

# CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

## Macclesfield

### Archaeological Assessment



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# MACCLESFIELD

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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### 1. SUMMARY

Macclesfield was one of Cheshire's most important medieval towns. The medieval borough, which was the product of 13th century town planning, was laid out around the Market Place, in a prominent position overlooking the River Bollin. The silk industry for which Macclesfield was internationally renowned in the late 18th and 19th centuries, developed to the south and east of the medieval area of the town on lower land by the River Bollin and its tributaries. Therefore, despite this intensive industrial development, the plan of the medieval town has largely survived.

#### 1.1 Topography and Geology

Macclesfield lies at around 150m AOD, 60km east of Chester and 2km west of the Peak District National Park. The Pennines lie to the east, the Cheshire Plain to the west and the river Bollin runs north-south through the town.

The underlying geology comprises Bunter Pebble Beds, which is overlain by glacial sand and gravel and there is a spread of alluvium running along the course of the River Bollin and its tributary the Dams Brook (British Geological Survey 1968).

The soils to the west of the town comprise chiefly brown sands, which are suited to mixed arable and grassland and are graded classes 2-3. The soils to the east, consist of brown earths, which are suitable for grassland and are graded class 3, and brown sands, which are under grass and graded class 3 at lower altitudes, rising to class 5 on high ground (Furness 1978).

The town is located at a nodal point in the road network. The A523 runs north to Stockport and south to Leek, the A537 west to Knutsford and the A54 east to Buxton.

#### 1.2 Administrative Unit

The township of Macclesfield lay within the Chapelry of Macclesfield, a sub-division of the large Parish of Prestbury, and the Hundred of Macclesfield (formerly Hamestan hundred) (Dunn 1987, 29). The modern town forms a major component of the Borough of Macclesfield.

#### 1.3 Place Name

The place name first occurs in the Domesday Survey (1086) as *Maclesfeld*. It also occurs as *Maklesfeld* (1182), *Makefeld* (1240) and *Makerisfeld* (1327). The final element *feld* means 'open country' and the first element may refer to a personal name. Hence the place name might translate as *Maccel's open land* (Dodgson 1970, 113-4).

## **2 SOURCES**

### **2.1 Historical**

Unusually for Cheshire towns, there are a number of secondary sources concerned with the history of Macclesfield. The majority of these are of 19th century date and include Correy (1817), Earwaker (1877), Finney (1871, and 1883) and Ormerod (1882). There is a short draft survey of medieval Macclesfield by Rick Turner (undated), in the Cheshire Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR). Davies (ed, 1961) provides a summary of the extensive primary records available for Macclesfield, including rentals and court rolls. Most of these records are held by the Public Record Office (PRO), while the County Record Office (CRO) holds records dating from the 16th century onwards. Analysis of the primary records is beyond the remit of the present survey.

### **2.2 Cartographic**

Macclesfield is depicted on Saxton's county map of 1577 and Speed's county map of 1610. The earliest map to show a schematic plan of the town and the road pattern is Burdett's map of Cheshire (1777). The field map of Sutton in Prestbury c 1787 provides partial detail of the late 18th century town. Detailed plans of the town include James Cawley's map of 1838, the tithe map 1840 and Ordnance Survey maps surveyed in the 1870s at the scales of 10 feet to 1 mile, 6": 1 mile and 25": 1 mile.

### **2.3 Archaeological**

Before the present survey there were 172 sites recorded in the town in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR), which are depicted on Figure 1. Where sites and finds have been identified from the CSMR the relevant reference is provided throughout this document. The present assessment has generated 15 new records.

The only archaeological work known to have taken place in Macclesfield was undertaken in 1987 in the Town Hall car park, 40m east of the Jordangate/Market Place street frontage. The earliest structure encountered was perhaps the east end of a building of 16th century date, above which was part of The Shambles, the 18th-century covered market. No medieval features were discovered, although pottery suggests activity dating to the 15th century in the vicinity (CSMR 1563/0/22; Connell and Freke 1988). Unfortunately, there are no sections included in the report, nor are there any indications of the depth at which features were recovered. However, excavation photos appear to suggest that archaeological deposits were located close to the modern ground surface, at a depth of c 200mm.

## **3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY: (Figure 1)**

### **3.1 Prehistoric**

The Macclesfield area was clearly of importance in the prehistoric period, Bronze Age burial mounds are known to the west (CSMR 1397), north (CSMR 1551, 1552), east (CSMR 1540, 1544) and south (CSMR 1539) of the town, while stone axes are

known from the north (CSMR 1591, 1593) and south (CSMR 1550). The finds suggest high-status occupation and perhaps a location on a trade route.

Numerous finds are known from the town, including two perforated Bronze Age stone axes (CSMR 1591 and 1593), and the site of two Bronze Age round barrows are known within the modern town, and possibly a third. The first barrow was located behind Mount Pleasant, Prestbury Road, in what is now the site of the modern cemetery. This was excavated in the late 19th century, and revealed a cairn three feet high, covered by a 4.5m thick layer of earth, all of which were overlying a deposit of human bone. The site has since been quarried away to a depth of over 4m below the former ground surface. To the west of the barrow a possible Bronze Age quern was discovered (CSMR 1551/0/2). The second barrow is sited near Beech Hall Drive and is surrounded by a housing development (CSMR1552/1/2). This barrow partially survives, having been damaged during WWII by the cutting of a Home Guard Trench. To the south-east of this a Bronze Age cremation urn was discovered c 0.5m below the ground surface. Whether there was a burial mound associated with this is unclear (CSMR 1552/1/1). Other prehistoric finds within the area of the modern town include an Iron Age disc or loom weight discovered in Macclesfield cemetery in 1866 (CSMR 1559) and prehistoric flints (CSMR 1558) found in the Hurdsfield area.

### **3.2 Roman**

In contrast to the prehistoric period, there is no evidence of Roman activity in the town and only a small number of finds are recorded in the surrounding area, including just one unidentified Roman coin discovered to the east of town (CSMR 1566).

### **3.2 Early Medieval**

Prior to the laying out of shire of Cheshire in the late 9th to 10th centuries it has been plausibly argued that Macclesfield lay within the territory of the *Pecsaete* (Peak dwellers), a large territory which covered the medieval hundreds of *Hamestan* in Cheshire, *Hamenstan* in Derbyshire and Totmonslow in Staffordshire (Higham 1993, 175-7).

There is a notable series of Saxon stone crosses in the Macclesfield area (CSMR 1438; 1560; 1563/1/4), and although their function is uncertain they do suggest that the area had religious significance (Harris and Thacker 1987, 281). Macclesfield is just 4km south of the ecclesiastical centre of Prestbury.

There is also evidence of high status occupation in the early medieval period. Higham (1993, 117) has suggested that the eastern region of the county was deliberately reorganised around a royal estate centre at Macclesfield in the 10th century and at Domesday Macclesfield was one of two large estate centres (the other being Adlington) belonging to the Earls of Mercia within the Hundred of *Hamestan* (Higham 1993, 174).

The Domesday Survey records that:

*The same earl [Hugh] holds Maclesfeld. (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 the manor. T R.E. it was worth £8, now 20s. He found it waste.*

(Harris and Thacker 1987, 347)

In 1066, the estate was valued at £8, which was one of the largest sums in Cheshire, indeed in east Cheshire only Adlington equalled it. Domesday also records that there was a hall and a mill in 1086, both of which were presumably already in existence in the early medieval period. The estate must have suffered in the devastation of Cheshire after the crushing of the rebellion of 1069-70, for it is described as having been waste. Its value of 20s by 1086 suggests that it was beginning to recover but it was still a long way from its value in 1066.

### **3.4 Medieval**

#### **3.4.1 The Manor**

Macclesfield remained in the hands of the Earls of Chester until the last earl died in 1237, after which date it reverted to the crown along with the earldom. Thereafter, the manor was held by the king and demised from time to time to various families in the county (Ormerod 1882, 740).

#### **3.4.2 Settlement**

##### **3.4.2.1 The Borough**

A borough was created at Macclesfield around 1220 by Ranulph de Blundeville, Earl of Chester. The original charter does not survive but a new charter was granted by Edward I in 1261 and probably contains many of the same provisions. The burgesses were given the right to form a merchant guild and were exempt from tolls in Cheshire. They paid 12d a year for their burgages, which later records suggest numbered 120. The rate for grinding corn at the lord's mill was fixed and bread was to be baked at the lord's oven (Davies 1961, 8-9).

##### **3.4.2.2 The Manor House**

The medieval manor house of Macclesfield was located to the south-west of the town on the road toward Congleton, in an area identified on the 1787 Sutton in Prestbury field map, as *Castle Fields*. The plan of the castle as it appears on the 1787 map, suggests that this may have even been the site of a motte and bailey castle. Ormerod (1882, 742), records that 'Near the Congleton road is a place called the Castle Field, which was probably the site of the local palace of the earls of Chester. In this a circular mount, or tumulus, is still remaining'. In the early 14th century it is recorded that the manor house site was surrounded by a timber fence (Davies 1961, 11). A medieval deer park lay close to the manor house, its site being indicated by place names such as Park House and Park Mill to the south of the Congleton road.

### 3.4.2.3 The 'Castle'

The term 'castle' used to describe John de Macclesfield's large fortified house is misleading, as this title was not in use until the 19th century (Birkett pers comm). The house was built on four adjacent burgage plots on the east side of Mill Street c 1398. It was by far the most important and imposing house in Macclesfield, but by 1585 it was ruinous, and nothing survives today apart from rubble stone walls. However, it was described in 1585 as being square in plan with two wings and five turrets, one central and one on each angle. It was surrounded by a wall and contained a courtyard, stables, kennels and outbuildings (King 1656). The porch and central turret had managed to survive until 1933 when they were demolished, and plans to re-erect the porch elsewhere never came to fruition (Turner 1987; Birkett 1998).

### 3.4.2.4 The Guildhall and other buildings

Macclesfield also had an important role as a meeting place for the courts of the hundred, manor and forest, and there was a medieval guildhall or *hall of pleas* immediately north of the market place on the site of the present town hall from at least the 13th century. It was replaced in the late 16th century by a stone building above an arcade of three shops (CSMR 1563/0/13). Immediately north of the guildhall stood the bakehouse, where the burgesses were required to have their bread baked, and although the bakehouse belonged to the manor it was often leased out to a burgess. The *common oven* is referred to in 1351/2, but by 1383/4 a reference to *the old bakehouse* suggests that the location had changed (Birkett pers comm). The chief gaol of the borough was located on the opposite side of the market place in Dog Lane (Davies, 1961, 16).

There is a 13th century reference to a leper hospital (Turner undated). Its site may be commemorated in the name *Spitalfields*, which formerly lay to the south-west of the medieval town. Leper hospitals were sited on the edges of towns due to the risks of infection.

The Grammar School was founded in 1502 by Sir John Percyvale and was located on the east side of the parochial chapel (Ormerod 1882, 742).

### 3.4.3 Economy

Ranulph de Blundeville was also responsible for the creation of the planned town of Frodsham and this too proved to be a successful venture. In 1237 the manor of Macclesfield was worth £67 compared to Frodsham's valuation of £126. 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) and in the Cheshire Mize of 1405 Macclesfield paid the sum of 36s 3d and Frodsham also paid 36s. The highest assessment in Macclesfield Hundred was for Cheadle (£4) (Booth 1985).

Much of Macclesfield's wealth was dependent on agriculture. Each burgess was allotted an acre of land within the town fields to the west of the town, they had right to dig peat in Danes Moss to the south-west of the town and to pasture sheep, horses and cattle on the common to the east of the River Bollin. Further revenue

would have been provided by the town's markets and fairs and, although there is no mention of a market or fair charter in the historical record, there obviously was a market at Macclesfield c 1280 when the town was complaining of competition from the market at Stockport (Laughton pers comm). There is a fair recorded in 1241 (Letters 2002), which may be same as the fair held in November at All Saints from at least 1301-2 (Stewart-Brown (ed) 1910, 7). By the 16th century there were three main fairs – held in May, June and October (Davies (ed) 1961, 64). A court house was provided by the Black Prince around 1358-9 by dismantling Foxwist Hall and re-erecting it in the market place (Booth 1981, 115), There were four shops below it and this building survived until 1826 when the market place was cleared (Turner undated).

A wide range of crafts and industries were carried out in the town. The street name *Soutersgate* attests to shoe repairers (*souter* = cobbler), while the surname *Botfis* suggests a fishmonger (Dodgson 1970, 115-6), and cheese was produced in the town on a commercial basis from at least 1372 (Crosby 1996, 45).

The Domesday Survey records that there was a mill at Macclesfield belonging to the manor (CSMR 1561/2/1). The location of the manorial mill is unclear. The 1787 map records 'Big Mill' and 'Little Mill' fields in the area of Park Green, and Turner (undated) suggests that the mill was located in this area, while Davies (1961, 16) suggests it was located further to the north by Brunswick Street. During the 14<sup>th</sup> century there are numerous references to the manorial mill being located in Sutton. It now seems clear that Wood's Pool on the west side of the River Bollin, was the mill pool of the 14<sup>th</sup> century manorial mill, with an earlier site being in Tytherington (Carne 1996).

#### **3.4.4 Religion**

The church of St Michael (formerly the church of All Saints) was built in 1278 by Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I. It acted as chapel of ease to the large parish of Prestbury until 1835 when it became an independent parish church. A document of 1240-57 records rent of land to the chapel of St Mary, which might point to there being an earlier chapel in the town, and this is supported by a charter held by the British Museum that refers to St Mary's Place in Chestergate (Turner undated).

#### **3.4.5 Surrounding Landscape**

The forest of Macclesfield, was established initially by the Earls of Chester to the east of the town (CSMR 1574) but was absorbed by the crown as part of the earldom. There was a hunting lodge, *the Chamber in the Forest* (CSMR 1574/1), situated in the Langley valley, which Edward I is known to have visited (Davies 1961, 11-12).

### **3.5 Post Medieval**

#### **3.5.1 The Manor**

Macclesfield remained in the hands of the crown until 1835 although it was leased at various times to local magnates, including the Savage family and the Earls of Derby (Ormerod 1882, 740).

### **3.5.2 Settlement**

The town continued to act as a market centre for the surrounding region. By the 16th century the market had spread from the Market Place along the main streets and down Wallgate/ Church Street to Waters Green (Davies (ed) 1961, 58). William Smith, writing at the end of the 16th century, described Macclesfield as 'one of the fairest towns in Cheshire' and recorded that it had a market on Mondays and two fairs each year (Ormerod 1882, 138). In the 19th century, and probably much earlier, fairs were held at Waters Green (Davies 1961, 67).

Macclesfield Grammar school was moved in 1748 to King Edward Street and in 1856 it was relocated again, this time to its present site in Cumberland Street. In 1910 the Grammar School was combined with Macclesfield Modern School, which had been founded in 1844 on Great King Street, and the combined schools were renamed King's School (Ormerod 1882, 742). In 1880 a Girl's High School was founded in Park Green. The 19th century saw the spread of education 'for the masses' and the foundation of a number of Sunday and day schools. In 1865 there were nine national day schools, two Roman Catholic schools, a Wesley and a Ragged School and at least seven private schools in Macclesfield (Davies 1961, 222).

### **3.5.3 Economy**

Charles II granted a town charter in 1684 which, in addition to confirming existing privileges, gave the town greater autonomy and also gave the corporation the right to bring water into the borough from the common - a right which was to prove a valuable asset as the town grew and industries began to develop (Davies, 1961, 79).

Increasingly the town's commons were given over to non-agricultural pursuits. Quarrying for coal and stone was known from at least the 16th century, a brick works was established in 1696 and a copper works in 1758 (ibid, 90-4, 114-6). Additionally the burgesses were allowed to enclose areas of land. Many enclosures were for houses, but others were for small-scale industrial enterprises such as silk works and dye houses. The commons were eventually divided up and enclosed in 1804, and by the 18th century the town's open fields had already been consolidated into separate farms (ibid, 95-6).

Macclesfield dominated the Cheshire silk throwing and hand weaving market (Calladine and Fricker, 1993, 14) in the 19th century. Prior to this there had been a button-making industry in the town from at least 1574, and this had gradually developed into the manufacture of silk buttons in the 17th century (Davies 1961, 42-3). There was some cotton spinning in Macclesfield in the late 18th and 19th centuries but this was a minority industry, compared with the extensive success of the silk industry.

The industrialised silk industry was initially based on silk throwing, the twisting of silk thread. The first silk-throwing mill was built in the town by Charles Roe, a silk button

maker, in 1743 and it was located at the southern end of the town by Park Green, powered by water supplied by the Dams Brook. At first, silk thrown in Macclesfield was sent elsewhere for weaving, particularly Spitalfields in London, or it supplied knitters in the east Midlands. However, from the late 18th century weaving was increasingly carried out in Macclesfield in weavers homes or garrets, then from the 1830s purpose - built mills, workshops and sheds were built, in which expensive Jacquard looms were installed. The silk industry grew rapidly, although it was always susceptible to episodes of boom and bust. In 1814 there were around 30 mills in the town, and by 1824 there were over 70. After 1870, very few new mills were built in Macclesfield until the 1920s when there was a brief revival of manufacture based upon the use of artificial silk or rayon and partly as a result of the fashion for short, washable silk dresses, particularly in Macclesfield stripe (Calladine and Fricker, 1993, 15).

Trades in Macclesfield in the mid-19th century included shopkeepers (around 200), boot and shoe makers (around 100) and tailors and drapers (around 60) (Bagshaw 1850, 237-247).

### **3.5.4 Religion**

With the exception of the tower and the Savage and Legh Chapels, the church of St Michael's was rebuilt in 1739. In 1819 further alterations were made, the east end of the church was rebuilt and a new chancel added. In 1898-1901 the church underwent extensive restoration, although the chancel and chapels of Savage and Legh were excluded from this (Richards 1973). The churchyard, which had been used for burials, was inadequate for the growing town and was closed in 1845. The situation had been eased by the construction of Christ Church and its graveyard in 1775 and finally in 1866 a cemetery was opened immediately north-west of the town.

A number of Anglican churches were built in the surrounding districts to cater for the expanding population, including St George's Church in Sutton, which was opened in 1834, Trinity Church in Hurdsfield, opened in 1837, and St Paul's to the east of the Bollin, which was opened in 1844 (Davies 1961, 315-320).

The first Nonconformist chapel to be opened in Macclesfield was the King Edward Street Chapel, opened in 1690. The Friends' Meeting House, Mill Street was opened in 1705. The first Methodist chapel to be built in the town was Wesley's Chapel, Sunderland Street, which was built in 1779 and rebuilt in 1802. Two Congregational chapels were built in the town, one on Roe Street in 1828-9, and the other in Park Green in 1877 (Kelly's, 1902, 397). Many other chapels were built in the 19th century and a total of eleven dissenting chapels are recorded in the town in the mid-19th century (Bagshaw 1850, 211-2).

A Roman Catholic Church was erected in 1838 and Ormerod records that at the time of his writing the tower was still incomplete (1882, 739).

### **3.5.5 Population**

Macclesfield's population in 1664 has been estimated from the Hearth Tax returns as 2,640, by far the largest population in Macclesfield Hundred and one of the largest in

Cheshire (MacGregor, 1992). From 1801-1971 population data is available from the census returns printed in the Victoria County History (Harris 1979, 202-240). The figures for 1801 - 1851 are for Macclesfield township, the subsequent figures include the Macclesfield Metropolitan Borough. For 1981 and 1991 census data has been reproduced for Macclesfield under Class Licence Number C01W0000125 with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO.

<b>1801</b>	8743	<b>1901</b>	34624
<b>1811</b>	12299	<b>1911</b>	34797
<b>1821</b>	17746	<b>1921</b>	33846
<b>1831</b>	23129	<b>1931</b>	34905
<b>1841</b>	24137	<b>1951</b>	35999
<b>1851</b>	29648	<b>1961</b>	37644
<b>1861</b>	27475	<b>1971</b>	44401
<b>1871</b>	26837	<b>1981</b>	46525
<b>1881</b>	37514	<b>1991</b>	49024
<b>1891</b>	36009		

### 3.5.6 Transport and Communications

The major routes into the town were turnpiked in the second half of the 18th century - the Buxton road in 1758, the Manchester and Leek road in 1758 and the Knutsford road in 1769 (Harrison 1886). Macclesfield was a stopover for coaches on the London to Manchester road and still retains a number of its coaching inns, such as the Bulls Head on Jordangate and the Flying Horse Inn on Chestergate.

The Macclesfield Canal, constructed by Thomas Telford, was opened in 1831. It connects with the Peak Forest Canal at Marple and the Trent and Mersey Canal at Talke in Staffordshire. The canal was a financial failure as it was soon followed by the opening of the railway (Davies 1961, 162-3).

The Macclesfield Branch of the Manchester and Birmingham Railway was opened in 1845. The line terminated at Beech Lane bridge to the north of the town. In 1849 a new line was opened by the North Staffordshire Railway Company, connecting the town with London and the Potteries. This entailed major alterations to the layout of the area around Waters Green and much of the Bollin in this area was culverted. A new station for both lines was constructed at Hibel Road and a tunnel was cut under Beech Lane. In 1872 a third was built, the Marple to Macclesfield Branch of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railway, and a new station for the line, the Central Station, was opened in 1873 (Davies ed 1961, 164-6).

### 3.5.7 The Surrounding Landscape

There are a number of 17th-century farmhouses and cottages in the surrounding area. To the north-east of Macclesfield is Shrigleyfold Farmhouse, which is Listed Grade II (CSMR 3179/1), and to the south-east is the Hollins farmstead, also Listed Grade II (CSMR 1546/1). Other sites in the area include Swanscoe Deer Park (CSMR 1594/1) to the north-east and Cromwell's Camp (CSMR 1564).

## **4 PLAN COMPONENTS : (Figures 2 – 4)**

The town has been divided into 25 components (prefixed by **COM**), which have been sub-divided by period. Many components 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 and for others only a general area can be delineated. There is a need for further work to define the extent and date of these components more closely.

During the early medieval period Macclesfield was a prosperous settlement, and the Domesday Survey records that this included a hall and a mill. However, the whereabouts of this settlement is unknown and therefore two possible sites are suggested, one in the vicinity of the medieval manorial centre and the other in the area of the medieval borough. The plan of the medieval town is based upon the map drawn by Rick Turner in his study of the medieval borough in the early 16th century (CSMR 1563). The post medieval town has been planned at three stages: c 1787, c 1838 and c1871.

### **EARLY MEDIEVAL (Figure 2)**

**COM 1** - Settlement?

**COM 2** - Settlement?

### **MEDIEVAL (Figure 2)**

**COM 3** - Church

**COM 4** - 'Castle'

**COM 5** - Manor House

**COM 6** - Market Place, east of Park Lane

**COM 7** - Market Place, south of Jordangate

**COM 8** - Grammar School

**COM 9** - Burgages, west of Jordangate

**COM 10** - Burgages, east of Jordangate

**COM 11** - Burgages, north of Chestergate

**COM 12** - Burgages, east of Market Place

**COM 13** - Burgages, west of Market Place

**COM 14** - Burgages, west of Market Place

**COM 15** - Burgages, west of Mill Street

**COM 16** - Burgages, east of Mill Street

**COM 17** - Burgages, south of Churchside

**COM 18** - Burgages, east of Mill Street

**COM 19** - Bridge

### **MACCLESFIELD c 1787 (Figure 2)**

**COM 20** - Settlement

### **MACCLESFIELD c 1838 (Figure 2)**

**COM 21** - Settlement  
**COM 22** - Macclesfield Canal

### **MACCLESFIELD c 1871 (Figure 3)**

**COM 23** - London & North Western Railway and Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway  
**COM 24** - Settlement

### **MACCLESFIELD c 2000 (Figure 4)**

**COM 25** - Settlement

#### **4.1 Early Medieval (Figure 2)**

Two possible sites for this estate centre can be suggested: **COM 1** is located at the heart of the medieval town in a dominant position overlooking the river and **COM 2** is located on the site of the later administrative centre. Both sites are at road junctions and could have been located close to a river crossing. Further work is required to determine the location and extent of this early medieval settlement.

#### **4.2 Medieval (Figure 2)**

**COM 3** identifies the site of the church of All Saints (later St Michael's) built by Queen Eleanor in 1278. Little medieval fabric remains, the church having been rebuilt in 1739-40 and again in 1898-1901. However, two late medieval chapels, the Legh chapel of c 1422 and the Savage chapel of 1501-7, do survive. To the east of the church is the site of Macclesfield Grammar School (**COM 8**) from its foundation in 1503 until 1748 when it was moved to King Edward Street.

**COM 4** identifies the site of Macclesfield 'Castle', a fortified town house built by John de Macclesfield on four burgage plots at the end of the 14th century and later extended by the Buckingham family in the 15th century. **COM 5** identifies the likely location of the medieval manor house. The Field Map of c 1787 identifies this site as 'Castle Field' and a drawing of it suggests that it may even have been the site of a motte and bailey castle, perhaps of an 11th or 12th century date. Marketing would probably have arisen as goods and produce were brought to the manorial centre and it is possible that Park Green, the triangular area to the east of the manor house site, where the Congleton Road meets the Leek Road, may have originated as a market place (**COM 6**).

The early 13th century saw a transformation in the topography of the settlement, with the foundation of a new town to the north of the manorial centre by Ranulf de Blundeville, Earl of Chester. Around the same time the earl also founded a new town at Frodsham. In both cases the intention would have been to increase the earl's revenue and he may have been encouraged by any existing marketing. The borough may have been laid out on virgin land, but considering the defensive nature of the topography, with steep slopes to the north and south and a cliff overlooking the Bollin to the east, it is likely to have already attracted settlement, particularly in the Iron Age and early medieval periods (Turner, CSMR 1563).

The form of the new town is difficult to identify but it appears to be less regular than many other foundations of this time, including that of Frodsham, which is perhaps due to the topographical constraints of the site. The new town seems to have been largely focused upon the north-south route (Jordangate, Mill Street) and the road to the west (Chestergate), which may have been deliberately laid out at this time. A market was accommodated by the widening of the north-south road to form a wedge-shaped market place (**COM 7**). The area given over to a market place is not large, however, and it can be speculated that the market area may originally have included the churchyard to the east (**COM 3**) or the settlement area to the south (**COM 16**).

The new town or borough, has been identified from Turner's map of the 16th century town. This includes ten plan components that potentially comprise the extent of the 120 burgesses (**COMs 9-18**). **COM 9** identifies properties to the west of Jordangate and north of King Edward Street (formerly Back Lane). Here long, narrow tenements front onto Jordangate, as well as onto King Edward Street. A house at the west end of this component (11 King Edward Street) includes part of a medieval roof (Department of National Heritage 1994, 79). The street name Back Lane suggests that this may have provided access to the rear of burgage plots, and Turner suggests that this may have also been the case for Dog Lane and Church Street. Were this the case, **COM 9**, which lies beyond the Back Lane may have been developed after the new town was laid out. **COM 10** identifies properties east of Jordangate and north of Brunswick Street (formerly Goose Lane). Here long, narrow tenements fronted onto Jordangate and buildings also fronted onto Brunswick Street. It is in the vicinity of Brunswick Street that Davies suggests the medieval mill was located. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine the exact location of this, either here or to the south in the Park Green area as Turner suggests.

**COM 11** identifies properties to the north of Chestergate, west of Market Place and south of King Edward Street (Back Lane), which comprise long, narrow tenements fronting onto Chestergate rather than the Market Place. It includes the site of Bate Hall, a late 16th – early 17th century dwelling, that is now used as an inn, and a Unitarian Chapel built in 1690, both of which are listed Grade II\*.

**COM 12** outlines tenements to the east of, and fronting onto, the Market Place. The site of the medieval Guildhall, which is known from the 13th century, is located in the southern area of the component in the vicinity of the Town Hall, which was built in 1823. Adjoining the Guildhall to the north was the Royal Bakehouse, where the townspeople were required to have their bread baked and north of this were long, narrow tenement plots. In the 18th century The Shambles, a covered market hall, was built on this site and demolished in 1939.

**COM 13** contains properties to the south of Chestergate and west of the Market Place, that backed onto the former Stanley Street/Dog Lane. The majority of the plots were long and narrow and predominantly fronted onto Chestergate, although the tenements to the east of the component fronted onto the Market Place.

**COM 14** identifies properties to the west of Mill Street, south of Dog Lane/Stanley Street and north and east of the former Derby Street/Barn Street. Properties fronting

onto Mill Street were long and narrow and typical of burgage plots. Smaller properties may have also fronted onto Dog Lane and Barn Street.

**COM 15** contains properties to the west of Mill Street and south of Barn Street/Derby Street. These are potentially of 'burgage type' fronting onto Mill Street, although plots are shorter than those to the north. The southern limit of the medieval town is unknown and as for **COM 18**, there is a marked drop in street level by Exchange Street and again by Roe Street, which may mark the southern limits of the medieval town. **COM 18** contains properties to the east of Mill Street that are also of 'burgage type', with narrow plots and buildings fronting onto Mill Street. This component also includes the site of Cockatrice Hall to the south, which potentially dates to the medieval period (CSMR 1563/0/18).

**COM 16** contains properties to the south of the Market Place, east of Mill Street, west of Church Street, and north of Backwallgate. It is a densely settled area with properties fronting to the north, west and east. Presumably the pressure for space has meant that the tenements located within this prime location have been increasingly sub-divided over the centuries.

**COM 17** identifies properties to the south of Church Road, east and north of Church Street. Properties in this area are small and constrained by the steeply-sloping ground. Accordingly it is difficult to recognise any original settlement pattern, but the proximity of the site to the church and market place suggests that it would have been settled early, despite the difficulties of the site.

An approximation of the course of the River Bollin, before it was realigned during the construction of the railway, has been attempted using the 1787 and 1838 maps and a map of the drift geology. The main medieval crossing point over the Bollin is assumed to be on the line of the later bridge at the north end of Waters Green leading to Buxton road (**COM 19**).

### **4.3 Post Medieval (Figures 2 & 3)**

Three maps are available for charting the growth of the post-medieval and industrial town: the 1787 Sutton field map; Cawley's map of 1838 and the Ordnance Survey First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1871-2, and accordingly the post-medieval period has been divided into three phases.

#### **4.3.1 Settlement c 1787 (Figure 2)**

The earliest available map is the c1787, Sutton in Prestbury Field Map, which provides a partial coverage of the 18th century town. What has been mapped (**COM 20**) is intended to provide a preliminary indication of the extent of late 18th century Macclesfield, which requires definition through further research.

Expansion to the north along Jordangate and to the west along Chestergate perhaps took place in the first half of the 18th century, as did the newly settled areas to the north of King Edward Street and to the south of Great King Street, which included the building of the new Grammar School in 1768 and Christ Church in 1774. Expansion to the south in the vicinity of Park Green probably dates to the second

half of the 18th century. This was the first area to undergo industrial growth, and it was here that the first mill was built - Charles Roe's silk throwing mill of 1743, followed by the larger Daintry and Ryle's mill, in 1785.

#### **4.3.2 Settlement c 1838 (Figure 2)**

This phase (**COM 21**) sees the greatest period of growth in the town before the modern era. There was expansion on all sides of the town: to the north along Beech Lane as far as Beech bridge; to the west along Chester Road and over the former town fields; to the south along the Bollin valley into Sutton township; and to the east over the former common land (enclosed in 1804) as far as the Macclesfield Canal, which was opened in 1831 (**COM 22**), and into Hurdsfield township.

#### **4.3.3 Settlement c 1871 (Figure 3)**

The extent of the town c1871-2 (**COM 24**) has been mapped using the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map. Development was concentrated to the west where expansion over the old town fields continued. In 1866 the town's cemetery had been opened in the north-west area of the town.

A major influence on the development of the town was the construction of the various railway lines between 1845 and 1872 (**COM 23**), as demonstrated by the clustering of industries. This plan also provides a snapshot of the extent of the industrial works located within Macclesfield c 1871, which are clearly dominated by a large number of silk mills. Other industries included six breweries, eight dye works and a handful of cotton mills.

#### **4.4 Modern (Figure 4)**

**COM 25** depicts the extent of Macclesfield c 2000. There has been a considerable increase in the settled area, with major expansion to the west as far as Broken Cross, and to the north taking in Tytherington township.

### **5. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

#### **5.1 Above-Ground Remains**

There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument in Macclesfield, comprising three standing crosses of probable 11th century date. The crosses now stand in West Park, but were relocated from elsewhere (CSMR 1560). To the north there are two further Scheduled Ancient Monuments: a standing cross on the Prestbury Road (CSMR 1438) and a bowl barrow at Tytherington (CSMR 1552/1/2).

There are a number of Conservation Areas designated within Macclesfield, including the route of the Macclesfield Canal, an area on the Prestbury Road, the Chestergate area, the Park Green area and the Fence Avenue area. There are 85 listed buildings in Macclesfield borough. Seventeen of these are Grade II\*, while the remainder are Grade II. The medieval core is rich in historic buildings, with clusters along Chestergate, King Edward Street, Jordangate, Market Place and Courtside. Examples include: the Church of St Michael, Bate Hall public house on Chestergate,

which is of later 16th to early 17th century date, the Unitarian Chapel of 1690 behind King Edward Street, the Sunday School on Roe Street of 1813, now Macclesfield Heritage Centre, and Paradise Mill, a typical 19th-century silk mill and now an industrial museum. Macclesfield also retains the major components of its medieval street layout; although the surrounding area was extensively remodelled from the 18th century onwards with the insertion of new roads and later the railway.

## **5.2 Below-Ground Remains**

The only archaeological work known to have been carried out in Macclesfield took place in the vicinity of the Town Hall in 1987. Although this work was inadequately recorded, the photographic record suggests that archaeological deposits were encountered c 200mm below the ground surface. Unfortunately, the survival and preservation of deposits in the wider township cannot be assessed from this work alone. The importance of Macclesfield during the early medieval and medieval periods, as well as its significance during the industrial period, should make an appraisal of its archaeological resource a priority and its protection imperative.

## **6. PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK**

### **6.1 General**

The study of Macclesfield forms part of a national research priority to examine the origins and development of medieval small towns and rural markets (English Heritage 1997, 49).

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

- PC6 Late Saxon to medieval
- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c1300-1700AD)

### **6.2 Early Medieval**

- Establish the location and extent of the early medieval settlement

### **6.3 Medieval**

- Establish the location and extent of the manor site. Was there a motte and bailey castle established here?
- Examine whether there was settlement in the area of the medieval town pre-dating the foundation of the borough in the early 13th century
- Establish the precise location of settlement areas and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish the nature and extent of buildings on settlement plots.
- Establish the date of foundation of the medieval church, examine phases of expansion and contraction.
- Examine evidence for medieval trade and industry.
- Establish the foundation of the market place; did Park Green originate as a market area?

## 6.4 Post Medieval

- Establish precise location of settlement areas and date the phases of expansion.
- Examine evidence for post medieval trade and industry, establish to what extent trade and industry encouraged the growth of the town and identify what form this expansion took.
- Examine the impact of the canal and railways upon domestic and industrial development.
- The development of the silk industry has already been studied as part of the East Cheshire Textile Mill Survey; any threat to a mill site would need to be checked against the survey evidence to establish whether further work was required. The survey did not include any form of recommendations for future research or management.

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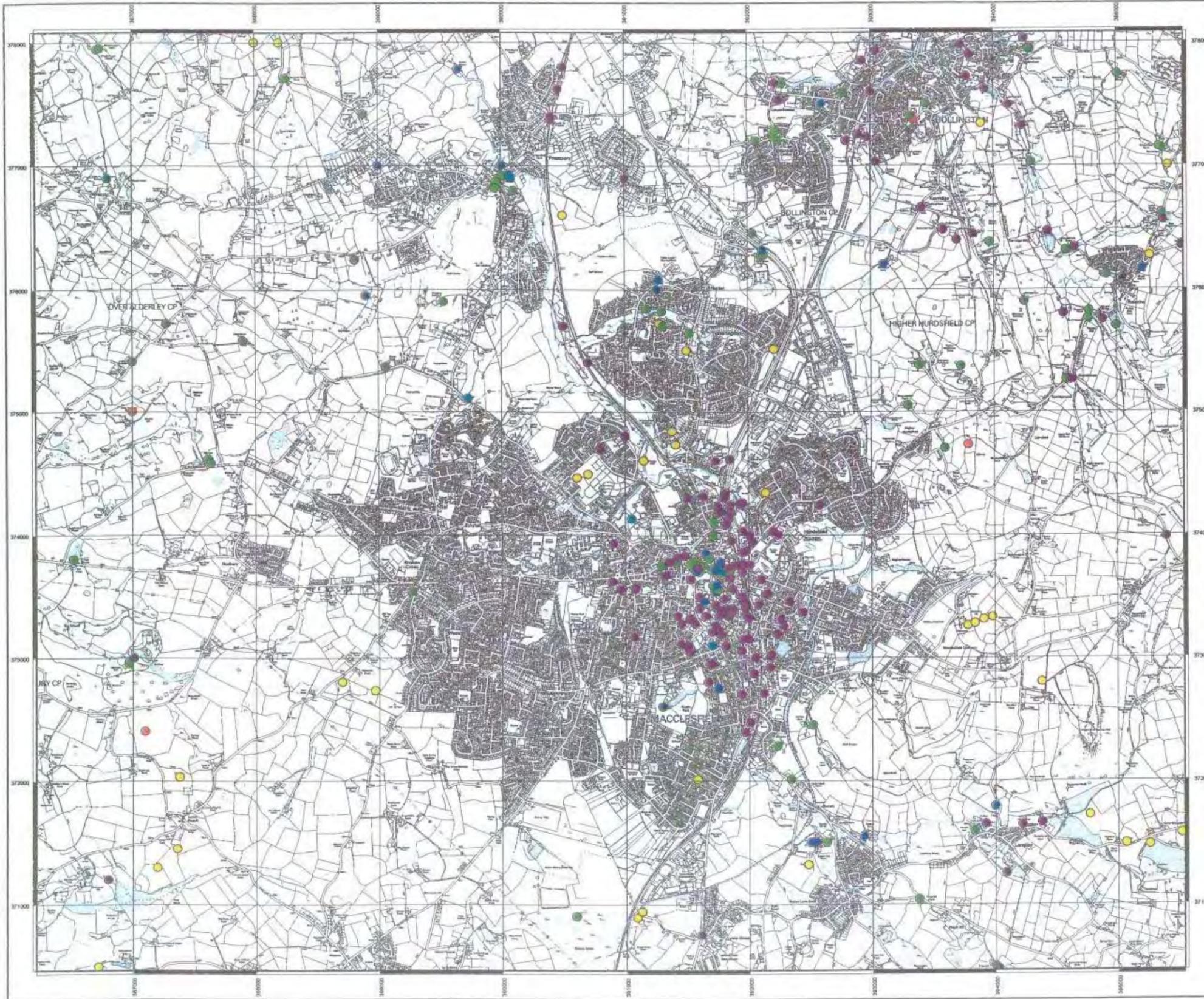
## 8. ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Macclesfield and the Surrounding Area

Figure 2: The Development of Macclesfield

Figure 3: Macclesfield c 1871-2

Figure 4: Macclesfield c 2000



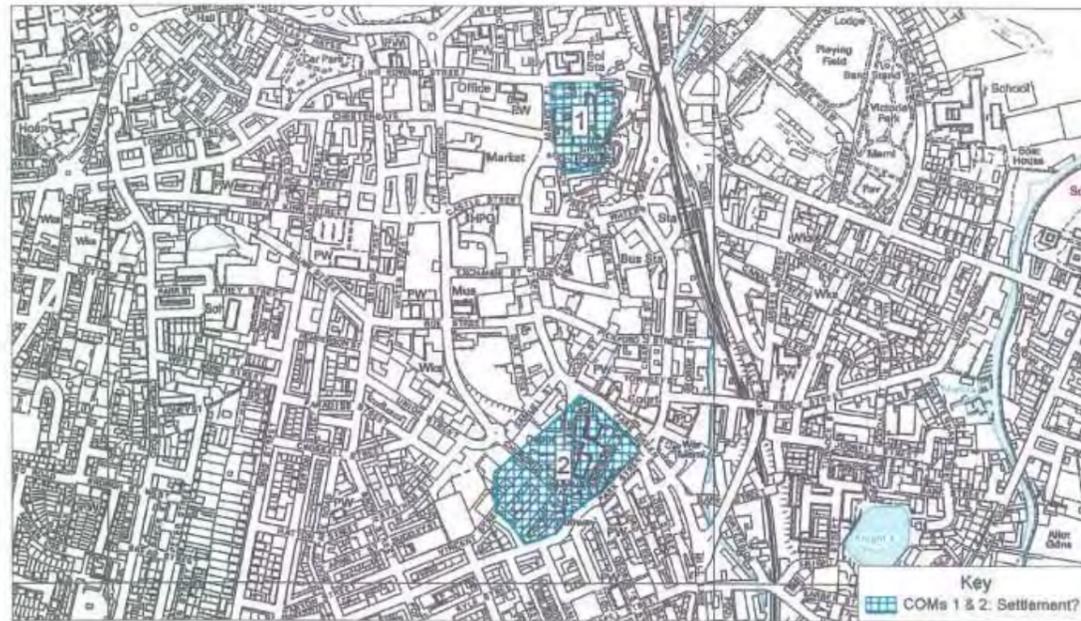
**Figure 1**  
**Macclesfield and the Surrounding Area**

- Sites and Monuments Record**
- Prehistoric
  - Romano-British
  - Early Medieval
  - Medieval
  - Post Medieval
  - Modern

1:30000

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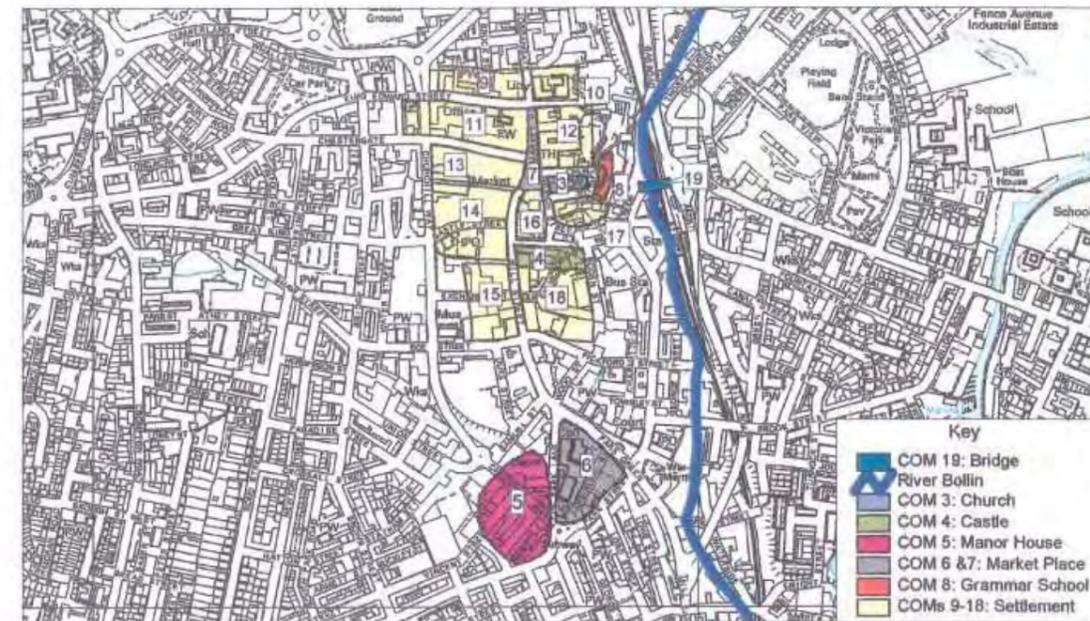
Figure 2: The Development of Macclesfield



Early Medieval

0 100 200 Metres

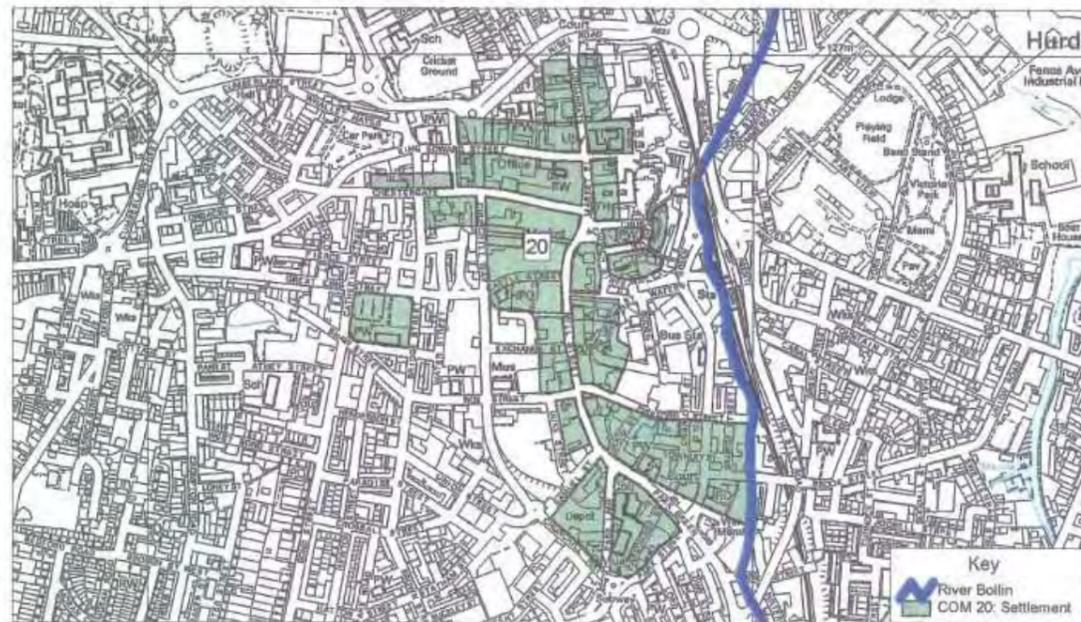
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Medieval

0 200 400 Metres

1:10000



Post Medieval c 1787

0 200 400 Metres

1:10000



Post Medieval c 1838

0 200 400 Metres

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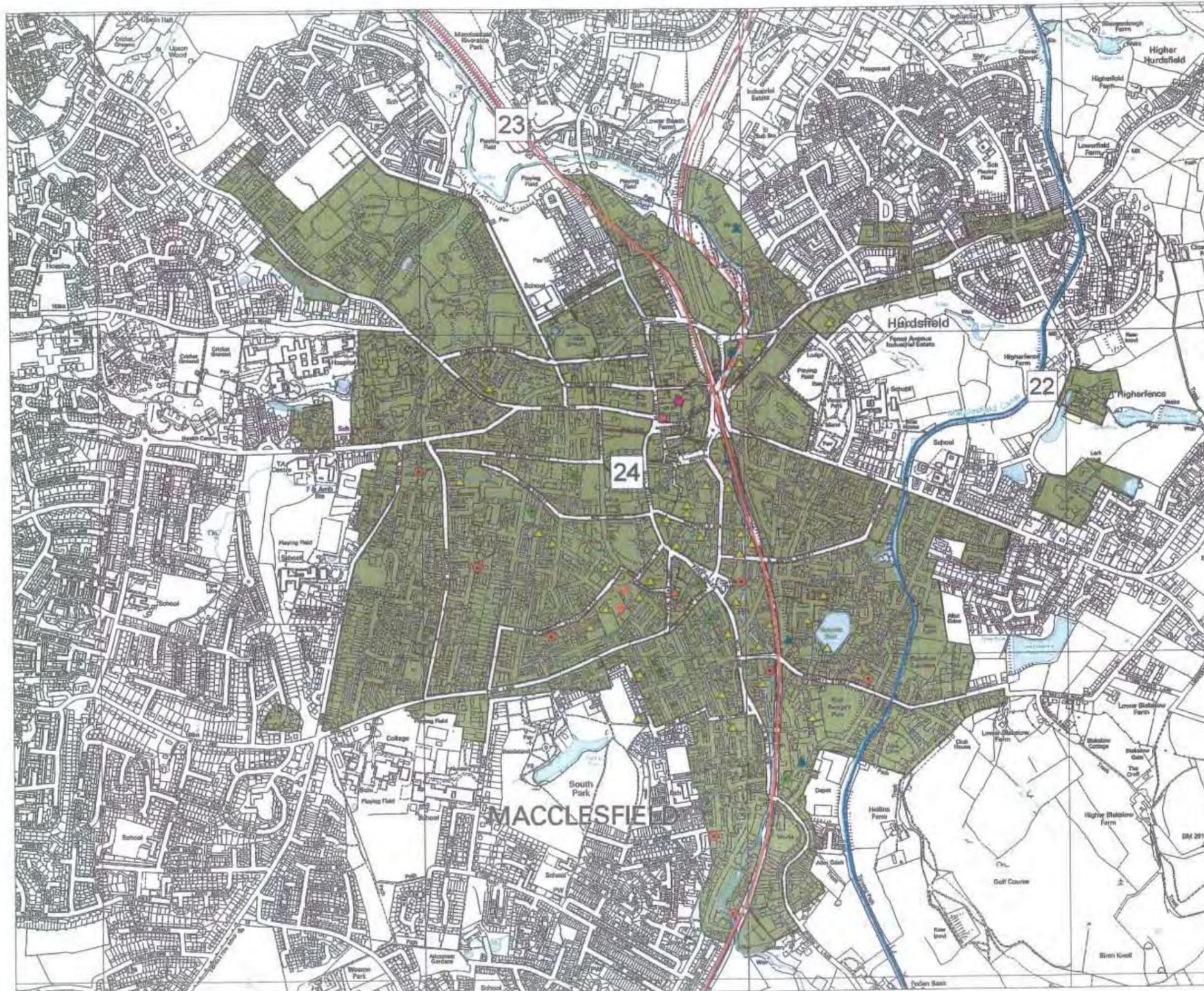


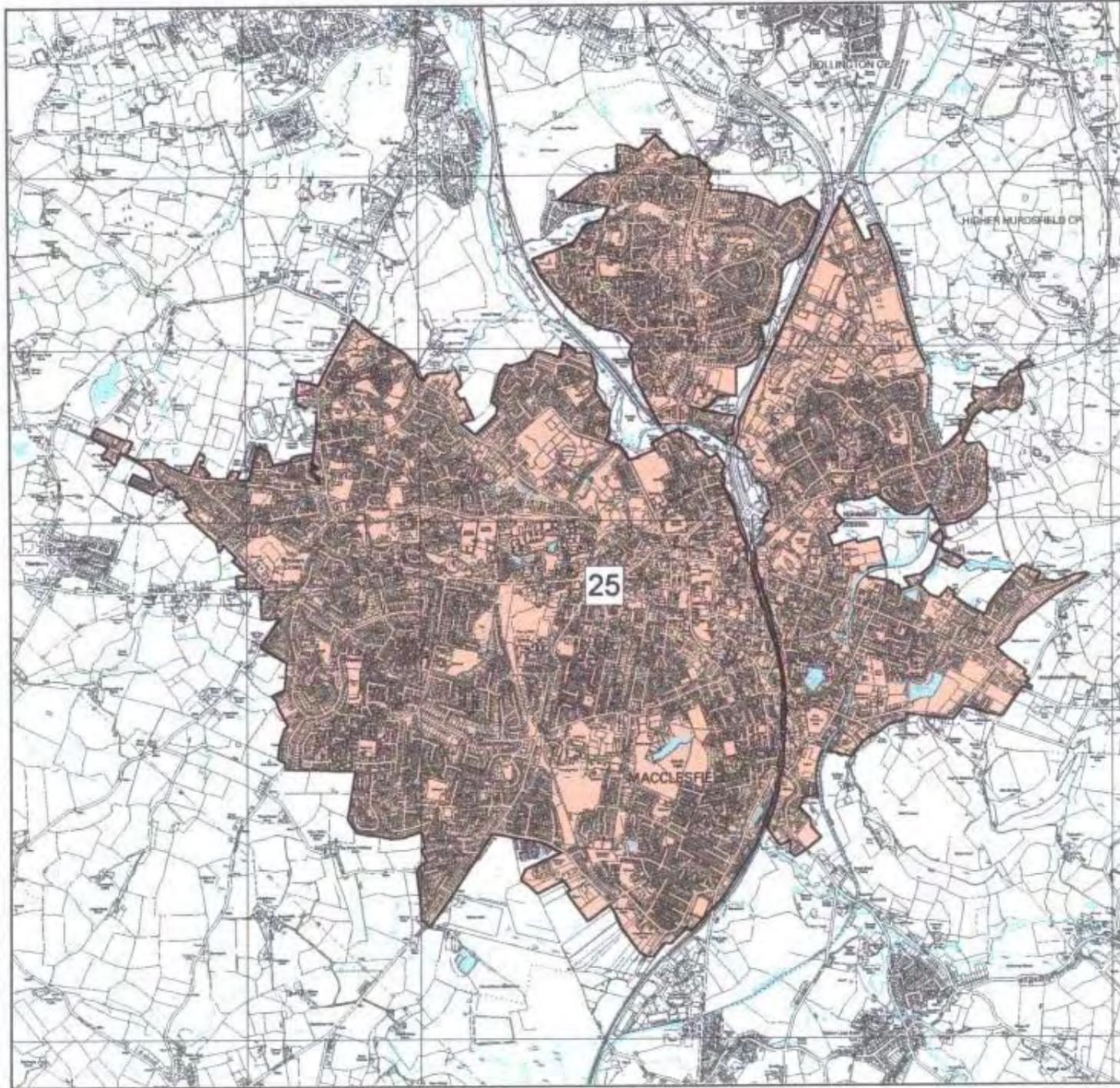
Figure 3  
Macclesfield c 1871-2

- Key
- Railway Station
  - COM 22: Macclesfield Canal
  - COM 23: LNWR
  - COM 23: MSLR
  - Silk Mill
  - Cotton Mill
  - Other Mill
  - Dye Works
  - Brewery
  - Gas Works
  - Works
  - Work House
  - Town Hall
  - Shambles
  - Grammar School
  - COM 24: Settlement

1:12000

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Figure 4: Macclesfield c 2000



1:35000

0 0.5 1 Kilometres

**Key**

 COM 25: Settlement



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