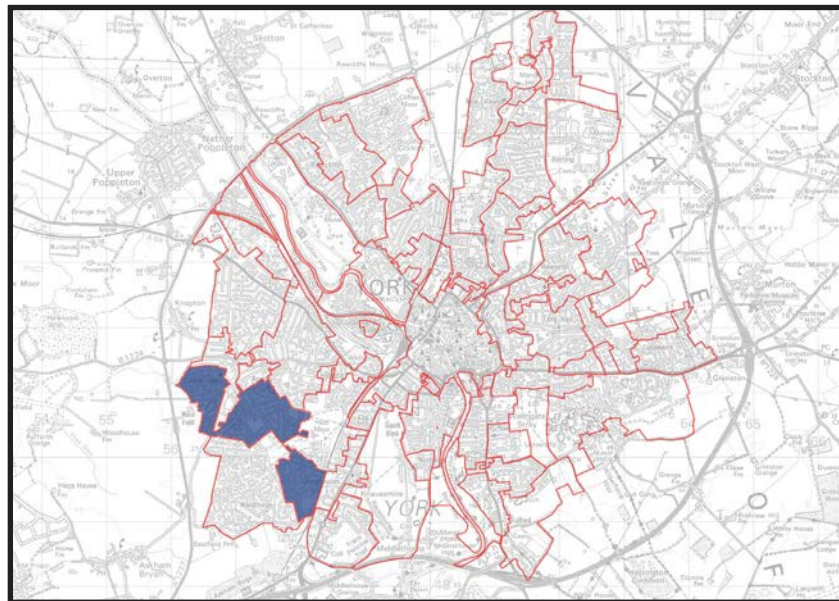
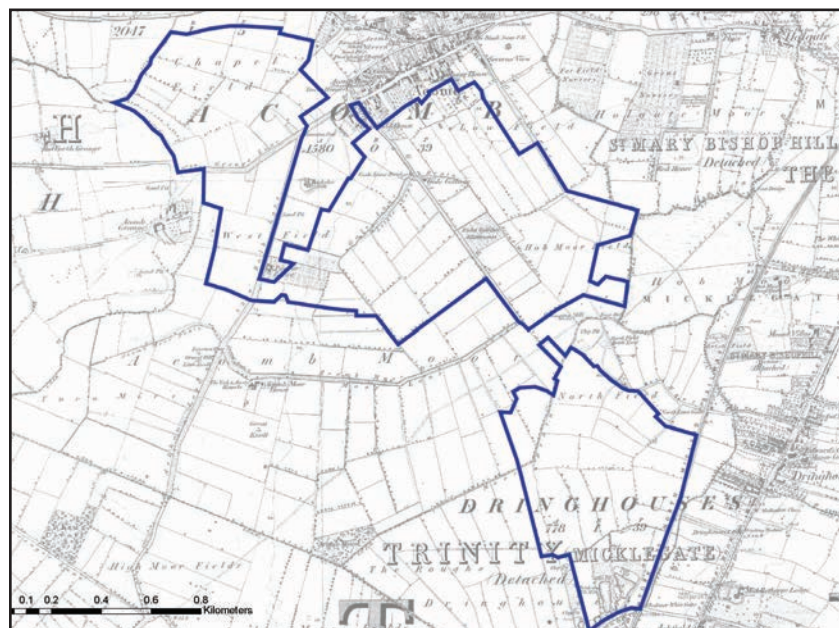


## Character area 25: Acomb south



Location of character area



Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan 1852

### Key Characteristics

#### General Character:

Three detached zones of inter-war and post-war council housing to the south and west of Acomb, covering several housing estates from Moor Lane and the main line railway to the south and Chapelfields to the north-west and to the rear of Acomb village to the north.

One area to the north of Grange Lane contains Westfield Primary School and backs onto open farmland to the west

The area to the north-east and south-west of Gale Lane contains three schools, York High School which includes the Energise sports facility, Hob Moor Community Primary School and Our Lady's Roman Catholic School.

A third area includes a large area of open water known as Chapman's Pond, a former brick works and is bounded by the mainline railway to the south-east.

Generally flat terrain throughout with a slightly higher sand and gravel deposit to the north which includes Acomb centre

Residential areas predominantly large scale, inter-post-war council estates a little 'worn around the edges'

Estates semi-rural on fringes of development but generally anonymous suburban feel

Tenuous relationship to the city

Earlier buildings dating to the late 19th century and inter-war period exist along principle roads such as Askham Lane, Grange Lane and Gale Lane. Mid to late 20th century buildings also exist in small pockets where re-development has occurred.

Approximate walking/cycling distance to the city centre from the centre of Gale Lane 4km via Kingsway and The Mount

**Dominant Housing Type:** Two-three storey post-war social housing in planned estates with wide streets and grass verges. Houses contain front and rear gardens – many front gardens have since been converted into driveways. On-street and communal parking provision.

**Other Key Housing Types:** Late 19th century industrial terrace and early 20th century terrace housing, inter-war and 1960s housing.

**Designated Heritage Assets:** None

**Non-designated Heritage Assets:** Older houses on Gale Lane which reflect previous rural/small scale industrial nature of area, post-medieval and 19th century boundaries surviving in an urban context.

**Key Views:** Rural views from the area north of Grange Lane, glimpsed views of Chapman's Pond and views of Hob Moor

**Surviving historic roads and tracks:** Askham Lane, Grange Lane and Gale Lane

## Archaeology and history

Areas of former medieval open fields evidenced by the survival up to the mid to late 20th century of field names, Chapel Field, West Field, Low Field and Hob Moor Field – all part of Acomb village field system. North Field formed part of the Dringhouses village open field system. Medieval broad ridge and furrow earthworks have been identified from historic aerial photographs of the area taken prior to development in the 1950s (English Heritage Vale of York National Mapping Project – City of York HER) and early maps show evidence of surviving enclosed groups of former strip fields in some locations.

Enclosure began in 1774. By the mid 19th century, further subdivision had taken place. Fields were distributed between scattered farms such as East Farm formerly known as Bog Farm. Small scale semi-rural industry such as the brick and tile works at the south end of Gale Lane and off Moor Lane, existed by the mid 19th century. These became slightly more widespread into the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

By the mid 19th century some small scale residential is evident, including short terraces on Gale Lane Brickyard Cottages for tile works employees, and larger semi detached houses on Grange Lane. Residential expansion of Acomb along the roads such as Askham Lane and Gale Lane continued throughout the inter-war years. Construction of social housing began immediately prior to the outbreak of war in 1937 when the Corporation bought land between Green and Gale Lane. Several streets such as Stuart and Tudor Road were subsequently constructed and completed by the 1950s with Kingsway West.

The post war council estates were constructed in the late 1940s on vacant land at the edges of the enlarged suburban villages surrounding York and in areas where 1930s construction had halted with the outbreak of war. In Acomb, for example, the post-war council housing was constructed immediately to the rear of the properties on the southern edge of Acomb village - removing original burgage plots and croft lines. This period of building was followed by 1960s estates and finally by the modern housing which continued the growth of the suburban area as well replacing older housing in some areas.

## Character

The social housing estates within this character area are typical of their time (1930s-1950s) and are similar to others found in York and across the country. They consist of a mixture of brick, one-three storey linked terraces, flats and semi-detached housing in well proportioned streets featuring grass verges. All houses have front and rear gardens and generally feature hipped roofs with chimneys.

Concrete road surfaces are common while parking areas are generally communal. In addition there is a high ratio of front garden to driveway conversions as seen in other areas.

The east side of Gale Lane contains late 1930s to early 1940s social housing, some of which features small rounded and square bay windows to the ground and first floors with red weatherboards or white pebbledash space in between the bays. The use of bay windows appears to peter out westwards on the post war estates, for example on St. Stephens Road.

Over the past 30 years the majority of social housing has become privately owned. Private ownership has resulted in significant erosion of original character through modification and extension. Well over 90% of houses have modern UPVC windows, a mixture of 20th century wooden and UPVC doors and some, photovoltaic panels. A high number of concrete fence posts have been retained either supporting hedgerows as they did originally or modern fencing.

There are no obvious open spaces, although on Foxwood Lane, there is a play area, which also serves neighbouring estates. Hedgerows, grass verges and trees do create a sense of green space within the urban environment.

A small 1960s bungalow estate exists on Grange Lane on land formerly part of the long back gardens of the extant late 19th to early 20th century housing.

Linked terraces dating to the same period, built as a mixture of council and private housing, also exist on Gale Lane.

There are no signs of 'historic York' or tourism here. This area is very much a residential suburb, with, in some cases, generations of the same family living on the same estate.

## Significance

**Archaeology:** Medieval and post medieval agricultural remains such as broad ridge and furrow and strip fields may partially survive beneath development. Evidence of post medieval and early modern small scale semi-rural industrial activity such as brick and tile works may also survive.

**Architecture:** Many examples of mid 20th social housing architecture as well as pockets of 1960s bungalow developments and older housing on principle roads. The houses are generally contained within large planned estates, which are almost small towns in themselves with self contained public amenities such as schools, churches, pubs and shops. Amenities such as these add to the sense of place and identity of the estates as well as providing places to meet and socialise. Many side roads retain their concrete road surfaces, which reflect the austerity measures in place at the time of construction.

The oldest buildings, on Gale Lane, relate to the former rural nature of the site as well as the small scale industrial works in use by the end of the 19th century.

**Historic:** The social housing which characterises this area is distinct from the inter-war, modern housing and Acomb village nearby although it is similar to other post-war development in York and reflects a national style. It has become surrounded by later development providing a good example of how the suburbs of York have grown and morphed together over the past 70 years.

Some street names reflect the historic rural nature of the area, such as Westfield, Chapelfield, Tithe Close, Moorgate and Cornlands Road. The name Gale Lane references the historic Gale Farm and the family who were once lords of the manor.

Significant historic boundaries and roads survive, for instance, Grange Lane, Gale Lane, Askham Lane, Green Lane and Moor Lane. Approximately 40% of the 19th century field boundaries exist in some way. The boundary between St. Stephen's Road and York High School dates to at least the period of enclosure in the 1770s.

Several earlier boundaries, identified on a 1664 plan of Dringhouses, can be traced in the modern street pattern such as Eason View continuing as Don Avenue, and the fence line between Eason Road and Gower Road.

**Streetscape components:** Mid to late 20th century street lighting, seating and post boxes, late 20th century phone boxes, modern bus stops, street signage and wastebins. Concrete and tarmac carriageways throughout bounded by paved and tarmac footpaths.

**Aesthetics:** Rural views, glimpsed views of Chapman's Pond and views of Hob Moor. Open rural space on the fringes of development.



## Opportunities and recommendations

It is recommended that any extensions, new development or re-development in the area should be sympathetic in terms of style, material, proportions and density and should complement and enhance existing character. Particular attentions should be paid to the historic buildings on Gale Lane. Street furniture, street signage and streetlights, should integrate with the character of the area.

Opportunities for improving the consistency of contemporary street furniture should be identified, in particular the enhancement of existing pedestrian surfaces, cycling facilities and upgrades of existing street furniture near retail facilities. This should be undertaken following guidance contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance (City of York Council, 2013).

Removal of original streetscape features over time has had a negative impact on the character of the area – further loss of these features should be avoided where possible.

Original street lighting columns should be retained wherever possible and carefully retrofitted with new lanterns where appropriate. The scale (height in particular) of lighting columns should always respect the character of the street. Lighting columns on residential streets with low traffic volumes should reflect traditional heights. Further guidance is contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance.

The post-war housing estates still retain some original architectural and streetscape features despite the privatisation of the majority of the area. It is recommended that further erosion of the original aspects of the estates, as well as changes such as garden to driveway conversions and inappropriate extensions should be monitored and avoided where possible.

Wherever possible and practical, it is strongly recommended that inherited historic grain evidenced through post-medieval and 19th century boundaries should be enhanced and conserved. These play a key role in explaining the historic development of the area.

Where historic boundaries have been identified, either as hedgerows or retained as part of historic development, efforts should be made to ensure their continuing survival as part of any future development opportunities.

Great care should be paid to the retention of socially valued buildings and spaces with appropriate weight given to local opinions.

Hedgerows and trees should be carefully managed and opportunities for planting trees along grass verges and in existing hedgerows should be identified in partnership with local residents. A programme of regular monitoring of the removal of original hedgerow boundaries and grass verges should be secured.

Key views of the Minster, other major heritage assets and local landmarks should be maintained and enhanced to help orientation and enhance local distinctiveness.

There is an opportunity for this study to be used as baseline data for the local community to develop local priorities, encourage community cohesion, recognise and improve the quality of their environment and strengthen a sense of place. This area in particular would benefit from further study and consultation with residents to inform on its character and how that has changed over time.



## Character Area 25: Images



*Late 19th to early 20th century terrace on Gale Lane*



*Grange Lane*



*Stephen's Road showing flats and link terraces with concrete road surface*



*1960s council housing on Gale Lane*



*Wain Grove shopping area*



*Grange Lane*



*Westfield Place*



*Work to the rear of a house in Thoresby Road, 1956 - City of York Archives*





Swale Avenue



Chaloner Road



Cornlands Road residence and retail block (above) with George VI pillar box on the same street (left).



Don Avenue

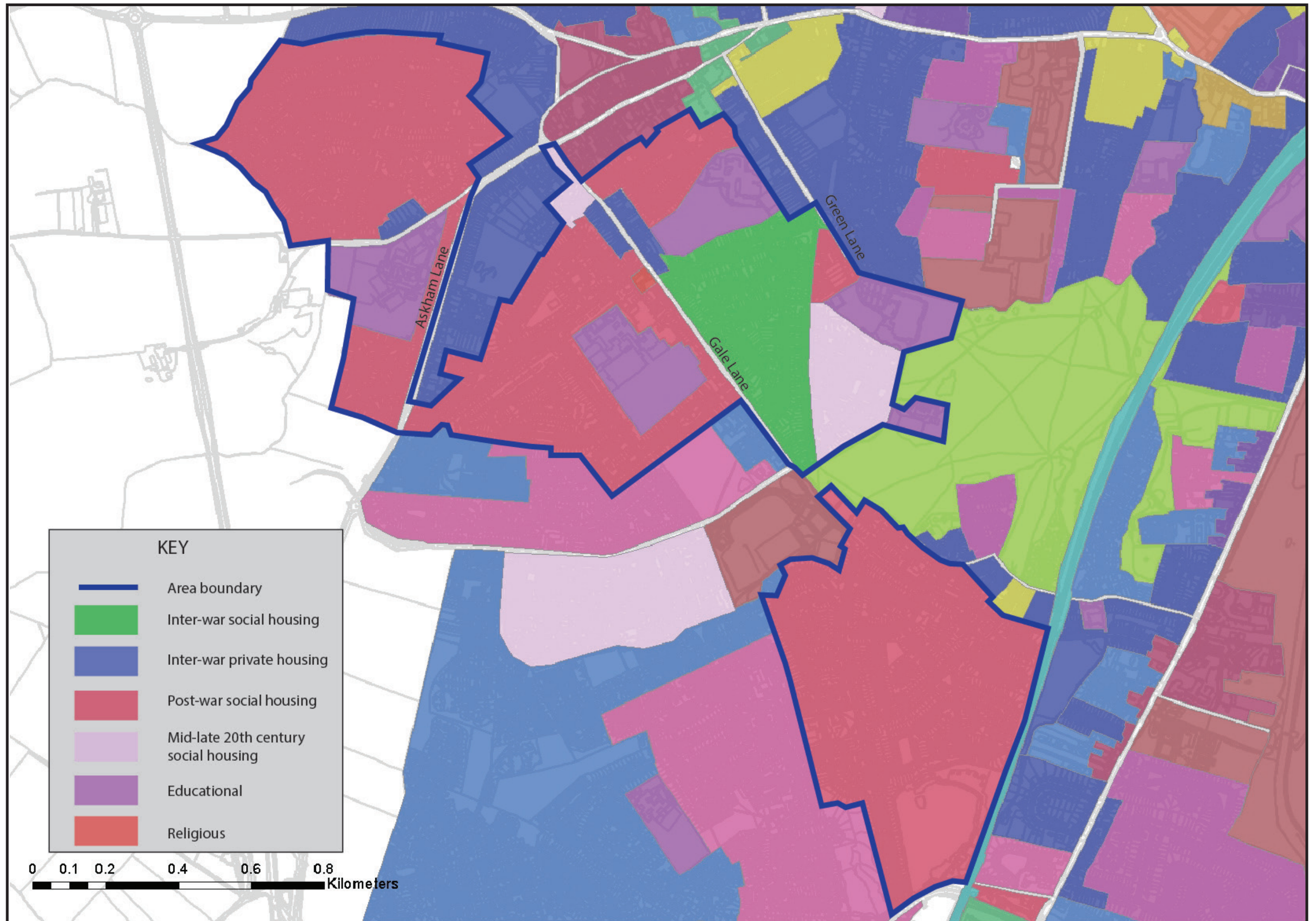


Springfield Close flats



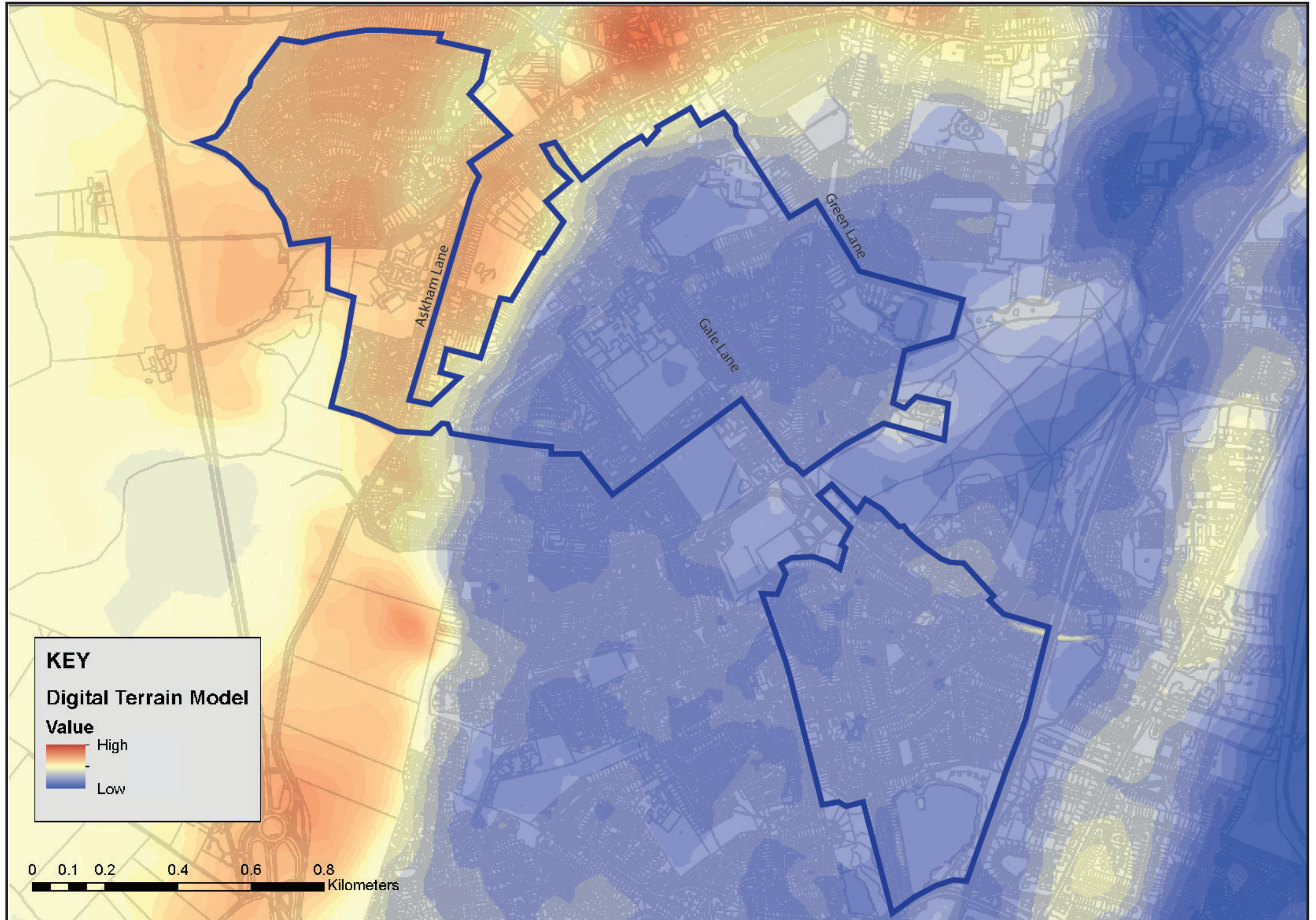
## Character Area 25: Maps

Broad Type characterisation plan.  
White roadways indicate roads or lanes visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey Plan



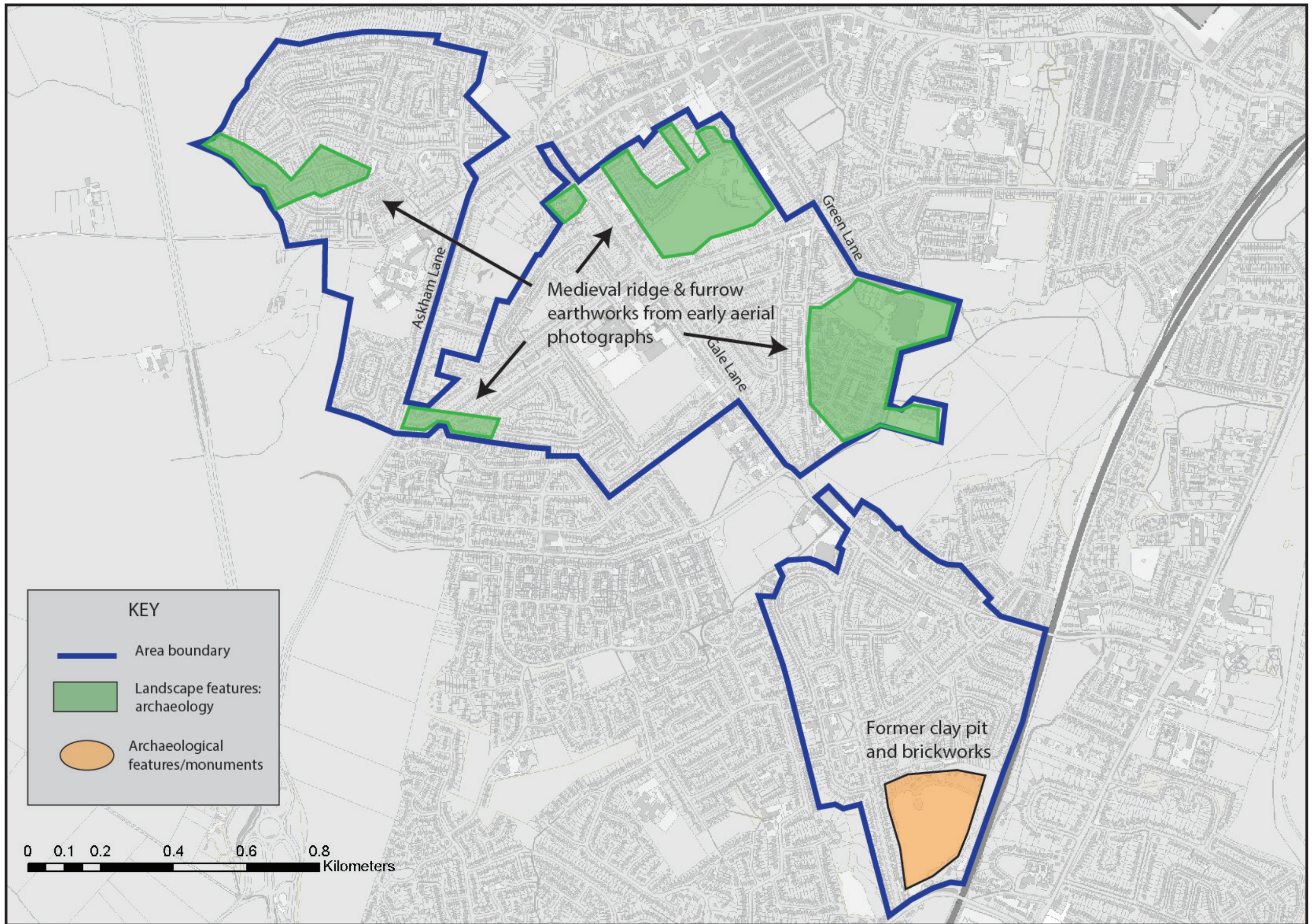


Topography



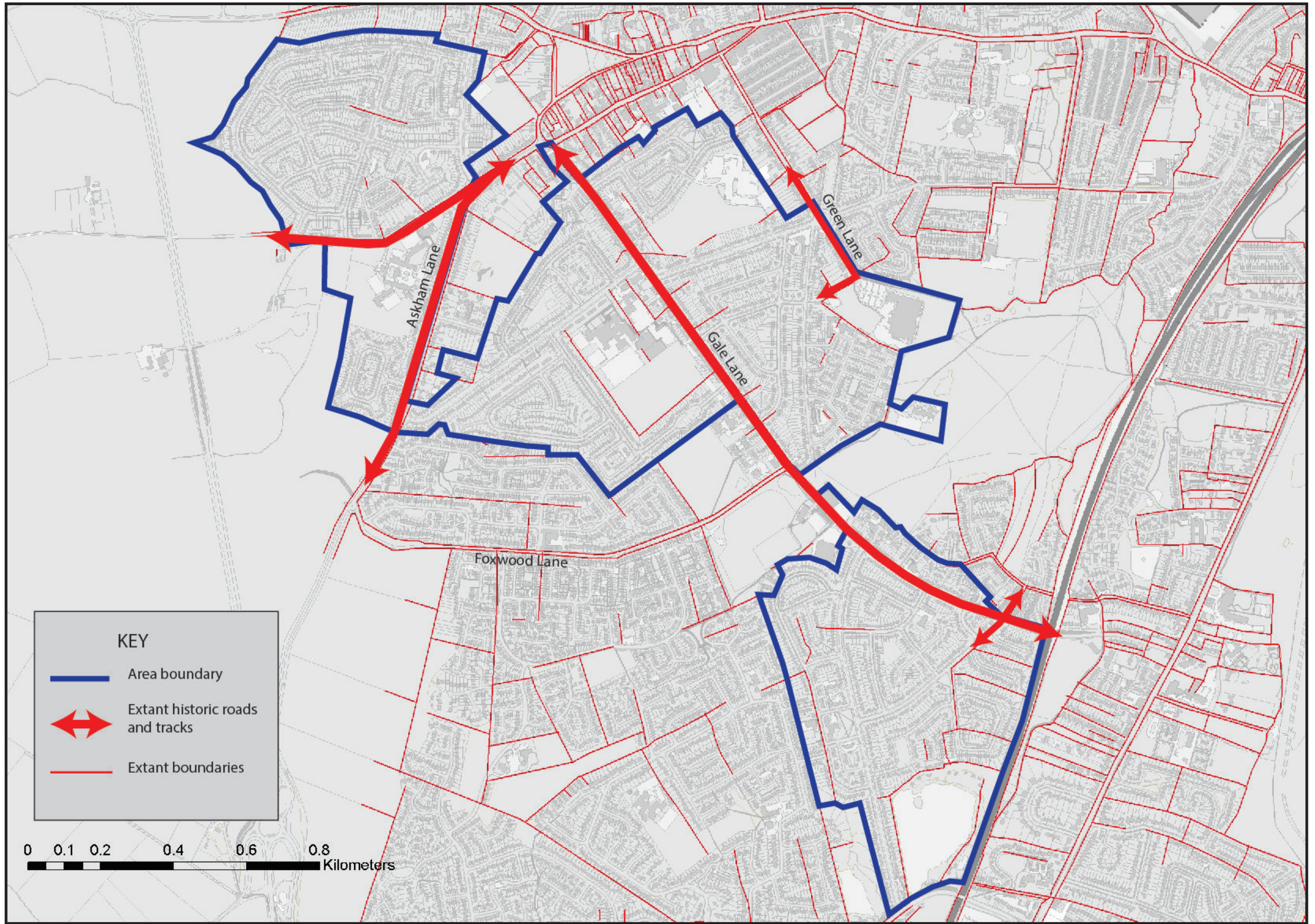


Archaeology and heritage assets





Extant surviving boundaries, roads and tracks as depicted on the 1852 First Edition Ordnance Survey plan





*Figure ground map showing the relationship between open space (black) and the built environment*





**Researched and written by:** Claire MacRae

**Photographs:** Claire MacRae except where indicated

**Graphics:** Bob Sydes and Claire MacRae

**Edited by:** Bob Sydes

**Funded by:** English Heritage

**Issued:** November 2013

© **City of York Council 2013**

