

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley

Archaeological Assessment



2003

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Ellesmere Port

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Environmental Planning
Cheshire County Council
Backford Hall
Backford
Chester
CH1 6PZ

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ALDERLEY EDGE AND NETHER ALDERLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Jo Clark

1. SUMMARY

During the medieval period, both the manor of Nether Alderley and the township of Chorley comprised small, dispersed settlement. This is still true of Nether Alderley today. However, in the mid-19th century, Chorley became a popular and desirable location to live and its expansion, prompted by the arrival of the railway, caused its name to be changed to Alderley Edge, so as to avoid confusion with Chorley in Lancashire (Carlon 1979, 11).

The close proximity and shared histories of Nether Alderley and Alderley Edge has meant that the most effective method of assessment is to consider both settlements in one report.

1.1 Topography and Geology

Nether Alderley and Alderley Edge are located in north-eastern Cheshire. Nether Alderley is 4km south of Wilmslow and 8km north-west of Macclesfield, and is situated on a gentle west facing slope at c91m AOD. The centre of Alderley Edge, 2km to the north of Nether Alderley, also lies c91m AOD. The scarp of Alderley Edge is to the east of its namesake and north-east of Nether Alderley and has a maximum height of 182m AOD. To the west of both townships is the flat Cheshire Plain. To differentiate between Alderley Edge settlement and Alderley Edge scarp, the term the 'Edge' shall be used to define the sandstone outcrop.

Both Nether Alderley and Alderley Edge have a drift geology of boulder clay. The Edge comprises keuper sandstone with conglomerates at its base, which are banded with upper mottled sandstone. There are also a number of mineral veins running through the Edge. To the east of Alderley Edge is an alluvium spread (British Geological Survey 1962).

Nether Alderley's soils are argillic brown earths, which are suited to pasture and graded class 3. The soils surrounding Alderley Edge are typical stagnogleys, ideal for grassland and also graded class 3 (Furness 1978, 73).

Both settlements are located on the A34. Mobberley Brook runs to the north of Alderley Edge and Pedley Brook runs west of Nether Alderley. There are a number of ponds in the area, particularly in Alderley Park, where there are a variety of functional and decorative ponds and lakes.

1.2 Administrative Unit

Nether Alderley township in the Parish of Nether Alderley, formerly lay in the Parish of Alderley. This was an ancient parochial Chapelry of Prestbury that had become

independent by 1328 (Ormerod 1882,565,568). Chorley was a township in Wilmslow Parish, later part of the newly created Parish of Alderley Edge. Both Nether Alderley and Alderley Edge lay in Macclesfield Hundred and Macclesfield Deanery (Dunn 1987, 34).

1.3 Place Name

The place-name Alderley, which appears in a variety of forms: *Aldredelie* (1086), *Aldredis* (1208), *Aldeldeleg* (1286), indicates that the name originated from *Aldred's Clearing*, i.e. *Aldred* and *leah*. The *Nether* pre-fix suggests that this was the inferior of the two settlements of Nether and Over Alderley (Dodgson, 1970, 94-5).

Chorley or *Chorlegh* suggests a 'peasants clearing' from *ceorl* and *leah*. Alderley Edge township was named after the large sandstone outcrop that stands to the east of the settlement (Dodgson, 1970, 225).

2. SOURCES

2.1 Historical

Little attention has been paid to Nether Alderley beyond a short pamphlet written by the National Trust about the restoration of the Water Mill (Boucher, 1980). The main historical sources are therefore Earwaker's *East Cheshire Past and Present* (1880) and Ormerod's Cheshire history (1882). Also, useful information about mining on Alderley Edge is provided by Carlon *The Alderley Edge Mines* (1979).

The Alderley Edge Landscape Project was set up in 1996 under the auspices of The Manchester Museum and the National Trust. This is a multi disciplinary project, which includes archaeological fieldwork and a survey of historic buildings and it has generated a large amount of information held in gazetteer format. The focus of the study is the Edge itself, while the urban area is treated as part of the projects' hinterland. The full report is awaited.

Detailed documents for Chorley and Nether Alderley are available in the County Record Office, for example the De Trafford family papers (CRO DTT), but unfortunately these are beyond the remit of the present assessment.

2.2 Cartographic

On Saxton's County map of 1577, both Chorley and Alderley are depicted. On Speed's County map of 1610 both Chorley and Over Alderley are identified but Nether Alderley is not. The earliest map to show a schematic plan of the road pattern is Burdett's map of Cheshire (1777), and there is also an estate map of Nether Alderley dated 1787. Detailed information is provided by the tithe maps of Chorley (1841) and Nether Alderley (1842) and the Ordnance Survey (OS) 6": 1 mile map surveyed 1871-2.

2.3 Archaeological

Before this assessment there were thirteen sites recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) in the settled area of Alderley Edge and twenty eight in the settled area of Nether Alderley. Also, there were 44 sites recorded on the Edge itself. All of these sites are identified in Figure 1 and where sites and finds have been identified from the CSMR the relevant reference is provided throughout this report. This survey has added a further eleven records to the CSMR.

Archaeological excavation has tended to concentrate upon the Edge itself. The only archaeological work known to have taken place in the study area is an evaluation and watching brief at the Old Hall, Nether Alderley, carried out in 1994 and 1995 respectively by Earthworks Archaeological Services (CSMR 1404/2/1). This work revealed a burnt layer that is possibly associated with the fire that destroyed the house in 1779, along with 17th and 18th century features, including a brick lined culvert and well (Earthworks, 1994 and 1995).

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY: (Figure 1)

3.1 Prehistoric

There are no recorded prehistoric sites or findspots in the township of Alderley Edge, while at Nether Alderley just one find is known. This prehistoric sandstone anvil stone was discovered in 1933 in the school grounds to the north of the Old Hall (CSMR 1403).

However, in the immediately surrounding area, the sandstone outcrop of Alderley Edge has been the focus of prehistoric activity since at least the Mesolithic period. A number of flint scatters have been identified, for example, Castle Rock Field, which was partially excavated in 1894-1905 revealed blades, scrapers, cores, flakes and borers. 19th century copper mining on the Edge revealed traces of Bronze Age workings, with the discovery of hammer stones in their spoil heaps, for example, at Engine Vein and Windmill Wood (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 78). It was noted by Dr Sainter of Macclesfield in 1878, that “..some hammers were lying upon the sand and gravel, 1-2 feet below the surface....others have been left in some old diggings of the copper ore, from 12-16 feet in depth, along with an old, very roughly used oaken shovel” (Roeder and Graves, 1905, 17-30). The Bronze Age wooden shovel has been confirmed by radiocarbon dating to have a calibrated date range of 1888-1677 BC. Also, a Bronze Age sword was discovered on the Edge in 1871 (CSMR 1440/0/13).

Other prehistoric sites in the immediately surrounding area include a possible Bronze Age barrow at Sodger’s Hump, which is a round earthen mound on a natural knoll south of Nether Alderley (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 82; CSMR 1337); and south-east of Alderley Park, due west of Birtles Hall is a scheduled barrow (SAM 22577, CSMR 1364/1) with two other possible barrows in the immediate vicinity of this (CSMR 1364 2/3).

3.2 Roman

There are just two records in the CSMR that refer to the Roman period, both of which are located on the Edge. The first refers to a hoard of 533 4th century Roman

coins that was discovered by the Derbyshire Caving Club in a disused mine shaft in 1995. This confirms that the Edge was mined during the Romano-British period and it has been suggested that Roman copper working at Wilderspool possibly used copper ore from Alderley Edge (Crosby 1996, 25). The second record is that of four 4th century coins, which are alleged to have been found in a pot hole on the Edge (CSMR 1441).

Another reference to potential Roman activity is that of an “..old road (marked on the Ordnance Survey Map ‘Street Lane’) [which] runs from Hanford to the south, through Wilmslow and Alderley ...[and]...by its irregular course the road seems to have been a British one, utilised by the Romans, though it was never a way of very much importance” (Watkin 1886, 79).

3.3 Early Medieval

A small settlement is recorded at Nether Alderley in the Domesday Survey. However, there is no reference to Chorley at Domesday and it has been suggested that this small township was included as part of Earl Hugh’s demesne manor of Adlington (Cheshire County Council, Libraries and Archives, 1993b).

The Domesday Survey records that:

The same Bigot holds Aldredelie [Nether Alderley in Alderley]. Godwin held it as a free man. There is 1 hide that pays geld. The land is for 8 ploughs. In demesne is 1 [plough] with 2 oxmen, and 3 villeins and 1 radman with 1 plough. There [is] 1 acre of meadow. Wood 1 ½ leagues long and 1 league wide and 2 hays there. T.R.E. it was worth 20s., now 10s. He found it waste.

The same earl holds EDULVINTUNE [Adlington in Prestbury]. Edwin held it. There are 2 hides that pay geld. The land is for 10 ploughs. There [are] 2 radmen and 6 villeins and 3 bordars with 3 ploughs. There [are] 21 acres of meadow. Wood 11 leagues long and 2 wide, and there [are] 7 hays and 4 eyries of hawks. T.R.E. it was worth £8, now 20s. He found it waste.

(Harris and Thacker, 1987, 347, 359)

Adlington, which lies 8 km north east of Alderley Edge, was a substantial estate centre in the early medieval period but vastly reduced in value by 1086. It had presumably suffered from William’s harrying of the north, as had the much smaller settlement of Nether Alderley.

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 The Manor

From Domesday to c 1346 the manor of Nether Alderley descended as a component part of Aldford fee through the families of Bigot, Aldford and Arderne. The manor was sold to William Stanley who was later beheaded in the reign of Henry VII, his estate reverting to the crown. Henry VIII then granted the manor to Urian Brereton and then to Edmund Pekham c 1525. It was sold to Sir Edward Fitton and then to

Sir Robert Tatton, from whom it was sold to Sir Thomas Stanley c 1601(Ormerod 1882, 567).

Chorley is first mentioned in a charter dated c 1280 when Edmund Fitton, Lord of Bolyn granted lands in the township to Robert de Dounes (Earwaker 1880, 159). In a charter dated 1348 there is mention of Henry de Chorlegh whose family held lands in the township, from which their surname was derived. A series of charters preserved in the collection of Sir Humphrey de Trafford shows how the township passed from the Chorleghs to the Honfords c 1420, and then onto the Davenports c 1523 (ibid). Also, in a deed of 1509, the 'manor' of Chorley is referred to "...but it does not appear that any manorial rights ever existed or were ever exercised" (ibid,162).

3.4.2 Settlement

Very little is known about the location and extent of medieval settlement in the two townships. However, details do survive of the more prestigious abodes. For example, Monk's Heath Hall (Listed Grade II) located at the cross roads to the south of Alderley Park, Nether Alderley, formed part of the estate of the Abbey of Dieulacres. Fernhill (Listed Grade II), which lies just east of Park House was also a possession of the abbey. It was sold in c.1560 to Thomas Stanley of Alderley and so became part of the Stanley Estate (Earwaker 1880, 612). Chorley Hall, in west Alderley Edge, which is listed Grade I, was built c 1330 by the de Chorley family. It is moated and has three square fishponds (CSMR 1394/1/1; SAM 13497).

Alderley Hall (later known as the Old Hall) "...the residence of the Stanleys but situated in Nether Alderley township, is stated on the tombstone of Sir Thomas Stanley, who died in 1591, to have been rebuilt by him, thus showing that there was a still earlier house on its site" (Earwaker 1880, 601). There is no other evidence available to suggest whether there was or was not a medieval forerunner of the Old Hall. The house was surrounded by a moat which was formed in the late 16th century, by adding two arms to the mill pond of the medieval corn mill, which lies to the west (CSMR 1404/2/2).

A deer park had been established at Nether Alderley by 1423 (Harrison, 1902, 26). The earliest available map to indicate the approximate extent of this park is Burdett's map of 1777. No other details about the park are known.

3.4.3 Economy

The economies of both Chorley and Nether Alderley were dominated by farming. It is unclear whether there was any medieval mining on the Edge, with no reliable evidence available until 1693-6 when small workings were documented (Crosby 1996, 67). It has been suggested that an old bloomery located east of Welsh Row, towards Bradford House (CSMR 1454), which was described by Roeder and Graves in 1905 as a "...deposit being some thing like three feet in depth", is potentially a site of medieval iron production (LUAU 1998, 36).

A market charter was granted at Nether Alderley to Wakelyn de Arderne in 1254, along with a three day fair. The market was held on Saturdays, while the fair was

held on the vigil and following two days of the feast of St Laurence (10 August) (Bagshaw 1850, 165; Letters 2002). The location of the market and its success is not known. Nether Alderley corn mill dates back to 1391 (Bott, 1983, 64). However, it has been suggested (albeit unsubstantiated and unsourced) that there was a Saxon predecessor (North West Civic Trust 1983, 63). The fabric of the present structure dates to the 16th century, with the back wall of the mill also acting as the dam wall of the mill pond. The mill pond was adapted to form the moat surrounding the 16th century Old Hall (Boucher 1980,8).

Data for Cheshire towns is rare because in the medieval period the shire was exempt from national taxation, having its own taxation system, the Mize. In the Cheshire mize of 1405, Chorley was assessed at 20s 0d and Nether Alderley was assessed at 27s 0d. The largest assessment in Macclesfield Hundred was for Cheadle (£4) (Booth 1985, 21).

3.4.4 Religion

There was no ecclesiastical provision in Chorley until 1852. The parish church of St Mary at Nether Alderley was formerly called St Lawrence's, the name changed some time during the medieval period (Richards 1973). Little of the medieval fabric remains, although it has a 14th century core and a 16th century tower. It underwent renovations in the 17th and 18th centuries, the chancel was rebuilt by Lord Stanley in the mid-19th century and the nave was restored in 1878 (Ormerod 1882, 570).

A 14th century font was found buried in the churchyard c 1830, which was presumably an attempt in the mid-17th century to protect it from destruction. A medieval cross is located in the churchyard, of which just the stump remains. It has been reused as the base of a sundial (CSMR 1404/1/2, SAM 30363). There is also a medieval cross at the crossroads to the north of Nether Alderley, which it has been suggested is in its original position and predates the construction of the church (Richards 1973; CSMR 1407/0/1 and SAM 25708).

Also of interest is the curvilinear shape of the churchyard as identified on early maps, which may imply that it had an Anglo Saxon predecessor (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 286). However, it has also been suggested that this distinctive churchyard shape was the creation of an 18th century vicar and therefore there was no early medieval predecessor (King, pers comm.). A similar illusion lies in the field boundaries surrounding the church. According to the modern Ordnance Survey map, fossilised in the field boundaries there appears to be a sub-circular enclosure surrounding the area of the church. However, this too appears to be an 18th century or later construction, since on the estate map of 1787 no such field pattern exists.

3.4.5 The Surrounding Landscape

There are a number of medieval sites in the surrounding area, including two possible Holy Wells to the east of Alderley Edge (CSMR 1445/0/1 and CSMR 1445/0/2), the site of the 14th century Sandlebridge Mill, 3km south-east of Alderley Edge (CSMR 1456/1) and the possible deserted village of Over Alderley located to the south of Nether Alderley (CSMR 1661). Also of interest is a section of the Alderley parish

boundary in south Alderley Edge, which the Alderley Edge Landscape Project suggests may date back to 1328.

3.5 Post Medieval

3.5.1 The Manor

The Davenport estates, including Chorley Hall, were sold in the first instance to Francis Downes c 1630s and shortly after to John Hobson. By 1640 Sir Thomas Stanley of Alderley was the owner of the estates (Earwaker 1880, 164). Meanwhile, the principal landowner in Alderley Edge township by the late 19th century was Sir Humphrey de Trafford and it is upon his estate that the numerous villas, dwellings and a considerable hotel were erected (Ormerod 1882, 602).

3.5.2 Settlement

Little is recorded about the nature and extent of settlement at Chorley in the post medieval period, however one reference provides a description of the township before the arrival of the railway. At Alderley Edge “..sixty years or so before the railway was cut. There were about three cottages between what is now the station and the Trafford Arms and about two farm houses. There was another farmhouse on the opposite side of the road. These were all antiquated structures and covered with thatch.” (Notes and Queries, 1896, I, 12).

Nether Alderley was unaffected by the developments that were occurring to the north at Alderley Edge. There was no population explosion nor an increase in the local services, and the dispersed medieval settlement pattern largely persisted. There are, however, a small number of identical Stanley Estate farmhouses which were constructed in the mid-18th century and are Listed Grade II - for example, Walton Farmhouse on Welsh Row, Dean Green Farmhouse, Topps Farmhouse and Gatley Green Farmhouse (DoE, 1987, 80) and cottages constructed on Welsh Row reputedly belonged to 18th century copper miners, including Welsh miners who gave their name to the street (North-West Civic Trust, 1983, 163).

Alderley Hall was destroyed by a fire in 1779, which prompted the Stanleys to relocate to Park House, on the southern edge of Alderley Park (Ormerod 1882, 567). Subsequently the house and grounds have been extended and improved. For example, Bagshaw (1850, 166) noted that the Hall was surrounded by a park of 200 acres yet by 1892 the park had increased to an area of 300 acres (Kelly's, 1892, 19). Amongst the features of the park was a square walled deer house with corner towers and crenellations, probably dating to the 18th century, and demolished in the 20th century (CSMR 1404/5/1).

A boys school was built in the grounds of the churchyard of Nether Alderley by Reverend Hugh Shaw in 1628 and extended in 1817 (Ormerod 1882, 573). Just to the north of Nether Alderley, Lady Stanley's school for girls and infants was erected in 1822 and enlarged in 1863 (Kelly's 1892, 19). St Philip's mixed school at Alderley Edge was built in 1855. The British school at Lindow Common was built in 1860 and the Wesleyan Methodist School was built in 1877 (ibid).

3.5.3 Economy

The first documentary evidence of mines on Alderley Edge dates to 1693-6 (Crosby 1996, 67). Copper ores were mined between 1758-68 and smelted in Macclesfield and Congleton, then worked again after 1791 and smelted in Havannah and Bosley from about 1808 (Sylvester, 1971, 82). The mining heyday was between 1857 and 1877, when 250,000 tons of ore was extracted from the Edge. By the late 19th-century, foreign competition had put an end to mining ventures on Alderley Edge and as the area had become a desirable place to live such activities were no longer socially acceptable (Crosby 1996, 108).

In 1850, 25 farmers were listed in Nether Alderley, along with two inns and taverns, three shopkeepers, two butchers, one tailor, one corn miller and one saddler (Bagshaw 1850, 167). At Chorley in 1850, fourteen farmers are listed in Bagshaw's Directory along with three blacksmiths, three boot and shoe makers and five shopkeepers (Bagshaw 1850, 342).

The corn mill at Nether Alderley continued to be worked until 1939 when Lord Stanley was forced to sell it to meet the cost of death duties. In the 1950s the National Trust bought the site and its restoration commenced (Boucher 1980,11).

3.5.4 Religion

There was no ecclesiastical provision at Chorley until 1852 when St Philip's Church was built on Wilmslow Road (Ormerod 1882,602). In 1877, out of the parish of St Philip the church at Lindow was erected, and in 1863 the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was constructed (Kelly's, 1892, 19).

At Nether Alderley the parish church of St Mary continued to serve the local community. A date stone in the churchyard dates its expansion southwards to 1872.

3.5.5 Population

Population in 1664 has been estimated from the Hearth Tax returns as 160 for Chorley and 320 for Nether Alderley (Macgregor, 1992, 52). While Nether Alderley was the ninth largest settlement in Macclesfield Hundred, Chorley was the joint ninth smallest (MacGregor, 1992, 52). From 1801-1971 population data is available from the census returns printed in the Victoria County History (Harris, 1979, 202-240); and for 1981 and 1991 census data has been reproduced under Class Licence Number C01W0000125 with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO.

	Nether Alderley	Alderley Edge/Chorley
1801	483	391
1811	541	426
1821	668	478
1831	587	474
1841	679	561
1851	606	803
1861	617	1760
1871	560	1937

1881	573	1961
1891	517	2141
1901	522	2856
1911	614	3143
1921	704	3088
1931	757	3145
1951	529	3689
1961	608	3621
1971	659	4470
1981	553	4262
1991	626	4482

As noted on the census notes for Nether Alderley in 1841, the temporary increase of population was the result of the incoming labourers and their families who were working on the railway. By 1851 the population decrease is accounted for by their removal (Harris, 1979, 241). Meanwhile, the figures clearly demonstrate the rapid expansion of Alderley Edge, from 1841 onwards.

3.5.6 Transport and Communications

The road passing south from Wilmslow, through Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley and on to Monks Heath, was turnpiked in 1752 (Harrison, 1886). However, the course of this road was realigned some time before 1786, passing west of the original alignment so as to increase the area of Alderley Park and moving the road away from the side of Park House. The old road continued to be used as a route through the Park but has since been substantially downgraded.

The railway from Stockport to Crewe, which was a branchline of the Manchester and Birmingham Railway, opened in 1842 (Greville, 1954, 137). It ran through the settlement of Alderley Edge and just west of Nether Alderley, and the Alderley and Chorley station was constructed on London Road. So at a distance of 14 miles from Manchester, Alderley Edge became home to a number of Manchester merchants and professionals who had been encouraged to relocate by the offer of free rail travel to the owners of houses worth £50 and more per annum. The first villa was built in 1845 and by 1850 thirty 'handsome residences' had been erected (Bagshaw 1850, 342).

3.5.7 The Surrounding Landscape

Within the surrounding area there are a large number of 16th and 17th century cottages and farmhouses - for example, Preston Cottage, a 16th century timber framed building, 0.8km northwest of Alderley Edge town centre (Grade II; CSMR 1395); the 16th century Hayman's House, 1.5km east of Alderley Edge town centre (Grade II*; CSMR1458:); and the 17th century Heawood Hall, 1.5km east of Nether Alderley (Grade II; CSMR1409/1). Also included in the CSMR is the post medieval Saddlebole copper smelting hearth 1.5km east of Alderley Edge (CSMR 1446/1).

4. PLAN COMPONENTS : (Figures 2 – 3)

The town has been divided into 13 components (prefixed by **COM**). These have been tentatively sub-divided by period, although there is a need for a great deal of further work to define the date of these plan components more closely. Many would have spanned more than one period but are discussed under their earliest likely date of occurrence. In some cases tightly defined plan components can be identified, in others only a general area can be delineated and these should be treated as a model against which future evidence should be tested.

Although the Domesday survey includes the early medieval settlement of Nether Alderley, the location and extent of this is unknown and consequently the plan components commence with a projected plan of the medieval period. Burdett has been used to infer the potential location of late medieval settlement and the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map depicts the extent of settlement c 1875.

MEDIEVAL ALDERLEY EDGE & NETHER ALDERLEY c 1066 – c 1540 (Figure 2)

- COM 1** - ?Settlement, Chorley
- COM 2** - ?Settlement, Nether Alderley Cross Roads
- COM 3** - ?Settlement, Nether Alderley
- COM 4** - St Mary's Church
- COM 5** - Chorley Hall
- COM 6** - ?Deer Park
- COM 7** - Corn Mill

POST-MEDIEVAL ALDERLEY EDGE & NETHER ALDERLEY c 1871-2 (Figure 2)

- COM 8** - Settlement Nether Alderley
- COM 9** - Settlement Alderley Edge
- COM 10** - Old Hall
- COM 11** - Park House
- COM 12** - Manchester and Birmingham Railway
- COM 13** - Alderley Park

MODERN ALDERLEY EDGE & NETHER ALDERLEY c 2000 (Figure 3)

- COM 14** - Settlement

4.1 Medieval Settlement (Figure 2)

COMs 1, 2 and 3 are intended to provide an approximate location for possible medieval settlement in Nether Alderley and Chorley, and should be treated as a model, to be tested as new evidence is revealed. The location for this settlement has been partially derived from Burdett's map of 1777 and from topographical inference. Burdett's map is accepted as a schematic interpretation of the nature and extent of settlement in the 18th century and considering the small scale nature of settlement, it is unlikely to have undergone great change since the late medieval period. Components are not intended to indicate the full extent of medieval settlement, which is likely to have consisted predominantly of dispersed farmsteads.

COM 1 identifies the possible location of tenements in Chorley, clustered in the vicinity of the nodal point in the road network and along London Road. The true extent of this component remains to be tested against future evidence. **COM 2** identifies the possible location of tenements at Alderley Cross. Here Burdett depicts four houses on the western side of the crossroads but by 1842 when the tithe map was produced this had decreased to just one. It may be that during the medieval period this area was even more populated than Burdett suggests, with buildings also to the east of the crossroads. This is also the location of a medieval cross. **COM 3** depicts the possible location of medieval tenements surrounding the church of St Mary. Again, the validity of this will have to be tested against future evidence.

Despite the granting of the late 13th century market charter, the township of Nether Alderley failed to develop a commercial centre. However, the manor contained a number of components that suggest it was of some importance. The 14th century church of St Mary (**COM 4**), located close to the 14th century corn mill (**COM 7**) and the 15th century deer park (**COM 6**) that has been approximately outlined, are all features that might suggest the nearby location of a manor house. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the Old Hall (**COM 10**), which was built in the early to mid 16th century, had a predecessor. Sir Thomas Stanley may have rebuilt the Old Hall but this does not mean that he necessarily rebuilt a manorial hall. There is also no evidence to suggest that Nether Alderley was home to the lord of the manor until the Stanleys in the post medieval period. Meanwhile, Chorley Hall (**COM 5**), which lies c 2km to the north, was a sub-manor built by the Chorley family and passed down through the local landowners from the 14th century onwards.

4.2 Post Medieval (Figure 2)

As inferred from Burdett's map of 1777, it is likely that post medieval Nether Alderley and Chorley were both small scale settlements consisting of a handful of cottages and farmsteads scattered throughout the area, a pattern that is likely to have persisted since the medieval period. For Nether Alderley, this pattern was largely unchanged c 1871, although small increases were evident, for example along Artists Lane and Welsh Row (**COM 8**). Meanwhile, Chorley, or Alderley Edge as it became known, had expanded beyond recognition by 1871 (**COM 9**). This expansion was stimulated by the arrival of the Manchester and Birmingham Railway in the mid-19th century (**COM 12**). Settlement was concentrated to the east of the railway, and in particular large houses were constructed east along the Edge.

Alderley Hall (**COM 10**) or Old Hall, as it became known, was destroyed in a fire in 1779, prompting the relocation of the Stanley family south to Park House (**COM 11**). Alderley Hall was built in the 16th century and it was surrounded by a moat constructed from the mill pond of the corn mill, which lies to the west. Using the tithe map and the OS First Edition, it is possible to trace part of the water system associated with the corn mill, which may have been developed when the medieval mill was constructed. The mill pond was fed via a number of ponds located in the Park (Radnor Mere etc.) and having passed through the mill, the water then flowed away west. Alderley Park (**COM 12**), which was probably enlarged when Park Hall was constructed, possibly includes the extent of the medieval deer park.

4.3 Modern Settlement (Figure 3)

Despite small scale expansion, for example along Congleton Road, Nether Alderley maintains a partially dispersed settlement pattern. The largest development that has occurred in the township is that of the Astra Zeneca research centre, which covers a large proportion of Alderley Park. In contrast to Nether Alderley, Alderley Edge has continued to expand in all directions. Housing estates have contributed to this growth, particularly to the west and northeast.

5 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Above-Ground Remains

There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the settlement areas. These are the churchyard cross at Nether Alderley (SAM 30363), Chorley Old Hall, moated site and fishponds (SAM 13497), and the cross located at Nether Alderley crossroads (SAM 25708).

There are twenty one Listed buildings in Alderley Edge and thirty six in Nether Alderley. All of the Listed buildings in Alderley Edge are Listed Grade II apart from St Philip's church (Grade II*) and Chorley Old Hall (Grade I). Amongst the Grade II Listed buildings are 17th century farmhouses and a number of mid-19th century buildings constructed as the town began to develop following the construction of the railway. For example, the Queen's Hotel was built in 1844 for the London and North West Railway Company. At Nether Alderley, St Mary's Church is Grade I while the Church Hall (formerly the school house), the mill and dam wall, Soss Moss Farmhouse and the Old Hall are all Listed Grade II*. A significant proportion of Grade II buildings include 17th century farmhouses and cottages - for example, the Eagle and Child on the Congleton Road which was built as a cottage, then used as a Inn, and is now a house. (Department of the Environment 1987).

At Nether Alderley, the environs of the church, mill and Old Hall are included in a designated Conservation Area. The Conservation Area at Alderley Edge covers the south-eastern area of the town. There is also a small Conservation Area in the northern area of the town, between the railway and Davey Lane.

5.2 Below-Ground Remains

Through the Alderley Edge Landscape Project, work has been predominantly concentrated upon the Edge. Excavation of mining works has proved fruitful e.g. the hoard of Roman coins discovered buried at the top of a shaft in the area of Engine Vein in 1995 (CSMR 2481). However, no archaeological work is known to have been carried out in the urban area of Alderley Edge, and the survival and quality of archaeological deposits in the town have not been assessed.

At Nether Alderley, archaeological work has been limited to an evaluation and watching brief at the Old Hall in 1994 and 1995, which demonstrated good survival of 18th and 19th century deposits associated with the Hall. However, the lack of archaeological work in the rest of the township means that survival and quality of deposits cannot be assessed.

6. PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

5.3 General

The study of Nether Alderley and Alderley Edge forms part of a national research priority to examine the origins and development of medieval small towns and rural markets (Priority H5; English Heritage 1997, 49). In addition, a landscape analysis of Alderley Edge might potentially contribute to the research priority to study late Bronze and Iron Age landscapes (Priority P7; English Heritage 1997, 47).

Work would fit into a number of national priorities, particularly the following processes of change:

- PC6 The late Saxon to medieval period
- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c1300-1700AD) (English Heritage 1997, 44-5)

6.2 Prehistoric

- Establish the extent of the activity in this area during the prehistoric period. Was this confined to the Edge or is there evidence in the wider landscape?

6.3 Roman

- Establish the extent of the activity in this area during the Romano-British period. Was there activity beyond the Edge?
- Establish whether Watkin's suggestion, that the road which runs from Wilmslow south through Nether Alderley is Roman or earlier, is correct.

6.4 Early Medieval

- Establish the location and extent of settlement at Nether Alderley and Chorley.
- Establish whether St Mary's had an Anglo-Saxon predecessor.

6.5 Medieval

- Establish the foundation date of St Mary's Church, examine its form and phases of building.
- Establish the precise location of settlement areas at Chorley and Nether Alderley and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish the construction date of the medieval corn mill at Nether Alderley.
- Establish whether the Old Hall, Nether Alderley had a medieval predecessor.
- Establish the foundation date and ownership of the deer park and examine its boundaries.
- Examine any evidence of trade and industry.

6.6 Post Medieval

- Establish precise location of settlement areas and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish the nature of buildings and activities on settlement plots.
- Examine evidence for trade and industry; establish its date and nature.
- Examine what remains of the formal gardens and parkland associated with Park House.

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8. ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley and the Surrounding Area

Figure 2: The Development of Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley

Figure 3: Modern Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley c 2000



Figure 1
Alderley Edge,
Nether Alderley
and the
Surrounding Area

Sites and Monuments

- Prehistoric
- Romano-British
- Early Medieval
- Medieval
- Post Medieval
- Modern

1:30000

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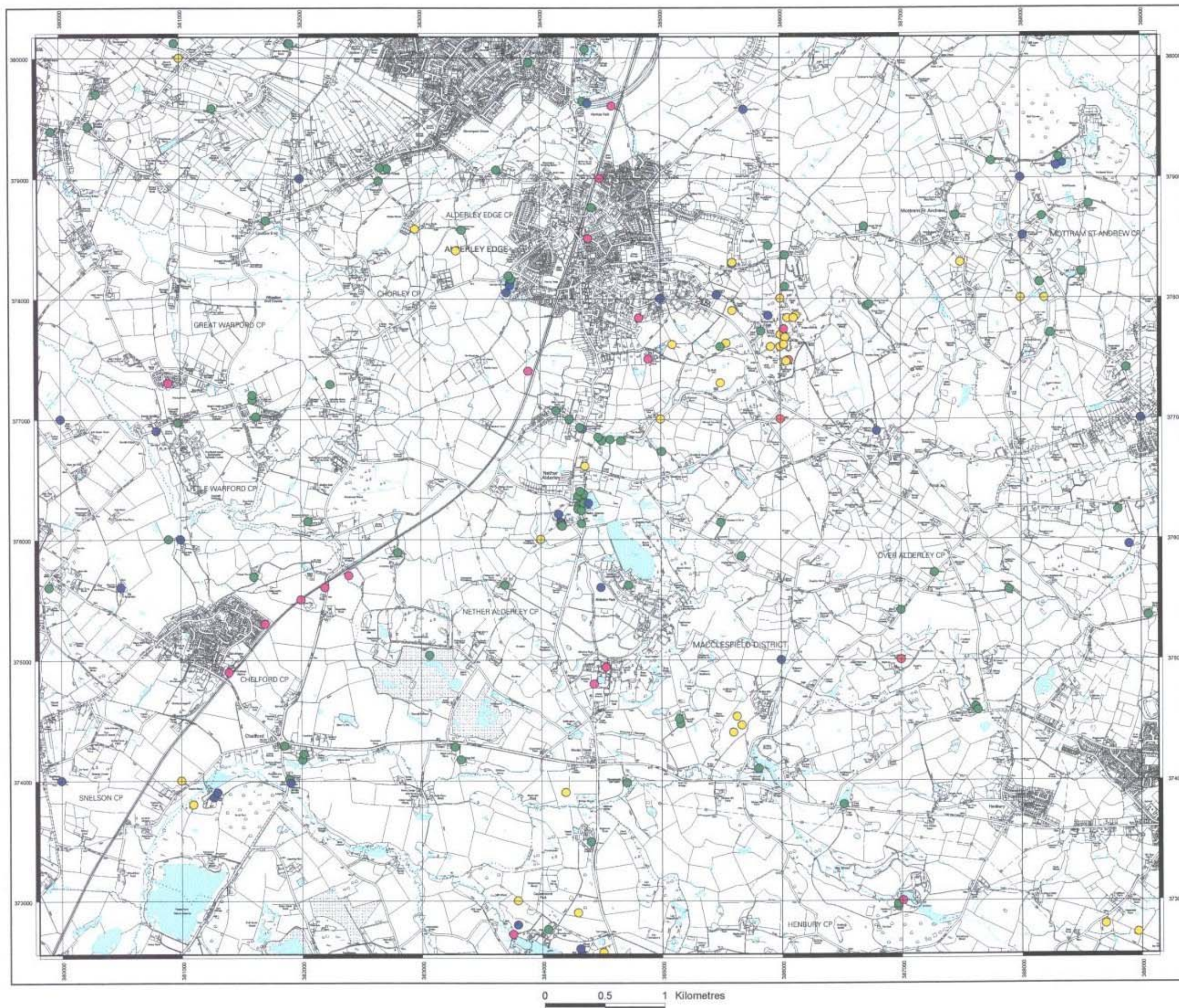
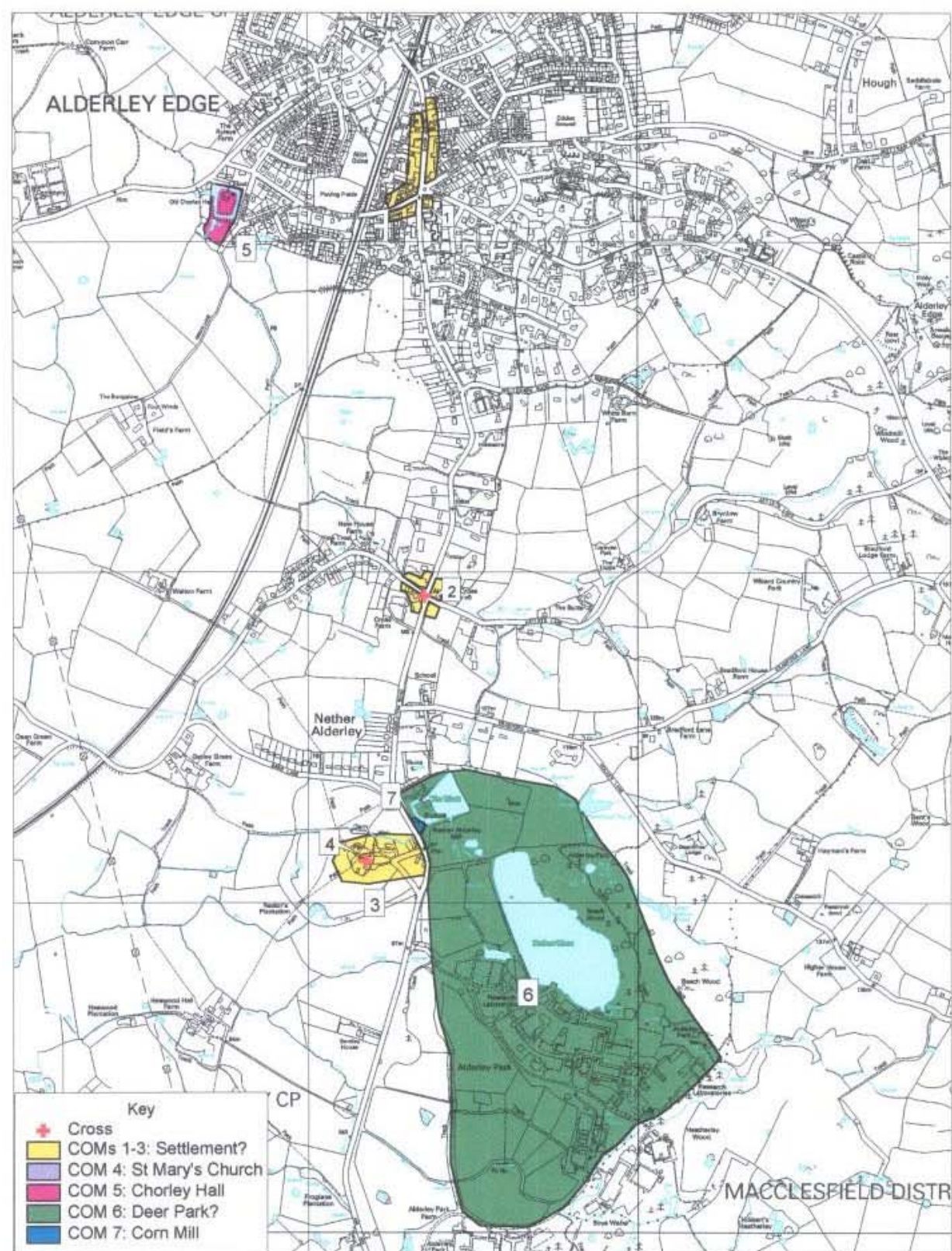


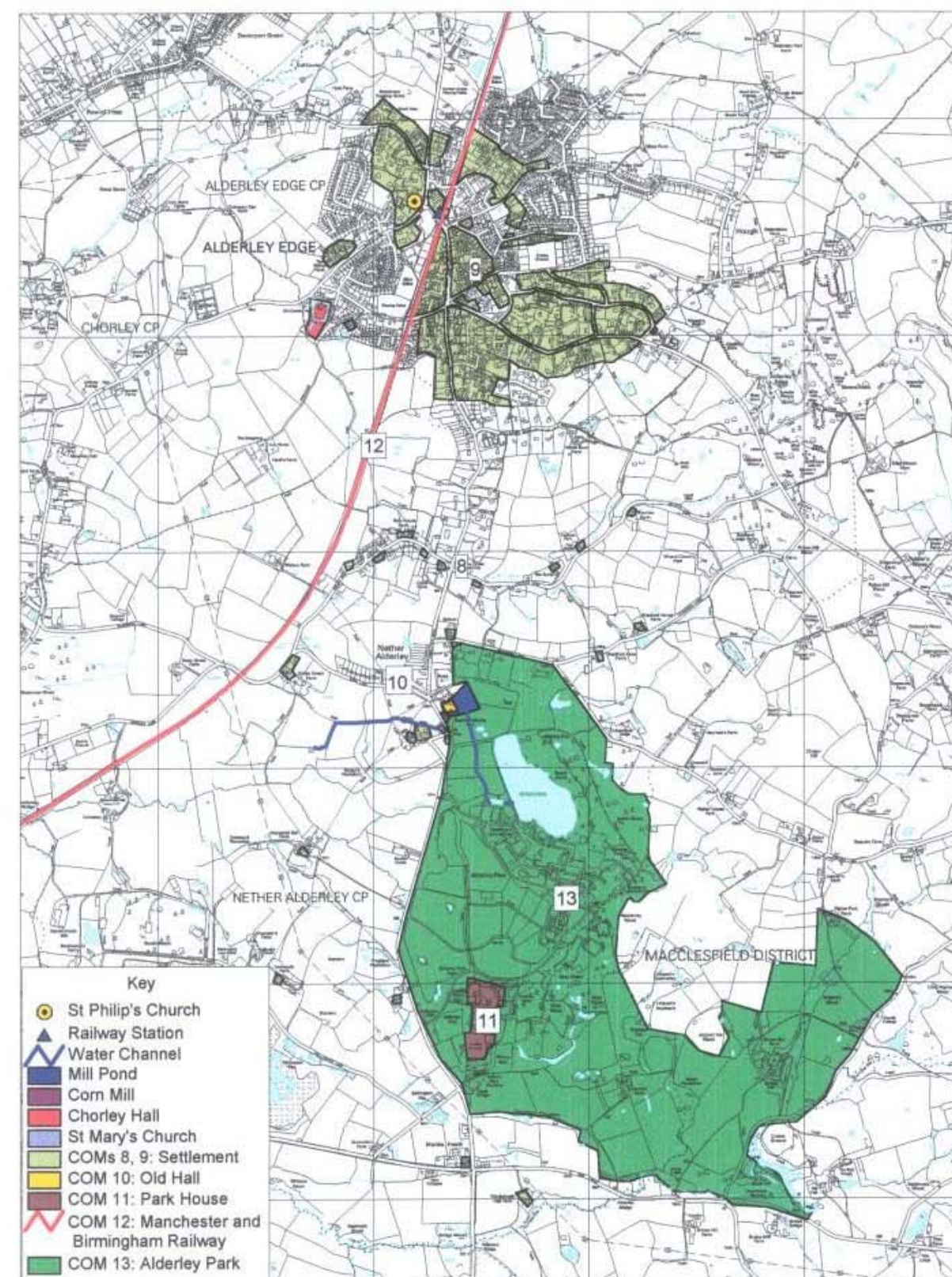
Figure 2: The Development of Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley



Medieval

0 300 600 Metres

1:16000



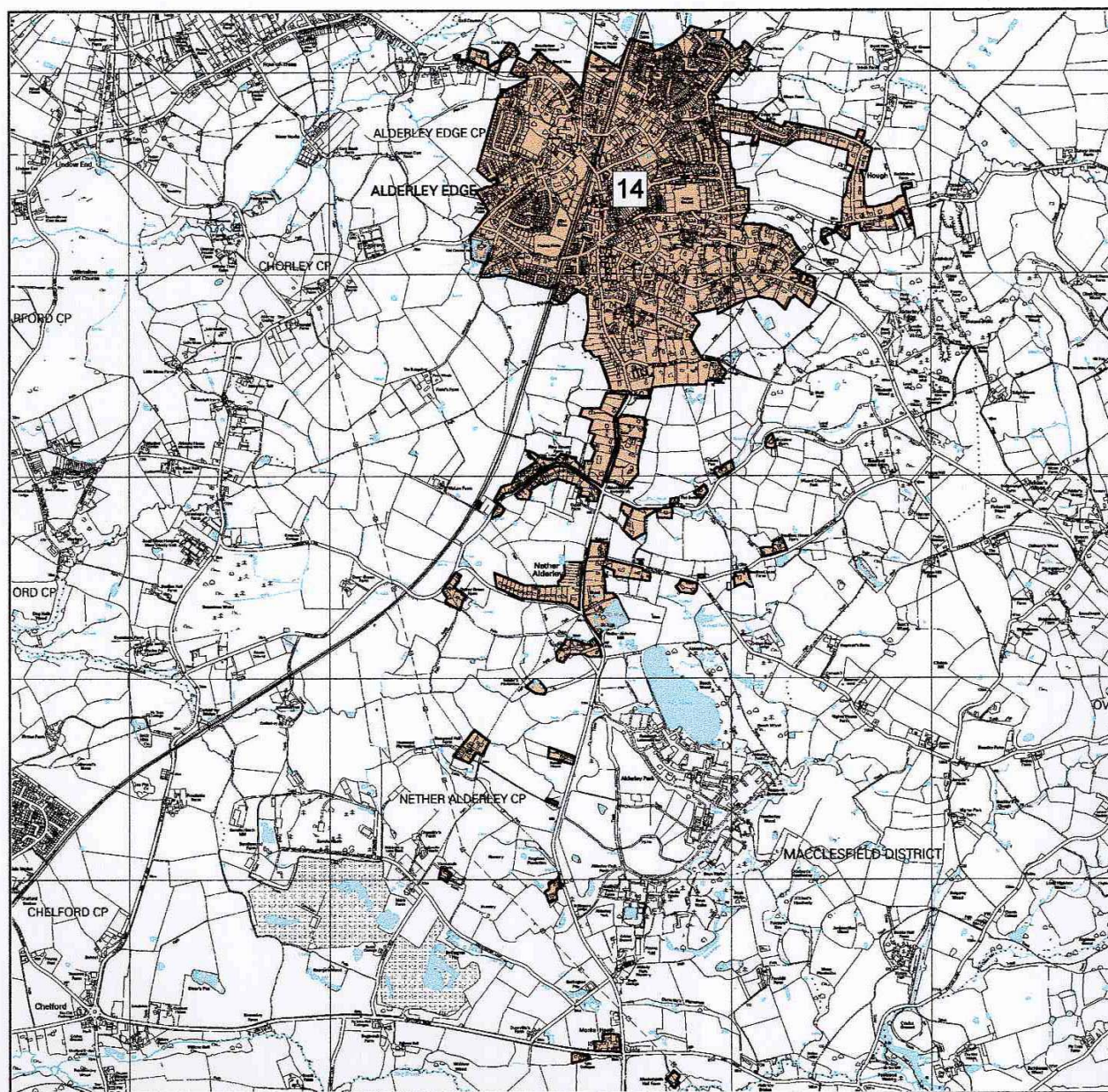
Post Medieval c 1871-2

0 300 600 Metres

1:25000

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Figure 3: Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley c. 2000



1:30000

0 0.5 1 Kilometers

Key

COM 14: Settlement

