6. Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

The conservation area contains a wealth of buildings in differing styles, ages and historic importance. The area includes eight listed structures, two Grade I (Conisbrough Castle and the Church of St. Peter) and six Grade II. Just outside the current boundary of the conservation area is a listed well head. All the list descriptions of the listed buildings are attached as Appendix II (although these are a means of identifying which is the listed building and therefore will not list all the significant parts of the building) and are also shown on Map 2 - Positive Features, both of which can be found to the rear of this appraisal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Listing Grade</th>
<th>EH Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conisbrough Castle</td>
<td>Grade I &amp; Scheduled Ancient Monument</td>
<td>334795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of St. Peter</td>
<td>Grade I</td>
<td>334797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle House</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cromwell’s Restaurant</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Priory</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation/Lamp Standard</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Memorial</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conisbrough Stocks</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Head</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>334807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any works which involve the alteration or extension of a listed building in a way which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest require listed building consent. Repairs do not generally need consent, though the distinction between repair and alteration is often unclear.

All parts of a listed building are protected, including its interiors and any building or fixed object within its curtilage at the time of listing. However, not all parts of a listed building will be of the same value in terms of its special interest and there are very few buildings which cannot accommodate some degree of alteration, provided this is done with skill and care. If you are considering doing works to a listed building you are strongly advised to discuss this with a member of the Design and Conservation Team at the earliest opportunity.
Conisbrough Castle
Conisbrough Castle is the most significant and prominent building within the conservation area. The castle is protected by Grade I listed status and is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The creamy white magnesian limestone ashlar keep was started in 1180 by Hamlin Plantagenet (half brother of Henry II). It measures 90 ft in height and has relatively recently had its roof and two oak floors reinstated. The keep is supported by six giant buttresses and represents the 'transitional' stage of castle building, the change from solid rectangular to hollow turrets. Modern concrete steps (1960s) provide access at first floor level to a stone vaulted floor. The entrance has a joggled lintel with relieving arch above. The second floor has two twin windows and the third floor contains two quatrefoil windows forming part of the chapel built into the thickness of one of the buttresses. The curtain walls constructed from course rubble form a D shape bailey and were added later. The bailey contains the remains of gatehouses, a prison cell, kitchens, a chapel and the barbican. Since the castle was never forcefully besieged and was militarily defenceless during the civil war, it has never been destroyed, making it the finest Norman keep in Britain.

The romantic image of the ruined castle provided the inspiration for Sir Walter Scott to write his novel *Ivanhoe*. In it Scott describes the setting of the castle: "There are few more beautiful or striking scenes in England than are presented by the vicinity of this ancient Saxon (sic) fortress. The soft, gentle River Don sweeps through an amphitheatre in which cultivation is richly blended with woodland and on a mount ascending from the river, well defended by walls and ditches, rises the ancient edifice"

Scott's description illustrates the character and setting of the castle on its green and wooded embankment and still applies today, although the building is Norman and not Saxon as described by Scott. The landmark significance of the castle arises because of its prominent hill top location and as a consequence of adjacent development being lower.
Church of St. Peter
The Church of St. Peter is also a Grade I listed building. The nave is Anglo-Saxon in origin and has been remodelled in the twelfth, fourteenth and fifteenth Centuries. It is constructed from magnesian limestone ashlar and coursed rubble. The tower has a pre-conquest core and was refaced in the fifteenth Century. The church is set in its own grounds characterised by the clustered headstones and several mature trees. The thousand years of burials have raised the ground level and a limestone retaining wall surrounds the churchyard to the north and east.

![Church of St. Peter](image)

Castle House
This former vicarage is opposite Conisbrough Castle's main gates and is Grade II listed. It is one of several large properties constructed from coursed limestone that are in the conservation area and has ashlar mouldings.

![Castle House](image)
‘Cromwells’
The Restaurant 'Cromwells' is a two storey building with cellars, attics and five bays. Its deeply coursed magnesian limestone walls have rusticated ashlar quoins and pantile roof and stone slate eaves. Unfortunately it is currently spoiled by having top-hung casements windows on its main garden front, and stone has been laid inappropriately on modern side extensions, it however hoped that these will be rectified in the future.

The Priory
The Priory is two storeys high with three bays. The welsh slate roofed building has been rendered. It also lies in large grounds that are well treed and together contributes very positively to the centre of the conservation area.
Coronation Park Structures
Several smaller structures that are listed lie within the conservation area. Coronation Park contains a listed drinking fountain and lamp standard, war memorial, and the village stocks.
Well Head
Although the Well Head is outside the present boundary of the conservation area, it is in very close vicinity to it. It was the main supply of water to the village and is one of very few remaining well-heads in the Doncaster Borough.
Key Unlisted Building
As well as the listed buildings in the conservation area there are many that have a positive impact on the conservation area, some of which are considered to be key. A key building is defined as follows: -

- The work of a particular architect of local or regional note
- Has qualities of age, style and materials of a substantial number of buildings in the conservation area
- Serves as a reminder of the gradual development of the area or of an earlier phase of growth
- Has landmark qualities
- Reflects the traditional functional character or appearance of the conservation area
- Has significant historic associations with local people or past events

Buildings that are considered key unlisted buildings within the conservation area are shown on Map 2, and include the following: -

| The Terrace, Castle Avenue | Lowfield House, High Street |
| Castle Lodge, Castle Hill   | 5 High Street |
| 7 Church Street            | Ivanhoe Lodge, High Street |
| The Fox PH, Church Street  | 12 High Street |
| 20 Church Street           | Eagle and Child PH, West Street |
| 39 Church Street           | Barn to rear of Eagle and Child PH |

These can be broadly divided into three categories: -

- Vernacular limestone
- Vernacular render
- Victorian
There are several vernacular limestone buildings within the conservation area. Key unlisted ones include the large house on High Street as well as the two storey dwellings on High Street (No. 5) and Church Street (No.s 20 and 39), and the large limestone barn behind ‘The Eagle and Child’ Public House.
The vernacular rendered buildings include ‘The Eagle and Child’ Public House in its prominent site with ashlar quoins and sash windows, as well as ‘The Fox’ on Church Street. Lowfield House on High Street is another significant building, and due to its apparent age so is 7 Church Street (see later).
There are also several large Victorian houses that by their scale and detailing are key buildings in the conservation area; examples of these are Ivanhoe Lodge and The Terrace. Another important Victorian building which contributes to the character of Conisbrough is the sandstone Castle Lodge built as the custodian’s house in 1899, however this would be considered to lie within the curtilage of the castle and would therefore be covered by listed building legislation. The Lodge incorporates the castle’s DeWarren family coat of arms into its masonry.
Other Positive Buildings
As well as the listed and key unlisted buildings there are many other buildings that have a positive impact on the historic character and appearance of Conisbrough Conservation Area. Any omissions that come to light are unintentional and do not imply that they are of no interest.

There are many two and three storied terraced commercial premises, some of which have recently had improvements to their shopfronts, windows and roofs which contribute positively to the area.

Terraced commercial properties on Church Street

The purpose-built Police station is of brick construction, which at a later date has been rendered and occupies a prominent corner site on Castle Street although currently suffering from neglect (see later section on condition of buildings). The Star Public House on Doncaster Road is another important positive building and also acts as a marker for the settlement of Conisbrough that lies away from Doncaster Road itself.
Small stone vernacular buildings are found within the curtilage of other larger and in same cases more modern buildings. The west side of Waverley Avenue has two small outhouses of coursed rubble with large quoins. The former fire station retains its slate roof and posts that held the fire bell. The old slaughterhouse is a narrow two storey building with replacement concrete tiles. The terrace along Waverley Avenue has a stone façade and was constructed from reclaimed limestone blocks of a demolished farm.

The terraces of the Nineteenth Century are predominantly two storeys in red brick and with Welsh slate roofs. Terraces of this description dominate West Street and parts of Low Road and New Hill and due to the gentle curves and stepping of the buildings down the hill the building form contributes positively to the area, although the use of inappropriate materials has a marked effect on these buildings and is discussed further on the section on negative features.
7. Character and relationship of the spaces in the area

Open space adjacent to the castle
A significant contributor to Conisbrough's character is the generous amount of green open space. This space is most prominent in the north-eastern section of the conservation area.

The open space east of Low Road is a wooded ravine following the course of a stream, the Kearsley Brook. The wood contains a millrace and pond that eventually drains into the River Don. A network of meandering footpaths and small wooden bridges follow the course of the brook in this shallow valley. As this is the lowest part of the conservation area, and due to the density of the woods and adjacent developments, significant views are not often offered. Unfortunately the amount of litter and unauthorised fires detract from the peaceful character of the woods. The rear boundary to properties on Brook Road also present a poor edge to the area.

The open space surrounding the castle is well maintained with mowed lawns on the flat areas and natural length grass on the embankments. The castle is a constant prominent landmark and acts as the centrepiece to this open space. Mature trees are noticeable in this area clustered to the north of the castle.

The clustered wooded area north of the castle offers views of the River Don and beyond when viewed down Ferry Lane. The grassed area north east of the castle offers views along the Don Gorge terminating at Conisbrough Viaduct and across to the Crags on the opposite bank of the river.
Coronation Park has its own distinct character enclosed by hedgerows with the castle rising dramatically above it. The Park contains a war memorial, village stocks and several flowerbeds. The utilitarian benches detract from the ornamental nature of the park.

The open grassland radiating uphill from Coronation Park towards the castle illustrates various earth works related to the castle, such as a carp pond site. The land rising up towards The Priory has plenty of mature trees. The castle car park, adjacent to Low Road and Castle Hill junction is situated among the trees. New walls have been built in the style of the older limestone walls.

All of the open spaces described are accessible to the public and footpaths and steps encourage walking in the area. With the exception of the densely wooded area containing Kearsley Brook the castle is the main visual landmark throughout. Conservation area status provides some protection to most of the trees within it.
Church Street
Church Street has a narrow and enclosed feel created by the churchyard retaining wall and the dense row of buildings, built on the pavement edge, including the Fox Public House. This section of Church Street retains the narrow street the village had before road widening schemes of the 1960s. As Church Street descends towards the castle the roofline of the buildings remains roughly level as the two storey buildings become three storey. An area of open space breaks the density of the buildings on the corner west of the church. This offers views of the recent Wellgate redevelopment, which although outside the conservation area, does attempt to have a similar scale and form to those within it.

Properties on Church Street

As Church Street ascends through the village commercial centre it has dense buildings on the west side of two and three storeys and buildings in a more open setting on the east side, for example, the church hall and Cromwell’s restaurant. Recent development has been built which contributes to the character of Conisbrough through the use of limestone. Excelsior Court, opposite Cromwell’s being an example.
Commercial Centre
The commercial centre is built on the hilltop to the west. The junction of West Street and Church Street provides a large open area created by the wide streets and the supermarket car park. 1960s redevelopment has produced poor quality flat roofed buildings that do not relate to the traditional character of Conisbrough. Poor quality shop fronts and security shutters also further detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area and there is a lack of trees.

West Street
West Street is predominantly two storey red brick and slate roofed nineteenth century terraced shops and residential properties. As West Street descends the terraces step down and relate to the buildings that step down on New Hill. The buildings are built either to the rear of the pavement edge or behind small front yards, mostly with dwarf brick walls.
**High Street**

High Street, lying outside the commercial centre, has a very open feel due to the space that surrounds the church, the Priory, and the large houses with generous gardens and trees. Towards the junction with West Street and New Hill the buildings front the road, are slightly denser, and step down in the character of the buildings on West Street.

![Two key unlisted buildings on High Street](image)

**New Hill and Old Hill**

New Hill has two distinct identities. Towards the top, it offers vernacular limestone buildings and open space. Towards the bottom, the street is dominated by nineteenth century terraced housing fronting the road. Some of these buildings have unfortunately been unsympathetically modernised using modern materials such as crudely detailed uPVC windows and concrete roof-tiles.

![New Hill](image)

Old Hill, although now little more that a back alley was once the route of the main road from Doncaster to Sheffield.
**Castle Avenue and Castle Hill**

Castle Avenue has a rural character. The narrow lane is lined with limestone walls and at the southern end contains houses with large gardens and a row of stone and rendered terraces. The northern end runs through open wooded space, with the castle as the dominant landmark. A narrow passage with tall limestone walls links Castle Avenue with High Street. Similarly, Castle Hill is lined with limestone walls and winds gently uphill through a well-treed setting.

![Castle Avenue](image1)

**Low Road**

The southern length of Low Road consists predominantly of terraced housing that runs southwards to outside the conservation area. The predominant height is two storeys, of red brick with originally slate roofs and sash windows but again many have been altered with either replacement roofs using concrete tiles or replacement windows of the top opening modern type at odds with their historic setting.

![Low Road](image2)
Trees
The trees throughout the conservation area provide some form of linkage between the disparate areas. In recognition of the special contribution that trees can make to the character and appearance of conservation areas, they are afforded a level of protection similar to that of a Tree Preservation Order. Doncaster Council must be notified in writing 6 weeks before any work is carried out so that it has opportunity to assess whether the proposed work will harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any person removing or pruning a tree within a conservation area, without first giving the statutory notification, is guilty of a criminal offence and liable on summary conviction to a heavy fine.

Trees play an important role in Conisbrough Conservation Area
8. Traditional building materials and details

The conservation area has three principal building materials. On the oldest properties creamy white magnesian limestone is used for the walls, either in coursed or ashlar blocks (for example, the church of St. Peter, the castle, and Cromwells restaurant). On domestic buildings this is usually accompanied with a natural red clay pantiles, although sometimes with slate.

Vernacular stone buildings on Church Street, both of which are considered key unlisted buildings but which have windows that are not sympathetic to their appearance.

Another is red brick with slate roofs. The prevalence of red brick is due partly to the industrial expansion of the village and the proximity of the brick works on Doncaster Road.

Example of brick buildings, that on the left is a Victorian example on Church Street the other is one currently being built on West Street.

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The other building material is render, which has been applied on either stone or brick built in origin (Eagle and Child Public House and The Priory), with either slate or pantiles for their roofs.

Rendered properties: - That on the left is considered a key unlisted building on Church Street due to its age and historic form, although unfortunately it does have inappropriate modern roofing and replacement windows. The one on the right is a modern interpretation (fencing in foreground is not considered appropriate)

Buildings are generally of a simple form, with plain frontages without projections that are of narrow span with fairly steep roof (about 35-45 degrees) and have vertically proportioned windows that on historic properties are traditionally timber sash windows.
Almost every street and space within the conservation area, including the central area of the village, has an example of limestone walls, with rounded coping stones and which are shown on Map 2. Related to the walls are the large limestone gateposts with rounded tops. This style of gatepost is a feature of rural areas that lie on the magnesian limestone belt and many of the roads in the farmland around Conisbrough retain the gateposts in their hedgerows. The stocks were used as gateposts until they were restored and relocated in Coronation Park.

Limestone walls, trees and green space are a major contribution to the character and appearance of Conisbrough Conservation Area

Local details include examples of stone robbing. During the centuries when the castle was derelict and decaying it was treated as a stone resource. Many older buildings and walls have examples of the robbed stone, for example, the quoins in the wall on the corner of Castle Hill opposite the castle gateway. The arm of an Anglo-Saxon Cross has been incorporated into a wall on Castle Avenue. The wall below the castle by the Mill Piece has a stone stile set into it allowing access into the castle grounds (similar to the stile in the wall on Thorpe Lane, Sprotbrough, two miles east of Conisbrough). Castle Hill retains its original cast iron street sign and the adjacent castle lodge includes the DeWarren family coat of arms.
The ground materials throughout the conservation area are predominantly utilitarian tarmac or concrete paving slabs. Archive photographs of Conisbrough show roads being dirt tracks rather than having cobbles. However there are a few examples of cobbles within the village, such as at the junction of Castle Hill and Castle Avenue. Waverley Avenue still remains as an unmade road to this day.
9. **Negative features**

Negative features are described in the English Heritage guidance as elements that detract from the special character of the area. In terms of Conisbrough Conservation Area, there are several negative features.

The 1960s redeveloped town centre has a negative impact with their flat roofs and modern detailing, which is at odd with the historic nature of the place. This is made worse by the dominance of shop front security shutters in the village centre and poor quality shop fronts.

Another negative building is the unit housing the Co-op due to the blank and overwhelming nature of the first floor.
The modern shop units to the front of the church are at odds with both the church and the traditional buildings elsewhere on this commercial street, although their flat-roofs do actually reduce their presence.

Shops to front of church

Other buildings which are negative are the three-storey houses on Castle Avenue due to their modern architecture. They incorporate inappropriate details, such as the horizontal windows, garages on the frontage and use of an array of non-traditional materials of cladding and tiles.

Three storey houses on Castle Avenue
‘The Place’ appears to have an air of abandonment and its design is ‘blocky’ due to the flat roof and horizontally proportioned windows. It is at odds with its immediate context between the two main historic buildings of the castle and the church, and does not add positively to the streetscene at this crucial point.

![The Place, Church Street](image1.png)

‘The Venue’ Night Club and its associated car park are bland and utilitarian. Again the use of flat roofs and horizontal proportioned windows are at odds with more traditional patterns used elsewhere. The ad-hoc use of exposed concrete blocks and bricks for the car park walls also detract.

![The Venue](image2.png)
The end unit of the modern terrace on West Street is considered to be negative due to the odd look of its front gable caused by the mono-pitch roof which is a non-traditional feature. The use of concrete tiles and top-hung casement windows are also considered detrimental, and give the rest of the terrace an overall neutral contribution to the conservation area.

There are several bungalows within the historic centre and these introduce an alien suburban feel into the historic urban centre, and where they are in prominent locations can be considered negative due to the gap they create in the townscape.

This particular bungalow creates a hole in the townscape at a critical point on entering the conservation area.
The workshop on Doncaster Road due to its prominent position and haphazard construction looks out of place. It is however a strong remainder of the industry that once existed in this area of Conisbrough.

The area of terraced housing along Low Road, Doncaster Road and New Hill as noted above is considered to have a positive impact on the conservation area however the inappropriate replacement materials used for roof and window replacement here and elsewhere have a considerable negative impact.

uPVC windows can spoil the look of historic properties

Vertically sliding sash windows would have complimented this building better
Roller shutters also have a negative impact and give a hostile look to the area when down.

The use of inappropriate stonework with the use of jumpers and snecks rather than having stonework roughly of coursed nature has a negative impact by importing something that is not a local characteristic and any new build should use more appropriate examples as shown in the section on traditional materials.
The road junction on Doncaster Road has a negative impression as the entrance to the conservation area by the wide expanse of tarmac that is here. Alternatives should be looked at that create a more welcoming approach and define the space. This could be done through the use of buildings to enclose the space and using different road treatments to give a sense of arrival.