Hussey Tower is part of what was originally a much larger complex of buildings that made up a late medieval manor house. This computer-generated image shows what it may have looked like.

There would have been a series of other buildings as well as Hussey Tower itself, all arranged around and facing into a courtyard. Beyond the courtyard there would have been gardens and grounds, and a gatehouse facing towards the west.

The ground floor chamber was a service room, and the upper rooms were the most private and high status rooms. The most important, and most private of these would have been on the top floor. The upper rooms were reached by a spiral staircase that still survives today within the octagonal turret at the north-east corner. The staircase is particularly fine. It is made entirely of brick, with the stairs radiating off a central newel, and with a moulded brick handrail which runs the full height of the staircase.

Hussey Tower was built in about 1450 - 1460 by Richard Benyngton who was a wealthy and prominent Lincolnshire man during the mid 15th century. He knew Ralph Lord Cromwell who built Tattenhall Castle and it is thought that he deliberately built Hussey Tower in the same style. Richard Benyngton died in about 1475.

Hussey Tower takes its name from Sir John Hussey who owned the house after Benyngton's death. Sir John lived from 1465 – 1537 and was a privileged member of society. He came from a wealthy family and was an important member of the courts of both Henry VII and Henry VIII. He was given influential positions, land and money that made him a very powerful man.

Sir John owned Hussey Tower for about 60 years. In 1537 he fell out of favour with King Henry VIII at the time of Henry's break with Rome and the Dissolution of the monasteries. Henry blamed Sir John for not acting forcefully enough to quell the Lincolnshire Rising, the rebellion that took place against the changes being made. He was found guilty of treason and executed, and his lands and property were confiscated. The ownership of Hussey Tower subsequently passed to Boston Corporation. Boston Borough Council still owns the tower to this day. It is managed on their behalf by Heritage Lincolnshire.

The tower is built of brick and is three storeys tall. At the time that it was built brick was an expensive and prestigious material that only the wealthiest people could afford to use. The bricks are laid mainly in a pattern known as English Bond, with alternate courses of headers (short sides) and stretchers (long sides). On the external north wall there is a diamond-shaped pattern of darker bricks (deeper pattern). The other buildings were probably mostly timber framed. No trace of them survive today. They would have included a great hall, kitchens and service building, and lodgings for the household and visitors. After the manor house passed to Boston Corporation most of its buildings were gradually demolished; the building materials probably most probably being reused elsewhere. Only Hussey Tower remained. It had a number of other uses, including as a sailmaker's workshop, but we know from historic engravings that it was already a ruin in the 18th century.

The external east wall of the tower (the wall with the entrance door in it) still has evidence of an adjoining building having been attached. An inverted V shape high up on the wall shows where a pitched roof once joined. There is a blocked doorway that connected the first floor tower room with the upper floor room of the attached building. There are also two stone corbels which once supported the upstairs floor of this building.

The tower contained the high-status private rooms of the Lord of the manor (Richard Benyngton and afterwards John Hussey). The ground floor room, which had a vaulted brick ceiling, was a service room, and there were two private chambers on the floors above. The most important, and most private of these would have been on the top floor.

The brick staircase with ornate brick handrail survives today. The staircase is particularly fine. It is made entirely of brick, with the stairs radiating off a central newel, and with a moulded brick handrail which runs the full height of the staircase.

During the medieval period, especially in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, Boston was an important and wealthy sea port. Wool from the religious houses and private estates of Lincolnshire and the East Midlands was the major export, and luxury goods were imported from Europe and Scandinavia. Many European merchants lived and worked in the town, and its building markets and fairs attracted people from all over the country.

But this prosperity did not last. In the 16th century the town declined with the demise of the wool trade and the silting up of the river, but the effect of its medieval wealth and importance did not disappear altogether. This trail explores the evidence that can still be seen in the town today.
8. Green Man stone fragment
Set in the brickwork above the doorway of this building is a carved ‘Green Man’ face: a nature’s face, mouth open, as if speaking to you. This has been carved from oak by an artisan who is himself now old, so the carving is probably modern. The carving is a reminder of the forest fertility of the area. The building now is a furniture shop. The door is a reproduction of the original one. The Green Man figure is a pagan symbol eaten away by the Christian church, and today has pagan associations. It is more common in the north of England.

9. Mary’s Guildhall
Built for the wealthy religious guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Guildhall dates from the late 14th century. It is one of the most important buildings in the market square and was used by the guild to hold meetings and host events. It is thought to have been designed to impress! From the front gates of the building you can see how long and wide the building is and how far back from the street it extends. Carrying on down Petticoat Lane towards the market place.

10. St Mary’s Guildhall
Across the road in South Square. The guildhall was designed by William Fydell to make way for the current building, which was used as a grammar school until 1848. The present building dates from 1903 and is now the home of Boston College.

11. Burgage plots
Boston’s brick-paved streets and alleys were lined with shops and workshops. The boundaries were defined by tall hedges or buildings, the width of which depended on the size of the shop. The hedges or buildings would be 12–15ft wide, with the shop itself being 10–12ft wide. Each shop would have an alley or road leading to a larger square or open space, where the goods were displayed for sale. The shops were usually occupied by artisans or tradesmen, who would live above their shops. The burgage plots were arranged in a grid pattern, with each plot containing a house, a shop, and a cellar or basement. The plots were typically divided into smaller units, with each unit containing a single house or shop.

12. Medieval grammar school
A medieval grammar school was located on the site of the building immediately behind St Mary’s Guildhall. It was completed in the early 14th century by William Fydell to make way for the current building, which was used as a grammar school until 1848. The present building dates from 1903 and is now the home of Boston College.

13. An Augustinian friary is thought to have been located at Skiberke Road where the Broad Bridge is now. The exact site is not certain.

14. You can turn into Skiberke Road and cross over the southern end of the road to see the remains of the ancient Skiberke Bridge, although it is now in a bad state of repair.

15. Hussey Tower
You have now arrived at one of Boston’s most important surviving medieval buildings. Hussey Tower formed part of an extensive manor house and was home to one of the town’s wealthiest and most influential families. Turn to the right to discover more about the fascinating building and its owner. When you have finished exploring Hussey Tower, return to the Skiberke Road marketplace. Alternatively, you can explore the area and visit the nearby Skiberke Bridge.

16. St John’s church
This church is one of the oldest in the town, dating back to the early 13th century and is thought to have been designed by the master mason of the Blackfriars friary that stood nearby. You may be able to spot more architectural fragments from the friary in other buildings near here.