smuggling (Dudding 1930, 203; Cooke and Crome 1988, 22). Further information about these remains have not been located in this assessment, but they may represent much earlier burials in a formal churchyard.

The present Anchor Hotel, on the west side of Church Street, was apparently built in 1865 and enlarged in the early 20th century (Cooke and Crome 1988, 22). There had been a tinsmith's workshop in the grounds which was demolished to create a car park for the hotel. This workshop may have been in the buildings shown in 1905 at the southern edge of the proposed development site (Fig. 2).

### **The Proposed Development**

No information specifically relating to the proposed development plot has been located during this assessment but its close proximity to the present church suggests that this is an archaeologically sensitive area where no previous work has been conducted.

The plot appears to equate with parcel 189 of the 1840 Alford Tithe Award plan. This area (0a. 3r. 2p) was glebe land held by Samuel Stephenson, partly occupied by the Anchor Inn and a garden (LAO B84). The designation of this land as part of the glebe lands (providing income to the church) is interesting and may indicate that it had been part of the disputed area in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Apart from a 'house' used as a granary, no details are known of the land use of the disputed ground. It is certainly conceivable that this small pocket of land (in a town otherwise held by the lord of the manor of Well) was used to some advantage and need not have been empty or cultivated. The original church site may have been anywhere within this area, as could an associated burial ground.

### **Conclusion**

It is impossible to predict from the available information whether the proposed development site represents a significant archaeological site. No artefacts have been reported from this vicinity.

Archaeological deposits on this plot, if any have existed, may have been damaged by buildings and refuse pits associated with them. The positions of some of these buildings are known from 19th century and early 20th century maps. Until the mid 17th century it is likely that any structures were of mud-and-stud construction, with shallow foundations. Later brick buildings may have caused deeper disturbance.

The Anchor Inn may have needed numerous pits for disposal of various wastes, and these may have extended across much of the available area of 189 on the Tithe map.



The position of the site just north of the churchyard and the market place and close to the presumed medieval core of the town means that the presence of medieval building remains cannot be discounted. However, the proposed development lies to the rear of the plot where one might expect the presence of buildings to be less likely than on the street frontage.

### **Acknowledgements**

Copies of site plans were provided by Dean Cox (Sherwood Vale Developments).

LAS would also like to thank the Lincolnshire County Archaeology Section, especially Steve Catney (County Archaeological Officer), Mark Bennet (SMR Officer) and Sarah Grundy (Assistant SMR Officer) for their assistance. Help was also received from staff at the Lincolnshire Archives Office and at the Lincolnshire Libraries Local Study Collection. Particular thanks are due to Chris Cruickshank (photographer) and to Dave Start (Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire) for permission to reproduce Plate 1, which appeared as Pl. 66 in Start 1993. Naomi Field offered assistance and comment on this report, which was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
8th November 1996

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## Appendix 1

### Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record Summary

SMR	NGR. (all TF)	Description
42532	453 760	Neolithic polished stone axe
42533	453 762	3 Roman coins
42535	4572 7566	?site of prehistoric burial mound, early 19th century
42536	4554 7606	St. Wilfrid's Church
42538	4506 7603	flint arrowhead
42540	4547 7601	17th century stocks
42544	456 759	Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age polished stone axe, found 1969
42548	4571 7618	17th century spoon
42549	458 754	Roman pottery sherd
47539	4602 7584	?Early Bronze Age stone 'axe-hammer'





Fig. 1 Location of Alford



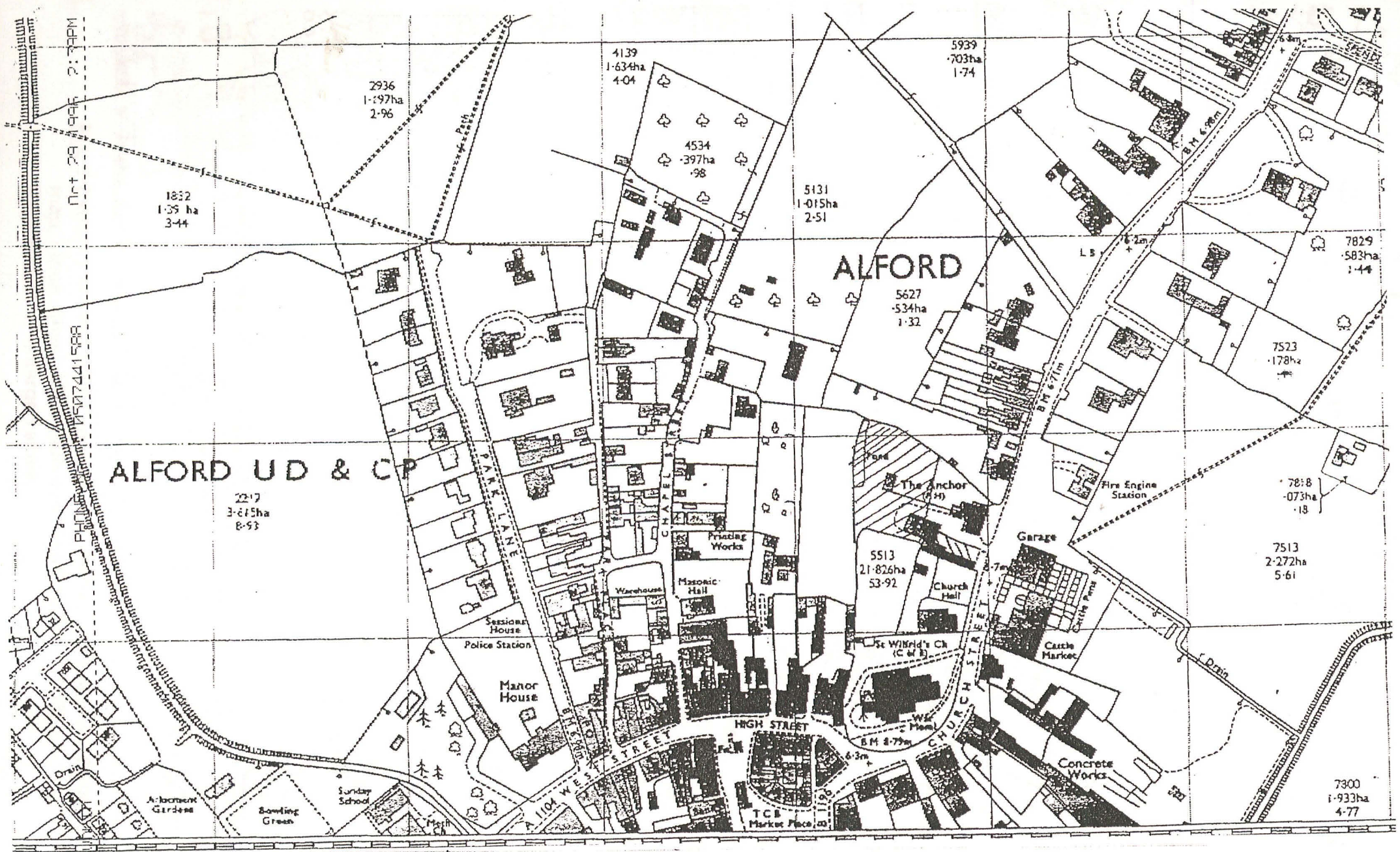


Fig. 2 Location of the Proposed Development (based on the 1972 Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map supplied by the client; © Crown Copyright, reproduced by permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).



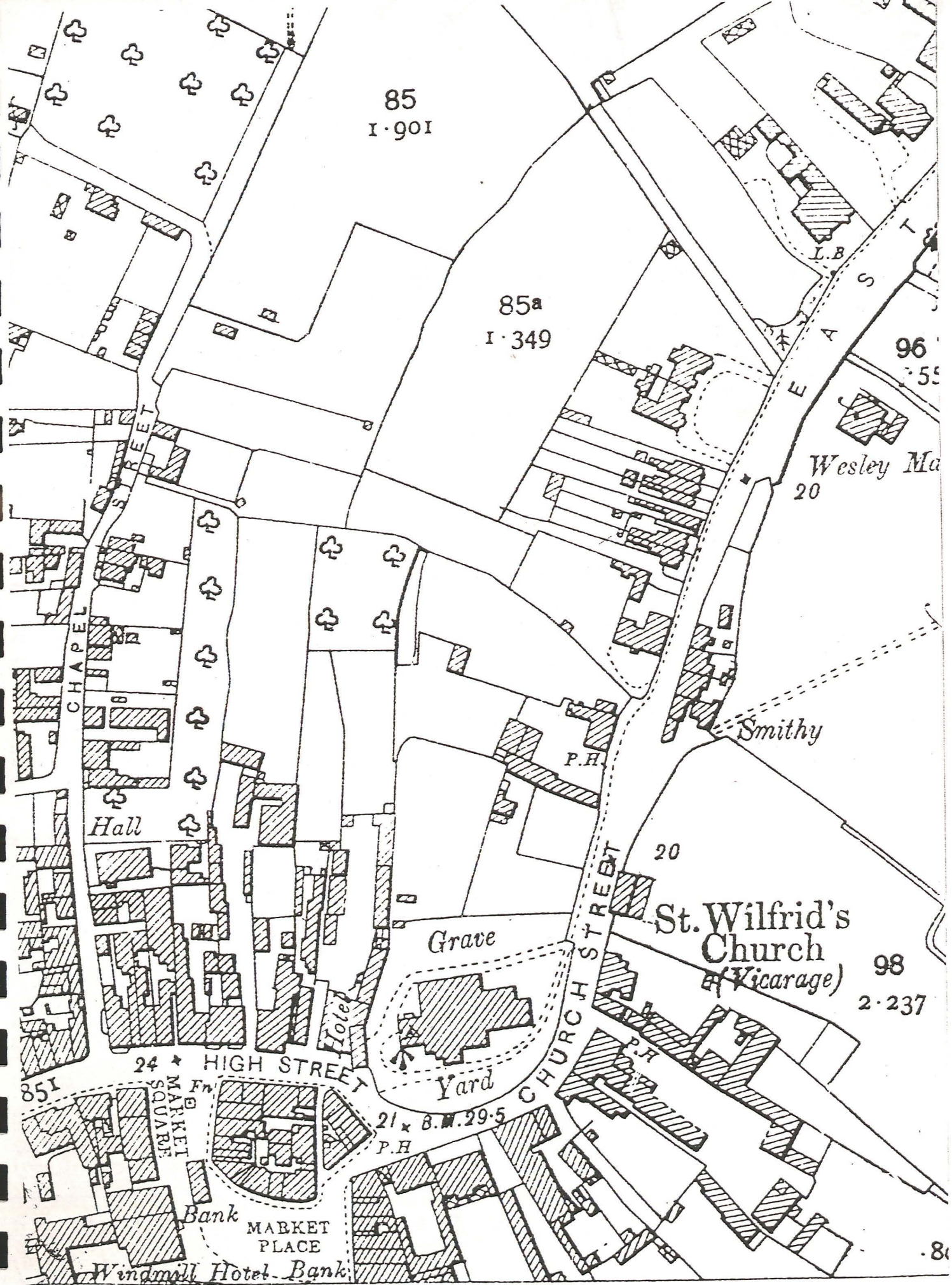


Fig. 3 Extract from the 1906 Ordnance Survey Second Edition 1:2,500 map, Lincs. Sheet 66/11 (surveyed 1887, revised 1905).  
 Reproduced at enlarged scale.



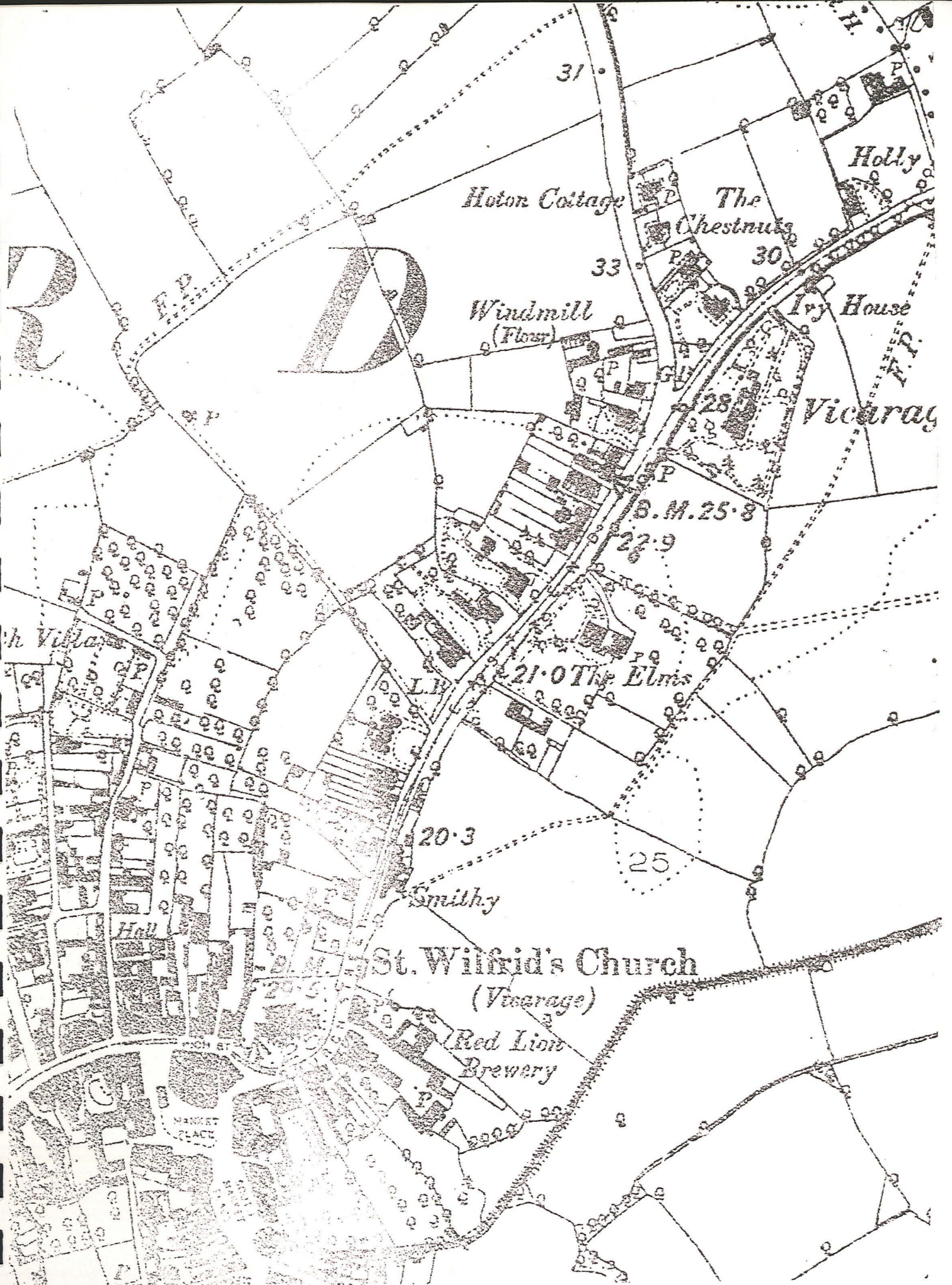
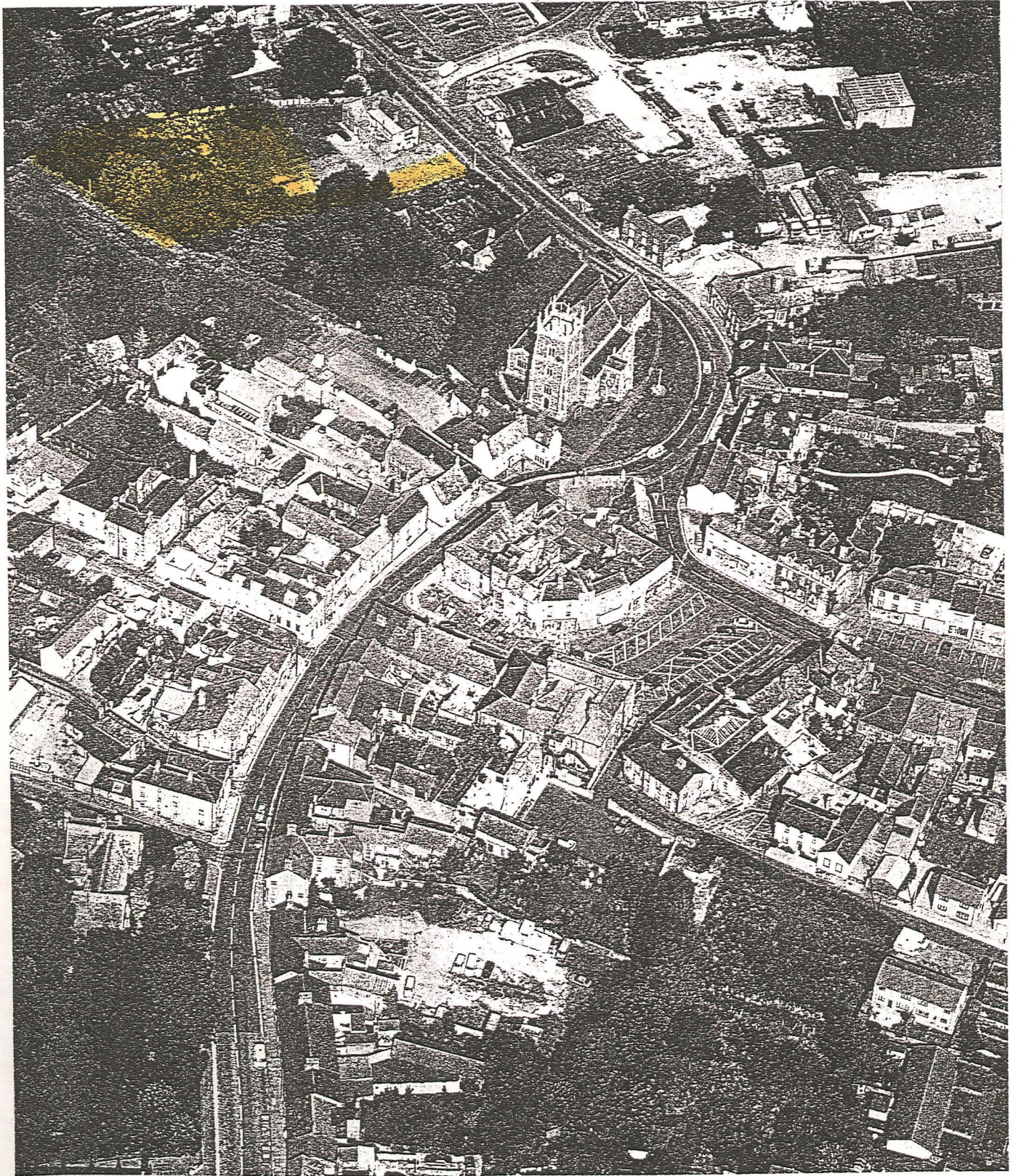


Fig. 4 Extract from the 1891 Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:10,560 map, Lincs. Sheet 66SE (surveyed 1887). Reproduced at enlarged scale.









Pl. 1 Air photograph of Alford town centre (looking NE), showing the site of the proposed development (photograph by C. Cruickshank, © Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire; reproduced with permission).