

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Wilmslow

Archaeological Assessment



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WILMSLOW

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Jo Clark

1. SUMMARY

During the medieval period, Wilmslow was a small agricultural settlement, which was focussed in the vicinity of St Bartholomew's church. It has been suggested that the higher ground upon which the church stands may have even been the site of pre-conquest settlement. By the 19th century, along with Styal, Bollington, Rainow and Disley, Wilmslow was an important part of east Cheshire's cotton production (Calladine and Fricker 1993, 4). As industry waned, Wilmslow became an attractive location for the residences of the commuting classes.

1.1 Topography and Geology

Wilmslow lies around 76m AOD, 64 km north-east of Chester and 2km south of the county boundary with Greater Manchester. To the north-west of Wilmslow is the massive conurbation of Manchester, to the east are the foothills of the Pennines, while to the south and west is the Cheshire Plain.

Wilmslow's underlying solid geology comprises predominantly upper mottled sandstone, with a drift geology of glacial sand and gravel in the west of the settlement and boulder clay in the east (British Geological Survey 1962). The soils of the surrounding area are generally argillic stagnogleys, which are graded class 3 and are suited to grassland. Along the courses of the Rivers Bollin and Dean are alluvial gleys and to the west of Wilmslow, Lindow Moss comprises earthy oligo-fibrous peat, surrounded by a band of sandy gleys (Furness 1978, 123)

The River Dean creates a natural boundary between Wilmslow and Handforth to the north, while the river Bollin flows west-east through Wilmslow passing just to the north of St Bartholomew's churchyard. The confluence of the two rivers lies just to the north of the town. One kilometre west of Wilmslow is Lindow Moss, one of the county's surviving wetlands, studied as part of the Cheshire Wetlands Survey (Leah et al 1997).

The A34 runs north through Wilmslow to Manchester. Other roads include the A538, which runs north-west to Hale and south-east to Prestbury, the A5102 to Stockport and the B5166 to Styal.

1.2 Administrative Unit

Wilmslow, as an administrative and political unit, has a complex background, as Ormerod explains:

'Wilmslow in strictness, contains exclusively of the parish church and the adjacent churchyard, the town which bears the name lying chiefly in the hamlets of Hough and Dean Row, with the exception of buildings of modern date, which extend into Morley; but the parish to which the church relates contains four townships, Bollin Fee, the

manor of which comprehends the hamlets of Bollin cum Norcliff, Dean Row and Styal; Pownall Fee which manor comprehends the hamlets of Hough and Morley; Chorley also comprehended in the manor of Pownall Fee; and Fulshaw' (Ormerod 1882, 586).

Wilmslow was an ancient parish in Macclesfield Hundred and Deanery (Dunn 1987, 18). The modern town lies in the Civil Parish of Wilmslow and Borough of Macclesfield.

1.3 Place Name

The place name is known from the 13th century, and it appears in a variety of forms: *Wimmislowe* (1286), *Wylmeslowe* (1287), *Welmesslowe* (1352) and *Wilmislawe* (1513). It is suggested that the place name originates from the Old English meaning *Wighelm's Mound* (Dodgson 1970, 220). It has also been tentatively suggested that in Cheshire some *-hlaw* names might identify aristocratic pagan Anglo-Saxon burials i.e. *Wighelmes-hlaw*. Such burials could have considerable local significance, perhaps marking the sites of local assemblies (Harris and Thacker 1987, 245).

2. SOURCES

2.2 Historical

The number of sources available for the study of Wilmslow is limited. Of these, useful histories are contained in Earwaker's *East Cheshire Past and Present* (1877), Ormerod's Cheshire history (1882), and more recently, Hodson's *A Portrait of Wilmslow* (1974). The Trafford collection (DDT) held at the Chester Record Office may repay in depth analysis of its content but this is beyond the scope of the present survey.

2.3 Cartographic

Wilmslow is identified on Saxton's county map of 1577 and Speed's county map of 1610. The earliest available map to provide a schematic representation of the town and the surrounding road pattern is Burdett's map of Cheshire (1777). Wilmslow is spread across three tithe maps, which provide a detailed plan of the township: Pownall Fee tithe award (1841), Bollin Fee (1841) and Fulshaw Fee (1841). There is also an enlarged plan of Wilmslow dated 1840 (CRO DDX 309) but this shows the same level of detail as that of the tithe maps. The Ordnance Survey (OS) First Edition 6"; 1mile map surveyed 1871-2, also provides a detailed plan of the town.

2.4 Archaeological

Before the present assessment there were 38 sites recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) for Wilmslow, which are depicted in Figure 1. Where sites and finds have been identified from the CSMR the relevant reference is provided throughout this document. This assessment has added a further twelve records to the CSMR.

The only archaeological work known to have been carried out in Wilmslow is a watching brief that took place in 1985, during underpinning operations at St Bartholomew's church. This work revealed that the foundations of the chancel and Hawthorn Chapel had several pieces of dressed stone incorporated in to their fabric, which Kenyon suggests are from a pre-1490 phase of the church (Kenyon 1985).

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY : (Figure 1)

3.1 Prehistoric

Lindow Moss, once an extensive peat bog that has been reduced to a tenth of its original size, dominates the prehistoric landscape to the west of Wilmslow. A number of important finds have been made at the bog, and these include: a causeway made of logs running across the moss and a decomposed skeleton of a boar (CSMR 1472/0/0); what were probably two male bodies dated to the 3rd century AD (CSMR 1473/0/1; 1473/0/3), and of course the famous bog body, Lindow Man (CSMR 1473/0/2).

Three kilometres to the south of Wilmslow, the prehistoric landscape is dominated by Alderley Edge. Flint scatters found here date activity to the Mesolithic period (CSMR 1440/0/1), while a radiocarbon dated oak shovel has dated copper mining to the Bronze Age (CSMR 1440/0/14). Mining was also carried out in the Roman period, as confirmed by the discovery of a hoard of coins in a disused shaft near Engine Vein (CSMR 2481). Three and a half kilometres to the north west, excavations at Oversley Farm, on the site of the second runway of Manchester Airport, revealed an unenclosed Neolithic and Early Bronze Age settlement, a rare find in the North West. Occupation of this site continued through the Iron Age and Romano-British periods into the medieval period (Garner 2000).

There was also activity in Wilmslow during the prehistoric period, as indicated by the discovery of at least two funerary sites. The first, a Bronze Age urn which contained calcined bones and the fragments of a bronze dagger, was found c1839 not far from Wilmslow Station (CSMR 1493/0/1). The second, another urn, was discovered close by in a ridge of gravel between the old and new roads leading to Prestbury. It contained bones, teeth and a bone stud (CSMR 1493/0/2). A further urn is recorded in the CSMR (1493/0/3) but this is probably a duplication of CSMR 1493/0/2. Few prehistoric tools have been discovered within the urban area of Wilmslow. A large Neolithic, wedge-shaped hand axe (CSMR 1469), which was found in a garden on Bolshaw Road, may in fact have been imported in a load of topsoil. Further afield, two Bronze Age looped palstaves were found in 1912 near the railway at Stannylands, between Wilmslow and Styal (CSMR1470).

3.2 Roman

There is just one limited reference to Roman activity in the area, an '..old road (marked on the Ordnance Survey Map 'Street Lane') that runs from Hanford to the south, through Wilmslow and Alderley...', which according to Watkin (1886, 79) '..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.'

3.3 Early Medieval

Evidence of early medieval activity is limited to St Bartholomew's former curvilinear churchyard, which may indicate the site of an early medieval church (Harris and Thacker 1987, 1, 241), and the suggestion that the place name –*hlaw* indicates the site of an aristocratic Anglo-Saxon pagan burial (ibid, 245). Hodson (1974, 27) also suggests that the rising ground south of the River Bollin is likely to have been the site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement, although the steep rise upon which St Bartholomew's church is sited today is much reduced, following the extension of the churchyard and the diversion of the river in 1862.

Wilmslow was situated closely to a number of important estates in the early medieval period. Macclesfield (10km to the south-east) and Adlington (6km to the east) were both large estate centres at Domesday, and both belonged to the Earl of Mercia. Also Prestbury, an important ecclesiastical centre, lies 6.5km south-east of Wilmslow (Higham 1993, 174). Since neither Wilmslow, Bollin Fee, Fulshaw nor Pownall Fee appear in the Domesday Book, it has been suggested that any settlement that existed in this area may have been included in the entries for either Macclesfield or Adlington (Ormerod 1882, 586).

The Domesday Survey records that:

The same earl holds Maclesfeld. [Macclesfield in Prestbury] (Earl interlined). Edwin held it. There are 2 hides that pay geld. The land is for 10 ploughs. In demesne is 1 plough and 4 serfs. There [is] a mill serving the hall (curia). Wood 6 leagues long and 4 [leagues] wide and 7 hays were there. Meadow for the oxen. The third penny of the hundred belongs to this manor. T.R.E. it was worth £8, now 20s. It was waste.

The same earl holds EDULVINTUNE [Adlington in Prestbury]. (Earl Interlined). Edwin held it. There [are] 4 (½ interlined) 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).

Both Macclesfield and Adlington were held by Earl Hugh, who was one of the leading landowners in post Conquest Cheshire. The Domesday entries indicate that both Adlington and Macclesfield had suffered devastation in the harrying of the north by Norman forces 1069-70 and had made only a partial recovery by 1086.

Prior to the laying out of the shire of Cheshire in the late 9th to 10th centuries, it has been argued that the medieval Hundred of Macclesfield (formerly Hamestan) was part of the large territory of the Pecsæte (Peak dwellers), which also covered Hamenstan in Derbyshire and Totmonslow in Staffordshire (Higham 1993, 175-7).

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 The Manor

The Lordship of Fulshaw (named after one of the constituent townships) was obtained by Sir Richard Fyton from Robert de Fulshaw c1200. The manor of Fulshaw was subsequently granted by the son of Richard de Fyton (Fitton) c 1230 to the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and, following the severance of Fulshaw from the original lordship, the remaining estate was referred to as Le Bolyn (Earwaker 1877, 46). This passed to the Venables through marriage and in 1421 the Lordship of Bolyn was divided between the two coheiresses of Richard Venables (daughters Alice and Douce). Alice was married to Sir Edmund Trafford and those lands inherited by her (Chorley, Hough, Morley and the patronage of the church of Wilmslow) were passed down through the Trafford family. Douce was married to Robert del Bothe (Booth) and those lands inherited by her included Styal in Pownall Fee and Dean Row in the Bollin Fee (ibid, 49).

3.4.2 Settlement

There are no surviving foundation or market charters for Wilmslow, and the earliest known charter referring to the Lordship of Fulshaw written c 1200 does not even mention Wilmslow: ‘... I Robert, son of Matthew of Fulshaw have granted, conceded and by this my present charter have confirmed to Lord Richard Fyton, knt. all my right and fee of Fulshaw, viz Fulshaw, Chorley, Pownall, Morley...’(Earwaker 1877, 42).

Bollin Hall, which stood on the south side of the river Bollin, c 0.3 km east of the church of St Bartholomew, was taken down when the railway was built in the 1840s (Ormerod 1882, 591). It was the 13th-century medieval manor house of the Fittons, and later the manor house of the Booths who retained the Hall as an occasional place of residence. A park at Bollin Hall is referred to in several early documents and Ormerod (1882, 591) suggests that it was in existence c 1330. It is observed on Saxton’s map of 1577, running south-east from the church and enclosing land on both sides of the river. The Park is not identified on Burdett’s map of 1777 but on the OS First Edition map surveyed 1871-2, an area called Wilmslow Park is depicted.

3.4.3 Economy

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. Wilmslow is not mentioned in the Cheshire Mize of 1405. Instead, Bolyn was assessed at 30s 5d and Pounale (Pownall Fee) at 44s 0d. These sums are the tenth and third largest assessments respectively in Macclesfield Hundred (Booth 1985, 20).

Richard Fitton was granted permission in 1335 by his father John, to erect a mill on the stream of the Bolyn in the vill of Morley. This, Earwaker suggests is “..in what is at present a large willow bed, not far from the junction of the two rivers the Bollin and the Dean, at Twinney Bridge” (Earwaker 1877, 141).

Bott suggests that the earliest reference to a corn mill at Wilmslow dates back to 1246. He states that this may have been a forerunner of Barbers silk mill on the Carrs (Weir Eyes), may have been on a tributary of the Bollin north-east of Twinneys Bridge or, most likely, it is located on the site of the 19th century corn mill, north of Bollin Walk (Bott 1983, 56).

3.4.4 Religion

The church of St Bartholomew is first mentioned in the inquisition post mortem of Sir Richard Fitton in 1246. Its date of foundation is unknown. The fabric of the present church dates from 16th century remodelling (Richards 1973).

There are two crosses at Wilmslow: Fulshaw medieval cross (CSMR 1476), reported to have stood at the corner of the road leading from Mobberley to Fulshaw where it joined the main road (Earwaker 1877, 158), and a roadside cross at Lacy Green, thought to be 16th century in date and probably not in its original position (CSMR 1482).

3.4.5 The Surrounding Landscape

A number of medieval manor houses and old halls survive in the surrounding area - for example, the moated Chorley Old Hall, (SAM 13497; CSMR 1394/1/4) lies 2.2km to the south of Wilmslow, and the site of Hollingee moated manor house lies 2.5km west (CSMR 1464/1/2). Further halls are discussed under section 3.5.7. Also noted in the CSMR is a 15th-century barn, 30m east of Chonar Farmhouse and 1.7km south-east of Wilmslow (1415/1).

3.5 Post Medieval

3.5.1 The Manor

By the mid-19th century, Pownall Fee had descended to the Earls of Stamford and Warrington (as heirs of the Booths), and Bollin Fee had passed through the de Trafford family to the lord of the manor and chief landowner at Wilmslow, Sir Thomas Joseph de Trafford (Bagshaw 1850, 338).

3.5.2 Settlement

Samuel Finney was made Justice of the Peace in 1770 and soon found plenty of employment “for the highways were almost impassable, and the licentiousness and disorders of the lower rank of people almost intolerable”(Earwaker 1877, 156).

Little is recorded about the township of Wilmslow but Fryer, writing at the end of the 19th century, records approximately seventeen thatched one storey cottages strung in three quarters of a circle between the church gate and Chancel Lane (Hodson, 1974, 35). This is supported by the Bollin Fee tithe map of 1841, which shows several plots running from the churchyard back to the River Bollin, listed in the apportionment as the site of cottages and yards. As the graveyard was expanded in 1829 and 1862, and as Chancel Lane was widened, these cottages were demolished.

There were a number of schools, including Fulshaw Memorial School built in 1876, Chancel Lane School built in 1868, and the National School, Parsonage Green which was built in 1830 (Kelly's 1914, 683).

Races were held on Lindow Common, to the west of Wilmslow between 1810 and 1880 (Lee 1996, 12). The pear-shaped course is now used as a park area and is surrounded by modern settlement.

3.5.3 Economy

Commencing in 1910, an open market was held every Saturday in the market place and fairs were held in April and October (Kelly's 1914, 683). It is not clear from the available map evidence where this market place was located, but this may have been sited on the east side of Church Street, where an open area is depicted on the OS Third Edition map of 1938.

3.5.3.1 Textiles

In the mid-18th century, between 60 and 100 button makers were supplied in Wilmslow by two button merchants named Acton and Street (Calladine and Fricker 1993, 16). By the late 18th century, the staple industries of button manufacturing and the spinning of jersey wool began to be replaced by the spinning of cotton (ibid, 36). Ormerod (1882, 593) records that in the late 18th century there were eight or nine cotton and paper manufactories near Wilmslow but by 1882, just two or three remained.

Little is known about the mills of Wilmslow, however, there is sufficient information for a brief discussion of the mills with known histories. Quarry Bank cotton mill at Styal, 2km north of Wilmslow, was built in 1784 by Samuel Greg, who dominated cotton spinning in the Wilmslow area (Calladine and Fricker 1993, 37-38). In 1796 the first steam engine was added to the mill and in 1819 modifications were made to dams and weirs along the River Dean and a new water wheel was built weighing 44 tons and measuring 32 feet in diameter (Rose 1978, 9).

Ralph Bower built a water powered mill at Wilmslow c 1780 for the carding and slubbing of cotton. Its exact location is unknown but it was possibly sited in what is now St Bartholomew's graveyard. Fryer, writing in the late 19th century, records that: "entering the church gates and keeping to the left...came an opening which led down to a little mill...belonging to lownds Bower" (Hodson 1974, 43). The remains of this mill were probably removed during the graveyard extensions of 1829 and 1862 (ibid, 44).

William Bower, son of Ralph built a steam mill on Mill Lane and in 1846 built a gas works to light his mill. Gas was also supplied to principal shopkeepers and some private residences (Bagshaw 1850, 338). He became bankrupt in 1849, the mill was demolished and the site occupied by a row of terraced houses (Hodson 1974, 46).

There was a silk mill owned by a Mr Barber at the Carrs on the river Bollin (Ashmore, 1982, 70). Little is known about this mill but it appears on the tithe map of Pownall Fee (1841) as a working factory. It burned down in 1923.

There were a number of Fustian Cutting workshops in Wilmslow. A late 19th-century workshop on Bollin Walk was used by a Mr Clare, who later moved to a workshop on Hawthorn Street c1900 (CSMR 2616/1/1 and 2616/1/3). Another was sited on

Manchester Road, at Stamford Court, now the site of a car park behind Safeways. Recorded on a plaque that marks the site is the following: "This building, housed the office, cloth warehouse and workrooms. Three storey houses which extended on each side to house the owner, equipment and craftsmen, were added in 1792 by the ground landlord the Earl of Stamford". Just to the south of this, another plaque indicates the location of a coach house, also built in 1792 by the Earl of Stamford. A much later fustian cutting workshop was started in 1951 by a Mr Dearden and was located on Manchester Road (Ashmore 1982, 70, CSMR 2616/1/2).

3.5.3.2 Bollin Corn Mill

The four storey 19th-century mill just to the north of Bollin Mill Walk ceased production in 1949 (Ashmore 1982, 70). The site has been the subject of recent redevelopment and the long head race that stretched from a weir on the River Bollin to the mill has been covered over with tarmac.

3.5.3.3 Trades

In the mid-19th century, a wide range of service functions were available at Wilmslow: eight academies, six blacksmiths, fourteen boot and shoe makers, four butchers, five bricklayers, two druggists, one ironmonger, seven wheelwrights, one linen draper, three plumbers glaziers and painters, one solicitor, one silk throwster and merchant, four surgeons, ten tailors and one tanner. However, agriculture was still an important aspect of the town's economy and there were also 71 farmers. The town also had a coaching service to Stockport on a Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Bagshaw 1850, 338).

3.5.4 Religion

St Bartholomew's underwent radical restoration work in 1863, which included building a chancel arch and panelling the nave. These alterations were recorded by Robert Langton in an account read before the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society: "In the first place, a score or two of dead bodies were removed to make room for a transeptal chapel, with heating apparatus beneath." (Richards, 1973).

A number of Nonconformist places of worship were built in Wilmslow. The most notable being the Grade II* listed Dean Row Unitarian Chapel built in 1693 (Richards 1973). Other chapels include the Friends Meeting House on Altrincham Road, Morley, built in 1831; the Congregational Chapel, Fulshaw built in 1846-7; the Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Hawthorn Street built in 1870; the Wesleyan Chapel, Water Lane built in 1884 and the Baptist Chapel, Brook Lane built in 1890 (Kelly's 1892, 505).

3.5.5 Population

The population of Wilmslow cannot be exactly calculated from the 1664 Hearth Tax returns. Those areas mentioned include: Bollin Fee with an estimated population of 445, Fulshaw 155 and Pownall Fee 610 (MacGregor (ed) 1992, 52). From 1801-1971 population data is available from the census returns printed in the Victoria County History (Harris 1979, 238-239); and for 1981 and 1991 census data has been

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1801	3233	1901	7361
1811	3710	1911	8153
1821	3927	1921	8282
1831	4296	1931	9760
1841	4973	1951	19536
1851	4952	1961	21389
1861	6616	1971	29040
1871	7816	1981	30055
1881	5664	1991	29745
1891	6344		

The above figures (1801-1871) are for Wilmslow Parish, which includes the populations of Bollin Fee, Chorley Township, Fulshaw Township and Pownall Fee. From this information it is impossible to separate the figures that relate solely to Wilmslow Township. In 1894 the boundaries were shifted and Wilmslow Civil Parish was created from parts of the Urban District of Bollin Fee, Fulshaw and Pownall Fee. The huge increase in population as identified in the census of 1951 is the result of the inclusion of part of Cheadle, Gatley, Handforth and Styal in the Urban District and Civil Parish of Wilmslow (ibid, 239).

3.5.6 Transport and Communications

In 1775 a new road was cut along what is now Grove Street and Manchester Road (A34). This was to become the main north-south route through Wilmslow, replacing the old route which went along Green Lane, up Church Street, past the church along Chancel Lane and up Cliff Road (Hodson 1974, 55). Unusually, the Manchester Road is depicted differently on Burdett's map of 1777. Rather than taking a straight route from Wilmslow north to Handforth as shown on the OS First Edition 6": 1mile map surveyed 1871-2, the road on Burdett's map curves its way to Handforth, with a distinct bend depicted as it crossed over the River Dean. Given Burdett's general reliability, it is likely that what he is identifying is the forerunner to the new improved road of 1775.

A Toll Bar was moved to the Water Lane end of Grove Street, from Brook Lane in Chorley c 1803, where it stood for approximately 70 years (Hodson 1974, 56).

The Manchester to Birmingham Railway opened in 1842, running through Cheshire via Cheadle Hume, Wilmslow and Crewe. Wilmslow Station opened in May 1842 and before long, commuters were travelling to Manchester from Wilmslow and Alderley Edge (Crosby 1996, 120). For both Wilmslow and Alderley Edge, free tickets were offered to those with a house of a rateable value of at least £50, located within a mile of the two stations (Lee 1996, 7). A loop line was opened from Longsight to Wilmslow and Styal in 1909 (Hodson 1974, 69).

3.5.7 The Surrounding Area

A high percentage of the post medieval sites in the surrounding area are manor houses, not all are which are still standing. Pownall Hall, is an ancient seat of the family of the same name, which terminated in the male line in 1328. It was then passed to the Fittons and subsequently to the Newtons. The house, which is now used as a school, is Listed Grade II* and is situated one mile north-west of St Bartholomew's church (Ormerod 1882, 592). The manor of Fulshaw was in part granted to Richard del Shert by the Knights of St John in 1277. The present 17th-century Fulshaw Hall, which is Listed Grade II, was built on the site of the 13th-century Sherd Manor House, which was a large timber building in a ruinous condition when it was pulled down (Earwaker 1877, 149-58). White Hall, in the Hough dates to the 16th century if not earlier, and was the manorial hall of the Trafford property in Wilmslow. (Earwaker 1877, 64). This was demolished some time after 1964. Norcliffe Hall, was built in 1830 but a much older building, also believed to have been called Norcliffe Hall, stood on the right bank of the Dean c 0.5 miles from Twinney bridge, the foundations of which were revealed during land drainage some time before 1877 (Earwaker 1877, 141).

4. PLAN COMPONENTS : (Figure 2)

The town has been divided into 11 components (prefixed by **COM**). These have been tentatively sub-divided by period, although there is need for further work to define the components more closely. Many would have spanned more than one period but are discussed under their earliest likely date of occurrence.

The plan components commence with the early medieval period, and the definition of an area, which may or may not be the site of a church or settlement. The evidence for this is limited and it should therefore be treated as a theory to be tested and redefined as new evidence emerges.

EARLY MEDIEVAL c 450-1066 (Figure 2)

COM 1 - Church?

MEDIEVAL c 1066-1540 (Figure 2)

COM 2 - St Bartholomew's Church

COM 3 - Tenements, surrounding the churchyard

COM 4 - Tenements, west and east of Church Street

COM 5 - Market Place?

COM 6 - Corn Mill

COM 7 - Bollin Hall

POST-MEDIEVAL c 1872 (Figure 2)

COM 8 - Settlement

COM 9 - New Road

COM 10 - LNWR

MODERN c 2000 (Figure 2)

COM 11 - Settlement

4.1 Early Medieval (Figure 2)

The characteristic sub-circular shape of the churchyard (see **COM 2**) suggests that St Bartholomew's may have had an early medieval predecessor. If this is the case, then potentially the area included in **COM 1**, as identified from topographical and place name evidence, may be the site of an early medieval church and perhaps the focus of Saxon settlement at Wilmslow.

4.2 Medieval (Figure 2)

It is likely that medieval Wilmslow was a small, dispersed settlement, perhaps beginning to develop a focus in the 13th century as the Fittons built Bollin Hall and the place name Wilmslow began to emerge. As it is impossible to map the scattered farmsteads that once comprised Wilmslow, mapping has focussed upon the settlement that developed around the church of St Bartholomew and then along Church Street. However, it is not clear whether this development began in the medieval period or later. This is a question that can only be answered as new evidence is revealed.

Wilmslow did not have a borough charter and there is no evidence from the surviving plot boundaries or from those depicted on historical maps that it was ever granted one. **COM 3** depicts what has been identified from the tithe map of 1841 as a cluster of houses surrounding the church. Although the evidence for this component is from a 19th century source, its location close to the medieval church is likely to have been a popular one for settlement from an early time.

A potential area of medieval settlement has been identified on Church Street (**COM 4**). The irregular boundaries of this component suggest that tenements were laid out on a piecemeal basis, perhaps as the population grew and settlement expanded, and tenements were claimed along Church Street. The A538 provides an artificial boundary for the back of these plots on the east of Church Street. Whether this area was developed in the medieval period or later can only be determined through archaeological intervention.

There is no surviving market charter for Wilmslow but the characteristic broadening of the road at the head of Church Street and in front of the church gates (**COM 5**), suggests that there may have been a medieval market place located here. This may have been held informally or possibly a charter was granted that has subsequently been lost. The widening of the street is not so apparent on modern maps but the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1871-2 and the tithe map of 1841 show this feature very clearly.

It is likely that the 19th-century mill north of Bollin Walk (A538), was the site of the medieval corn mill (**COM 6**). The head race of the post medieval mill may have followed the same course as that of the medieval mill. However, Burdett does not depict a water mill at Wilmslow on his map of 1777, which suggests that there may have been a break in continuity.

The approximate site of Bollin Hall, the 13th-century medieval manor house that was taken down when the railway was built in the 1840s, is identified as **COM 7**. It is not known whether the hall was located directly on the line of the viaduct or if it stood on the site of the later Bollin Hall, to the east of the viaduct.

4.3 Post Medieval (Figure 2)

The early post medieval settlement of Wilmslow is little understood, though no doubt it maintained much the same pattern as for the medieval period. The first area of expansion from the medieval core was probably south of Swan Street and along the present Green Lane, which is named 'Old Street' on the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1871-2. A map of 1840 (Cawley 1840) shows settlement on either side of Green Lane. Prior to 1775, Green Lane was the original north-south route through Wilmslow, leading north to Church Street and Chancel Lane (Walker and Bever pers comm). Settlement expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries when industries developed in the town and brought a rise in population. Housing was constructed for the workers of these industries and, encouraged by the arrival of the railway (**COM 10**), large villas were built for the commuting classes. In c 1875, this expanding settlement (**COM 8**) began to unite the once dispersed centres of Fulshaw and Pownall. The new road or Manchester Road (**COM 9**) built in 1775 allowed a greater movement of traffic through Wilmslow, diverting it away from the Old Bridge and the narrow Chancel Lane.

The 19th-century corn mill (**COM 6**) and its head race appear in detail on the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1871-2, running north-west from a weir on the River Bollin.

4.4 Modern (Figure 2)

Modern Wilmslow has expanded significantly, creating a continuous band of settlement between Handforth to the north and Alderley Edge to the south. The large increase in the population of the town has particularly been influenced by the car, which allows people to live in Wilmslow and commute to their places of work in the surrounding area.

5. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Above-Ground Remains

There are four small Conservation Areas in Wilmslow: the cemetery at Finney Green; the area to the south of Styal Road; St Bartholomew's churchyard and Chancel Lane, and the Hawthorn Lane area. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Wilmslow. However, there are 33 Listed buildings, and while the majority are Grade II, there are a number that are Listed Grade II*: Dean Row Unitarian Chapel, the 19th century Pownall Hall (now a school), and the 17th century Hawthorn Hall. St Bartholomew's church is also Listed Grade I (Department of the Environment 1984).

The majority of buildings in Wilmslow are of 19th and 20th century date. The prosperity of the mid-19th century onwards has seen older buildings and industrial sites cleared in favour of new villas, modern shops and roads.

5.2 Below-Ground Remains

The lack of archaeological work carried out in Wilmslow means that it is impossible to assess the survival and preservation of the below-ground remains.

6. PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

6.1 General

The study of Wilmslow 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 it would make a contribution to the study of industrial archaeology (Priority T6; English Heritage 1997, 53), as well as the understanding of the following processes of change:

- PC6 Late Saxon to medieval
- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c 1300- 1700AD)

6.2 Early Medieval

- Establish whether there was an early medieval church on the site of St Bartholomew's church.
- Establish whether there was early medieval settlement; was this included in the Macclesfield or Adlington Estate at Domesday?
- Examine whether there is any foundation to the suggestion that Wilmslow is named after the site of an Anglo-Saxon pagan burial.

6.3 Medieval

- Establish the foundation date of the church; establish its form and phases of building.
- Establish precise location of settlement areas and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish whether there was a formal market place and when it was used.
- Examine where the medieval crossing point of the River Bollin was located.
- Examine evidence for trade and industry.
- Establish the site of Bollin Hall and the park associated with it.

6.4 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 the precise location of mills along the River Bollin.

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Tithe Award of Pownall Fee 1841 (map: CRO EDT 331/2; apportionment: CRO EDT 331/1)

8. ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Wilmslow and the Surrounding Area

Figure 2: The Development of Wilmslow

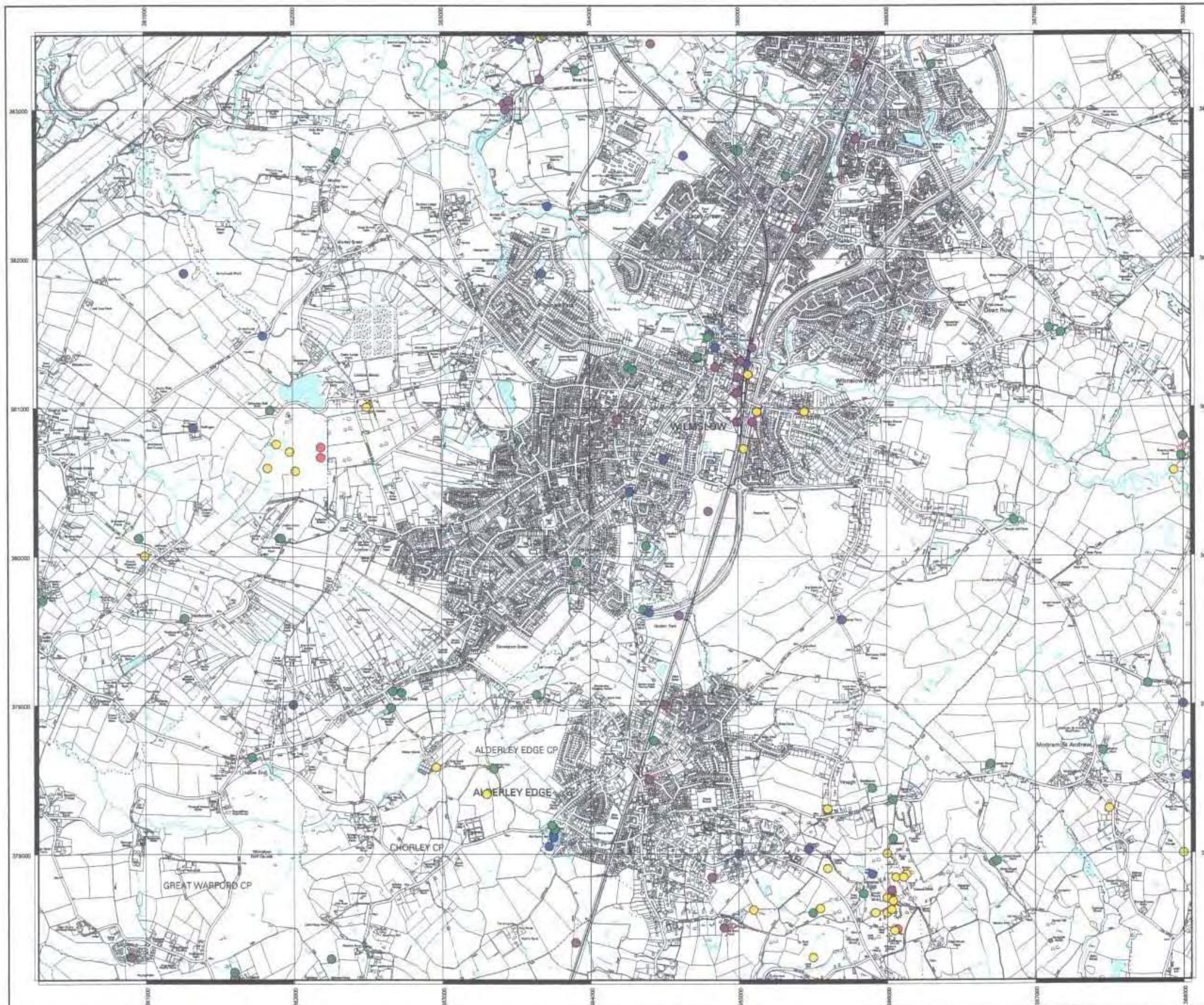


Figure 1
Wilmslow and the
Surrounding Area

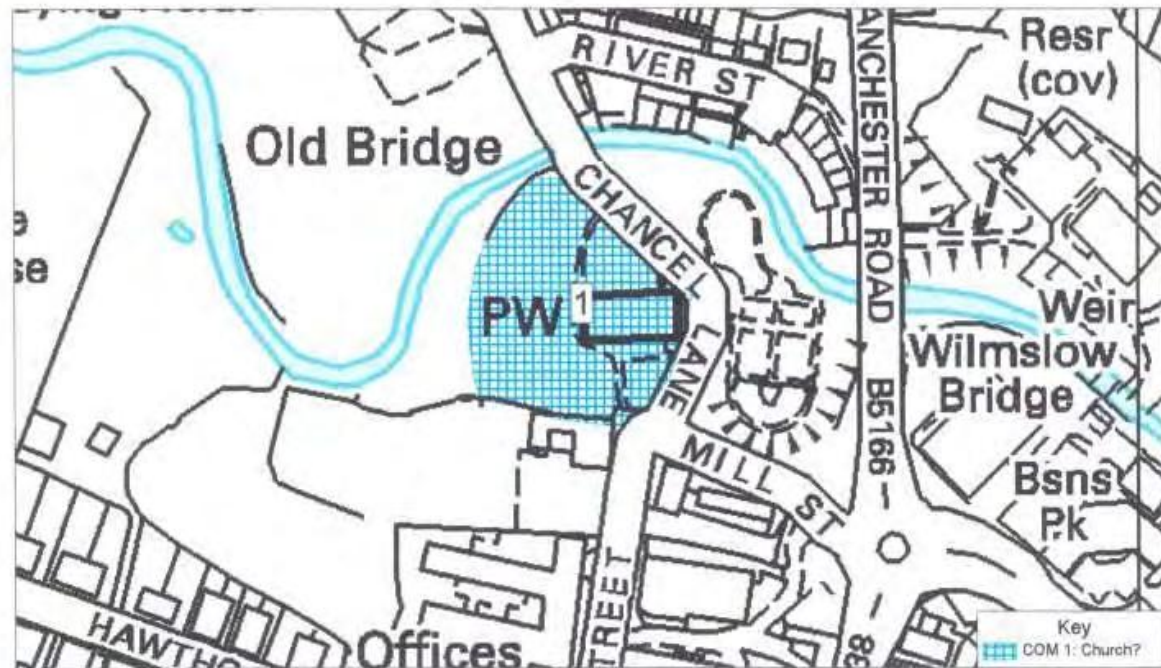
Sites and Monuments

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

1:25000

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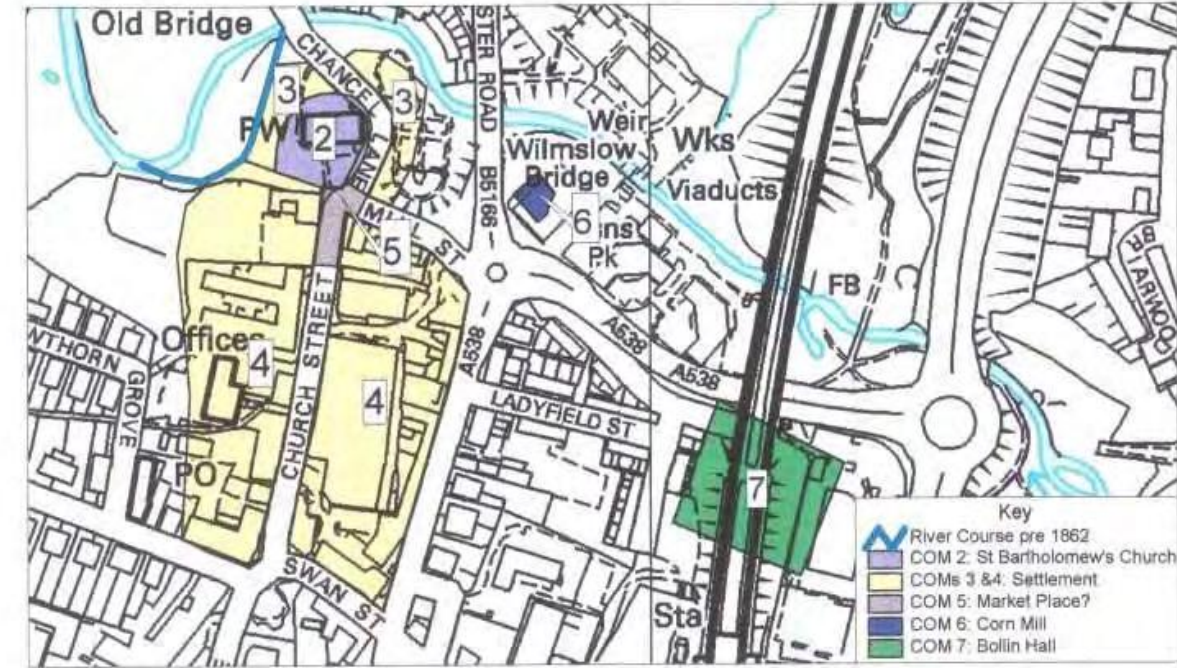
Figure 2: The Development of Wilmslow



Early Medieval

0 50 100 Metres

1:2500



Medieval

0 300 600 Metres

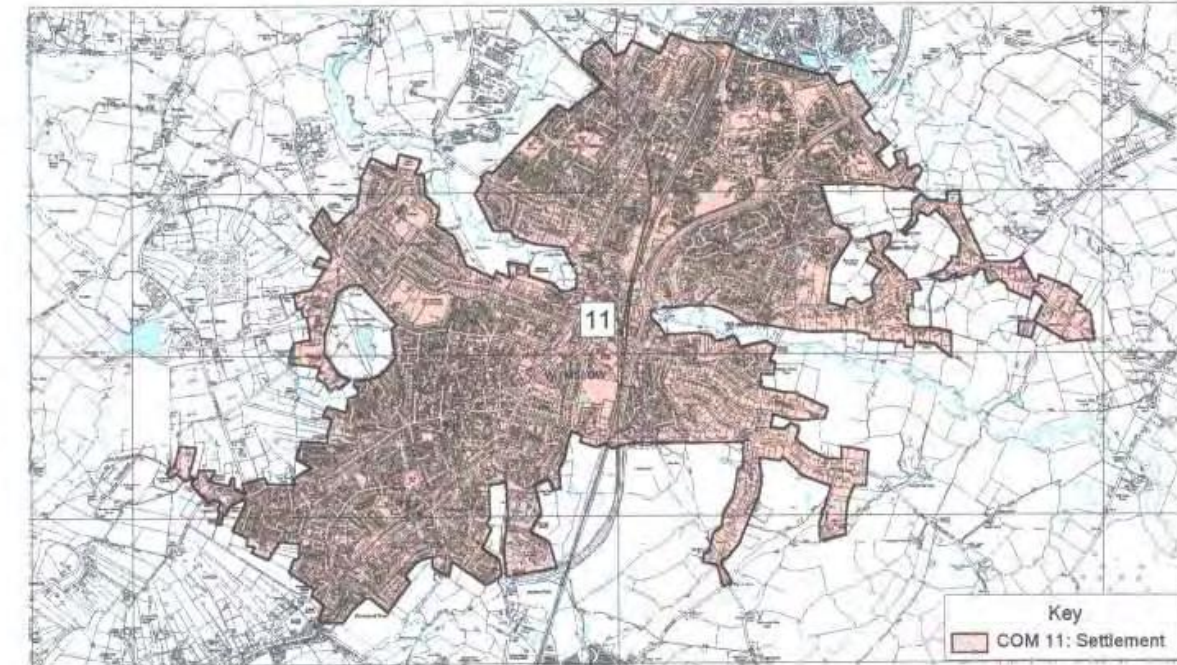
1:4000



Post Medieval c 1871-2

0 300 600 Metres

1:30000



Modern c 2000

0 0.5 1 Kilometres

1:40000