

# **GREAT ALT CAR CONSERVATION AREA**



## **CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**November 2006**

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## **PREFACE**

This appraisal is part of a programme of appraisals of all the current and proposed conservation areas in West Lancashire.

The District Council has an obligation under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review, from time to time, its conservation area designations and consider any new areas, and under Section 71 of this Act, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

When West Lancashire's existing conservation areas were designated in the 1970's and 1980's it was generally recognised that these areas were of a special character which warranted preservation and enhancement. However, very little was actually written down as to which features were important in this respect. English Heritage now recommend the carrying out of appraisals which will allow a full assessment of the characteristics of existing and proposed conservation areas. This will enable the Council to decide whether the conservation area still has sufficient character to warrant its designation or whether the area needs extending in any way.

The appraisals will also highlight the implications for the future preservation and enhancement of a conservation area.

The policies on conservation areas contained within the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted July 2006) form the basis for determining planning applications for development in these areas. This appraisal should be read in conjunction with these policies and will form a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications and planning appeals. The relevant policies are included in Appendix C.

The appraisals will also provide a basis for: reviewing conservation area boundaries; guiding future local authority action in preparing enhancement schemes and in guiding the actions of others; and, where appropriate, increasing planning controls.

It is intended that these issues will be considered in full consultation with local residents and landowners, local interest groups, the Parish Council, the Conservation Areas Advisory Panel and Lancashire County Council.

Finally, this document will hopefully raise awareness of the special qualities of the Conservation Area so that as the area continues to evolve, it does so in a sympathetic way and the essential character of the area is maintained for future generations.

### **What is a Conservation Area?**

A conservation area is an area of "special architectural or historic interest", the character of which is considered worthy of protection and improvement. It is the combination of the buildings, street patterns, open spaces, vistas, landmarks and other features which give a conservation area its distinctive character. This character should be the focus of efforts towards preservation and enhancement.

Under Planning Legislation the local authority has wider powers than usual to control development which might damage the area's character. The controls which exist in conservation areas are contained at the end of this document.

It is important that there is a consensus on the quality and importance of a particular conservation area in order to assist in its maintenance and enhancement. To be successful, conservation policy must be a partnership between West Lancashire District Council and the many interests involved in the conservation area's future.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Great Altcar Conservation Area was designated by West Lancashire District Council in 1985. The Conservation Area covers an area of approximately 15 hectares, is situated in Great Altcar parish and centres on the section of Lord Sefton Way (B5195) between Short Croft Lane and Broad Lane. The area has a number of working farm properties.

By far the greater percentage of the properties within the Conservation Area are tenanted and owned by the Leverhulme Estate (see map overleaf).

There are a number of older properties complemented by later development up to and including modern development from the twentieth century.

## **LOCATION AND SETTING**

Great Altcar like much of the Lancashire Plain has a recent geological history affected by glacial deposits derived largely by the retreating ice sheet in the Irish Sea called Northern Drift. The coarse textured glacial deposits overlay the whole area to varying depths.

The more recent deposits of sand, alluvium and peat reflect the subsequent sea-level changes that followed the glacial period. As the ice sheet melted there was a marked rise in sea-level flooding most of the land below the present 8 metre contour along the Lancashire coast, forming a new coastline, known as the Hillhouse Coastline. This ancient coastline, marked by a sharp drop in levels and a line of pine woodland can still be seen running northwards from Altcar up to Shirdley Hill, Bescar, Holmeswood and Mere Brow.

As the sea level later started to retreat back to its present day position due largely because of isostatic re-adjustment (when the land bounces back due to the weight of the ice being removed) the land was colonised by trees and as drainage became more difficult fens and reedswamps established. In such conditions the moss and peat deposits formed in a large crescent south of the Ribble estuary and bounded by the old Hillhouse Coastline.

The significance of the area around Great Altcar and the peat deposit is recognised in the fact that the large peat deposit is known as the *Altcar* deposit in the soil association map of Lancashire.

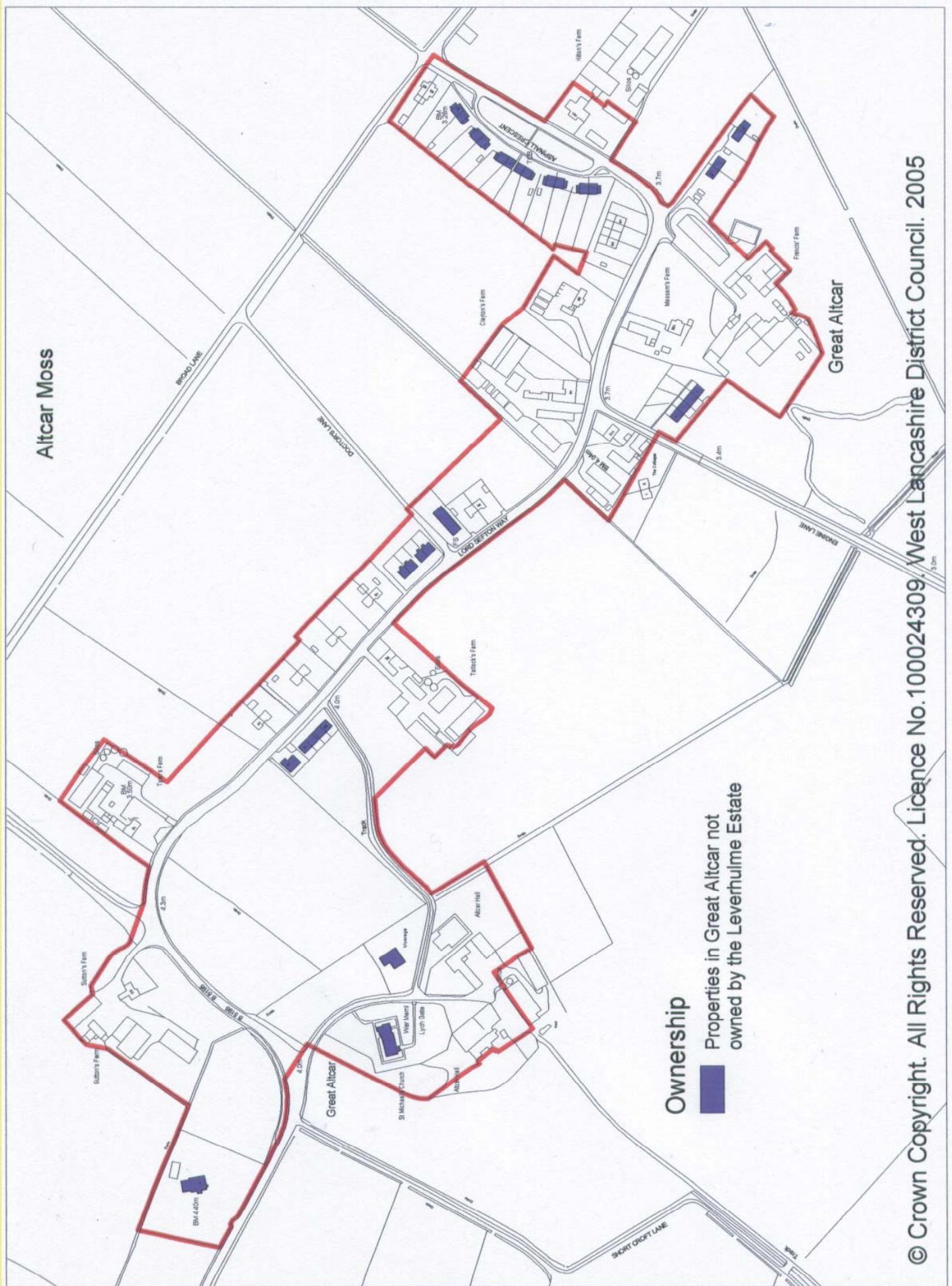
### **Location and Landscape Setting**

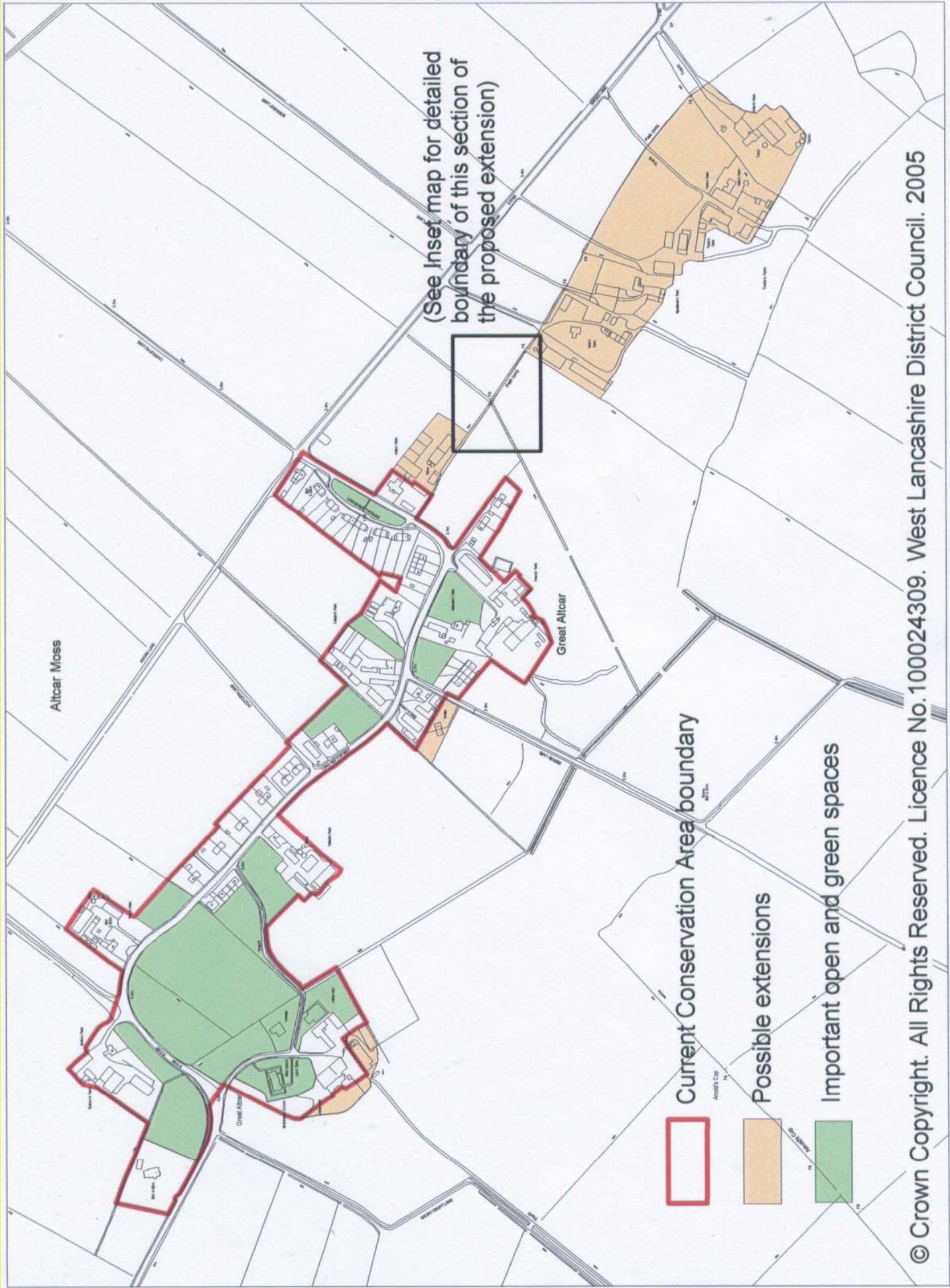
Great Altcar Parish lies to the extreme south east corner of West Lancashire District. An agricultural parish, Great Altcar extends for several miles along the north side of the meandering river Alt and is surrounded by low-lying agricultural land, crossed by numerous field drains. Woodland is relatively scarce in this area. The population is sparsely scattered; the 2001 census recorded only 243 people in the entire parish.

Great Altcar village is located in the north western part of the parish at NGR SD323064 (centred). The settlement is situated approximately 7 miles (11km) west of Ormskirk and 2 miles (3km) east of Formby. The village is situated on ground approximately 5m aOD in an

area known as Altcar Moss, a little to the east of Downholland Brook. The Geological formation consists of the lower Keuper sandstone of the trias or new red sandstone occasionally obscured by fluvial and blown sand.

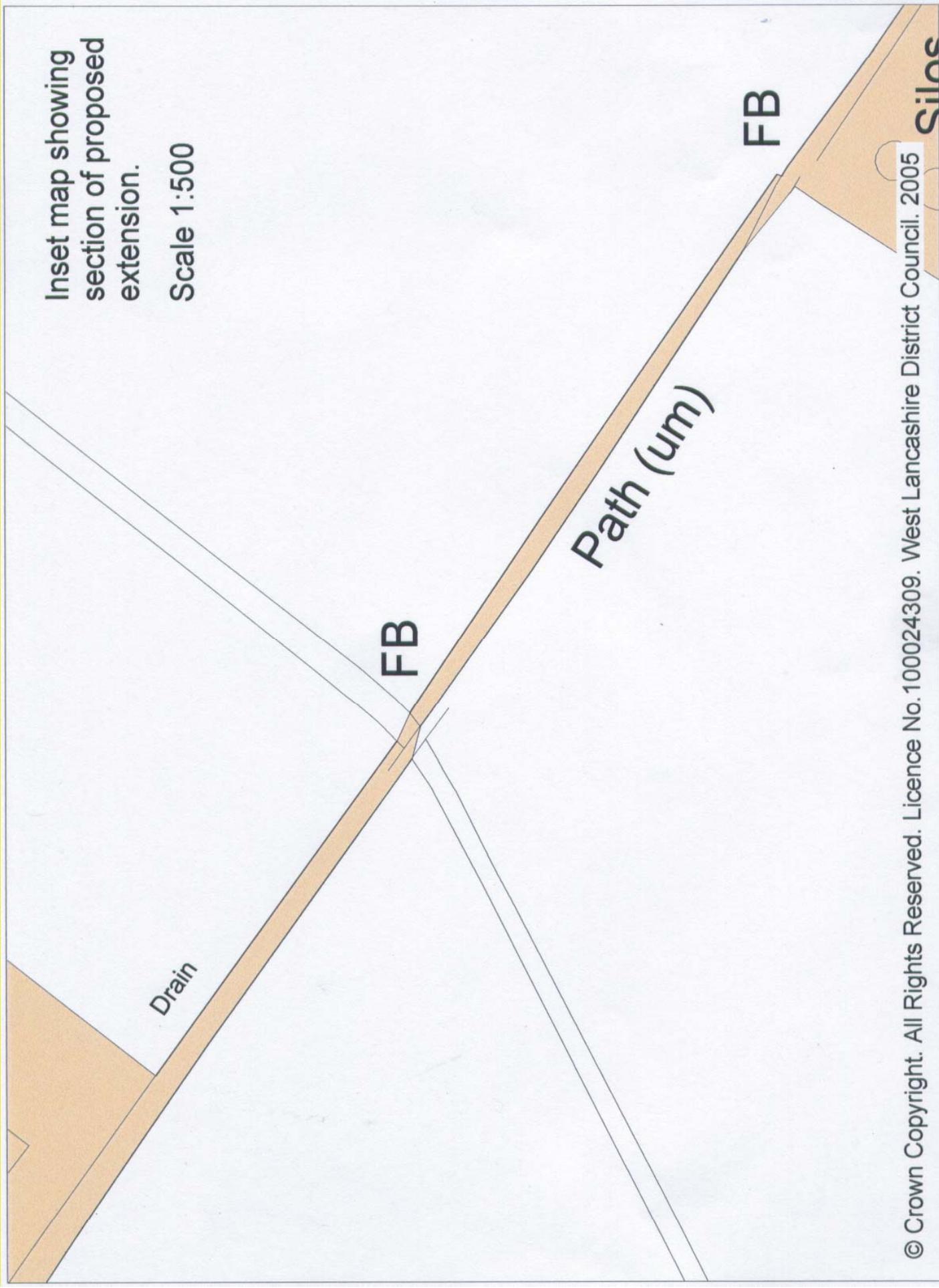
The village is built on land reclaimed from the sea; a process started in the Medieval period but mostly carried out in the nineteenth century. Floods were a perennial problem and there are records of the farmers travelling about their land by boat and crossing fields by boat to milk the cows. Such was the extent of the floods that it is recorded that one could skate from Altcar to Sefton after a severe frost. Floodgates were built on the River Alt to assist with the land drainage, these had to be re-built several times due to severe weather and there were several large floods that caused a great amount of damage to property and buildings. Records state that in 1720 a great sea storm flooded over 660 acres of land. From the Victorian period, hedges started to take over from the drainage ditches in terms of division of fields but there are still many drains to be seen today. In 1901 the division of fields by hawthorn hedges was identified as typical of the character of the area. The Environment Agency still identifies most of this area as having a risk of flooding. It has been classed as 'moderate'; this means that the chance of flooding each year is 1.3% (1 in 75) or less, but greater than 0.5% (1 in 200).





Inset map showing  
section of proposed  
extension.

Scale 1:500



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*A typical land drain*

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### **The Environment Agency's Floodrisk Assessment**

- Flooding from rivers or sea without defences
- Extent of extreme flood
- Flood defences

Illness or fevers due to the damp marshy conditions were prevalent in Altcar. In 1728, 47 people died out of a population of probably less than 150.

Lack of good communications with other areas meant that Great Altcar, as with many rural villages, had to be virtually self-sufficient for many years. This characteristic is reflected in the names of the fields and areas surrounding the village (as is the early ownership by the Abbey):

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Joins (Joiners) Land | • Swine Croft                |
| • Cobbler's Acre       | • Coward's (Cowherd's) Field |
| • Farrier's Marsh      | • Priest Carrs               |
| • Doctor's Yard        | • Monks Carrs                |
| • Doctor's Lane        | • God's Croft                |
| • Hemp Yard            | • Salt Fields                |
| • Hogshill             | • Oxen-house Field           |

Many of the farms around Altcar are named after the original occupiers, many of which (and / or their descendants) can be found commemorated in the graveyard.

The flat even ground lends itself well to hare coursing and this was a regular event until it was banned in 2005. The main event was the annual Waterloo Cup.



Altcar's agricultural legacy is demonstrated by the determination of its inhabitants to propagate all they could. The introduction of potatoes to Altcar happened in 1565 when an Irish ship carrying potatoes was wrecked near North Meols. The residents of Altcar gathered the spoil from the wreckage and planted them in the fields near Altcar, introducing a planting tradition that remains to this day.

*Potato fields at Great Altcar, with the village in the background*

### **Important Views**

Due to the low lying mossland on which the village is built and surrounding this area, views are far reaching all around the conservation area extending out over open fields to the slightly raised ground in the far distance.

Views of nearby farms that developed along the slightly raised ground ridge on which Great Altcar stands are also important, given that the character of the parish is of scattered farmsteads. These farms tend to be surrounded by clumps of screening trees giving them a very specific character within the flat, low lying landscape. Views up Broad Lane and across the fields, between Sutton's and Tyrer's Farms, of Formby's Farm in the distance are typical of this. In addition, at the other end of the village, views of the farms in the proposed extension to the conservation area are similar. Heye's Farm is the first seen from the village.



*Heye's Farm*



*Formby's Farm*

On entering the conservation area from Formby, the views of the church are similar, with a screening copse of trees surrounding the building. Views of the church itself, when the trees are not in leaf can also be considered to be significant both when approaching from Formby and across the fields from outside Tyrer's Farm.

All these views emphasise the rural, agricultural and isolated nature of the settlement.

Views within the village are few, as the meandering road and sparsely scattered nature of the buildings precludes any major viewpoints.

## **HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**

### **Early Development**

The place name, Great Altcar, is thought to mean '*greater (place by the) marsh on the (river) Alt*' - from the Old Scandinavian *kjarr*, 'marsh'. This word has now been transformed into 'carr' and is often found as part of location names around the Altcar area. The river has a Celtic name meaning 'muddy one'.

The first written records of the settlement date from 1086 when Altcar was mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was held by Uctred and was assessed as 'waste' and given no value. It was the only manor to be described as such in the whole hundred. It is thought this may be due to the destruction and desolation caused by William the Conqueror's army when they encountered fierce opposition in the north. In addition only 90 acres were cultivated at the time of the survey.

In c.1206 William Blundell was granted licence to make a millpool on the river Alt. It is recorded in 1228 that the area should be 'disafforested' and there are later records of many great trees, mainly oaks, buried in the moss and carr lands of Altcar. These trees, together with the horns and bones of wild animals, were regularly turned up by ploughs and were also found when the drain-sluices were dug.

Henry III (1216-72) granted royal estates in the area to Ranulf, Earl of Chester who died in 1232 and the land passed to his sister, Agnes, wife of William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby. At some point before 1238 they bestowed Altcar on the Cistercian Abbey of Miravalle (Merivale) in Warwickshire. The monks started improvements, initially by draining land and sending monks from the abbey to farm the fields. 1383-4 the monks also gained the grange of Altcar, mill and crofts which had previously been withheld from them.

Around 1440 Sir Richard Molyneux of Sefton attempted to persuade the monks to exchange the manor of Altcar for land he owned in Sefton. This transaction was not carried through but it shows the Molyneux family's early interest in Altcar.

The abbot of Miravalle finally decided to lease the Altcar manor, grange and lordship to Robert Molyneux of Hawton in 1537. Due to the Dissolution of English monasteries under Henry VIII the ownership of the area passed to the crown, which then sold the manor and the grange to Sir Richard Molyneux of Sefton in 1543 or 1558 for £1,000. The family retained the manor until the 1970s.

Great Altcar appears as Alkar at the edge of the moss on an early map of Lancashire dated 1598. The hearth tax assessment of 1666 found only four houses with 3 hearths or more in Altcar, with Alt Grange being taxed for five.

### **The Oates Plot**

Titus Oates was an Informer who concocted the tale of a 'Popish Plot' in 1678. This caused much panic in England and led to the persecution of Roman Catholics, which for a time was maintained at public expense, and men went in fear of his accusations. In February 1681 eight officers came to Altcar to seize the goods of John Sutton and Margery Tickle who were

accused in the panic. The officers seized cattle and attempted to lead them away but were opposed by approximately 20 men and women with staffs, pitchforks and muskets who fought and won against the officers, severely injuring six.

In his youth Titus Oates was expelled from school and University, briefly imprisoned for libel and expelled from being a chaplain in the navy. As chaplain to the Protestants in the Duke of Norfolk's household he became involved in generating anti-Catholic propaganda. In 1676 he was commissioned to produce criticisms of the Jesuits and the following year he became a Roman Catholic in order to infiltrate the Jesuit College at Valladolid in Spain. Expelled after five months, in 1678 Oates claimed, falsely, before the Privy Council that there was a Jesuit plot to kill Charles II. The 'Popish Plot' led to the conviction and murder of around thirty-five men. Oates was later sentenced to life imprisonment for perjury and was flogged but he was pardoned after James II was deposed in 1688. He was then released and given a pension but could not give up his religious dabbling, being later expelled from the Baptist church after becoming a regular preacher.

### **Later Development**

Infill development between the farms appears to have begun in the mid-nineteenth century with houses built by the Sefton Estate for agricultural tenants. Many of the 'estate' houses in the village carry datestones and relate to a more intense period of building in the early twentieth century (1913, 1914, 1916, 1920, 1923, 1930). Towards the end of this period, private semi-detached residences were built in a small close called Aspinall Crescent to the north-eastern part of the village. In addition West Lancashire Rural District Council built two pairs of semi-detached council properties in 1927. Further small scale development has continued during the twentieth century, including the provision of a further new vicarage (see below) opposite the church.

When the 7<sup>th</sup> Lord Sefton died in 1972 with no children, the 1000 year old Molyneux family came to an end and with it their connection with the village. The estate was divided up and sold, with Lord Leverhulme purchasing Great Altcar. Many of the houses have remained as 'estate' houses with agricultural tenants.

### **The Church**

The earliest reference to a church at Altcar (Chapel of St Mary) dates from 1429 but it is known that a priest was working at Altcar as early as 1292. It is thought there were several earlier churches on the site, the second to last being built in 1746 and pulled down in 1879 to make way for the current church: St Michael and All Angels, donated by the Earl of Sefton and designed by the architect, John Douglas of Chester. A font, which was previously recorded as situated in the graveyard, is said to have come from the 1747 church, it is now reported to be located in the chapel at the Great Altcar training camp.



## The School

The 1845 and 1892 maps record the presence of a school at Altcar, though it is shown that the school moved location between these periods. The school in 1845 was located in the buildings at 93/95 Lord Sefton Way, now split into two semi-detached dwellings. The Sefton family sponsored a new school built in 1865 to the east of Clayton's Farm. The school rooms to the rear were demolished and only the Master's House survives. The plot was used for a while as the works / maintenance yard for the Leverhulme Estate. The house has now been converted into a tenanted residence and at the time of writing is empty.



*93/95 Lord Sefton Way*



*School House, 83 Lord Sefton Way*

## The Public House

Altcar Hall was, c.1646 assigned as a parsonage house, with orchards, gardens, yards, stables and outhouses. A new Vicarage was built in 1858 and after this it became an inn and has now been demolished. Other records<sup>1</sup> state there was a public house called 'The Brow' almost opposite a thatched cottage located opposite Sutton's Farm. At a push this could refer to the same building, although the location is difficult to exactly pinpoint from the description and there are records of several buildings having been demolished in this area.

## The Post Office and Village Hall

Only one reference was found to a Post Office at Altcar, stating that it was located on the site of the present parish hall, close to the church<sup>2</sup>. This record relates to the previous parish hall, a dilapidated wooden structure that has since been demolished. The present village hall is a prefabricated structure located in the centre of the village on Lord Sefton Way and was donated to the village by Lord Leverhulme.

## The Railways

The settlement was an isolated community for many hundreds of years cut off from the outside world due to poor roads and lack of other communication. The construction of the Liverpool (via Formby) to Southport railway in 1848 provided a railway station within a

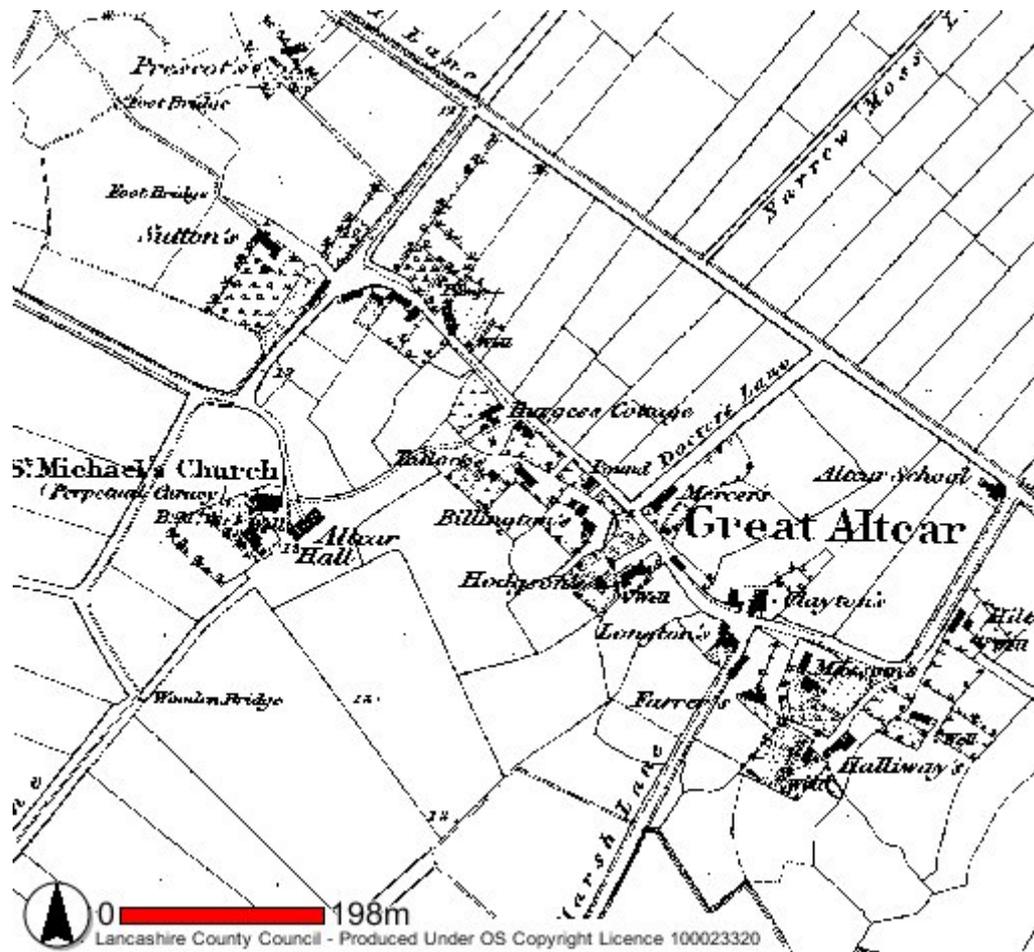
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<sup>1</sup> Palliser. 2002.

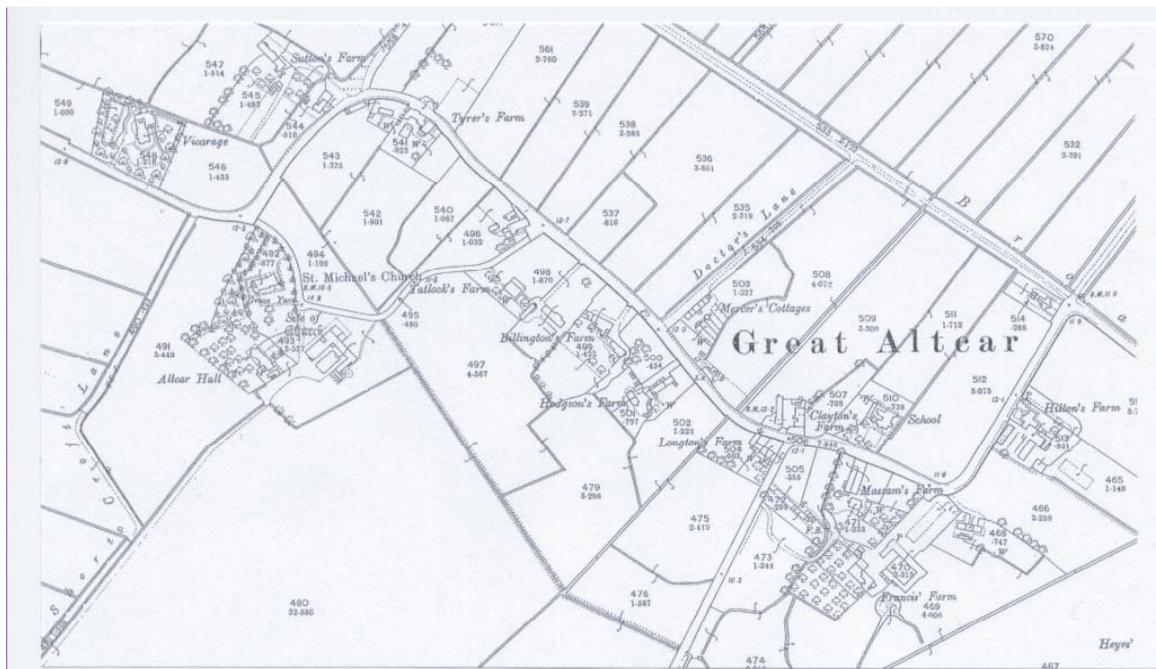
<sup>2</sup> Palliser. 2002.



Plan 5: Map of 1845 showing Great Altcar and Area



Plan 6: Map of 1892 showing Great Altcar and Area



## LAND USES

The 'feel' of the village is agricultural and many working farms still exist in the conservation area and in the land outside. Farms in this area developed where they could on the slightly higher rises of ground that projected above the marshes so there is no wonder that several grouped together in this area. There are additionally a fair proportion of residential properties, built for the agricultural workers.

Settlement is only relatively dense around the eastern end of the village and this is mostly due to later in-fill development. The rest of the village can be characterised as dispersed ribbon settlement.

The later stages of the development of the settlement are indicative of the development of many small rural settlements, clustering around the old hall and the church, developing and gaining new facilities such as the school, post office and inn only to loose them again later.

The western area holds the church and the three buildings that have been variously used as vicarages. These tend to be large detached dwellings in spacious grounds.

There are many old fruit trees scattered around the conservation area, probably the remains of the old orchards shown on the historic maps, that would have been a feature of farms and are now a feature of the landscape.

There is a small playground and a pumping station to the eastern side of Engine Lane where it meets Lord Sefton Way. Other open space includes the area to the front of the houses on Aspinall Crescent. Generally gardens are relatively large and open and fields intersperse the buildings. The open space and fields between the houses and farms adds significantly to its rural character. The location of the village hall in the centre of the village on Lord Sefton Way makes it accessible for all.

## BUILDING FEATURES

Great Altcar Conservation Area has five structures that have been identified as being of special architectural or historic interest and which have been provided statutory protection through the Listing system.

### Listed Buildings

#### *St Michael and All Angels Church*

The earliest reference to a church at Altcar dates from 1429 but it is known that a priest was working at Altcar as early as 1292. Elizabethan maps show a building with a square tower, which may have been an early church that in 1746 made way for another. This in turn was pulled down in the 1870s to allow the existing church to be built. The famous architect, John Douglas of Chester, designed St Michael and All Angels. The new church was built to the north of the earlier.

The current building has been cited as a fine example of the Victorian Vernacular Revivalist Style and is a Grade II\* Listed Building, built in 1879 by the Earl of Sefton. The building is of a timber-framed construction on a brick plinth with a red tiled roof. Repairs to the timber frame were undertaken in 1996.

#### *Lychgate*

Located approximately 20m south of the church, this grade II listed lychgate is timber-framed with a stone slate roof. It is probably also designed by Douglas.



#### *Dutch Barn at Francis' Farm*

A late 19<sup>th</sup> century dutch barn of steel and brick with a slate roof. This enormous barn is listed grade II due to its value as a group with Francis' Farmhouse. Locally these barns are known as 'Sefton barns' and there are several in the area, although some have been clad / altered hiding their massive brick pillars and buttresses. Internally these barns sometimes retain the immense sandstone slabs covering a large well.

### *Francis' Farmhouse*

This brick built farmhouse has a plaque on the front dated 1806, it is listed grade II.

### *Longton's Farmhouse*

A small grade II thatched farmhouse, probably dating to the mid eighteenth century, with a modern extension to the rear. Longton's and Francis' farmhouses are particularly important as they represent the agricultural roots of the community of Altcar and typically represent the development through time of the farming community and character of properties within the area.

### **Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest**

***LLB33 & LLB34 - 93 and 95 Lord Sefton Way*** on the extreme northern boundary of the conservation area were once the village school, as mentioned above. This building is now split into two semi-detached properties.

### **Important Unlisted Buildings**

In addition to the above listed buildings, there are other buildings of historic interest which contribute to the character of the area and its attractive appearance. These buildings have no statutory protection and are most at risk from harmful alterations, and in some cases have already been subject to substantial changes.

- All the 'estate' houses / buildings have an identifiable style of architecture, which continues throughout the whole timespan of building with very slight differences which relate to the period in which they were built and the prevalent or popular architectural style of those times. All these buildings reflect a particular period of development for Altcar and have strong historical links to the ownership and expansion of the village. These buildings include: Sutton's Farm, Tyrer's Farm, Tatlock's Farm the four pairs of semi-detached properties along Lord Sefton Way (47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59 and 61), Tatlock's Farm, 85-91 Lord Sefton Way. This architectural style continues with the farms to the east that have been suggested for inclusion in the Conservation Area and The Cottages, down Engine Lane, which have also been recommended for inclusion.



- The numerous farm outbuildings, barns, stables and so on (especially those of brick) and the unlisted farmhouses are indicative of the agricultural character of the area and must therefore be considered to be of importance. Considering the vast numbers of these structures it has not been possible to identify all those of importance on the map overleaf and therefore it should be assumed that all agricultural buildings and structures are of at least some interest.
- The Old Vicarage, 1 Lord Sefton Way, is an imposing detached Victorian property. It is a brick built property with a slate roof, Georgian style sash windows and an ornate Baroque style dutch gabled porch. It also has nicely styled soldier arches of gauged bricks over the windows.
- Altcar Hall Farmhouse is a long low four bay traditional farmhouse built in Flemish bond. The rear of the property has been haphazardly extended on several occasions; there is also a Victorian coach house at the rear. The large barn / stable complex at the farm is also of interest and reputedly has a cruck frame surviving.
- The picturesque row of four terraced cottages on Engine Lane behind the playground are also of interest and are accessed via an unadopted track.
- School House, 83 Lord Sefton Way, has a slightly more defined Victorian gothic revival style than the other estate properties and is of interest historically.

The properties within the conservation area can be divided into four distinct character types, using architectural and historical criteria:

- Early farms and associated buildings
- 'Estate' houses and associated buildings
- Inter-war non-estate houses
- Late twentieth century development

These are shown on the plan overleaf.

### **Other Important Features**

The **churchyard** is an attractive feature and greatly contributes to the setting of the Church and the Lychgate, both Listed structures.

There are a number of mature and attractive **trees** in and around the Conservation Area, especially those screening trees, mentioned above, surrounding the churchyard and the outlying farms. The old fruit trees showing the areas of old orchards have also been mentioned and are of value, contributing to the setting of the buildings and the special character of the Conservation Area. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the Area but there is special provision for trees in conservation areas under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring notification prior to work being undertaken allowing the Local Planning Authority time to consider whether a TPO should be made.

Boundaries include the stone walls around the churchyard and some of the roads and properties. Traditional **hedges** surrounding gardens and fields appear to be mostly hawthorn interspersed with common hedgerow plants such as elder and bramble. Many more fields have drainage ditches as boundaries and these can be havens for wildlife. These boundary features greatly contribute to the character of the Area. The Leverhulme Estate has recently

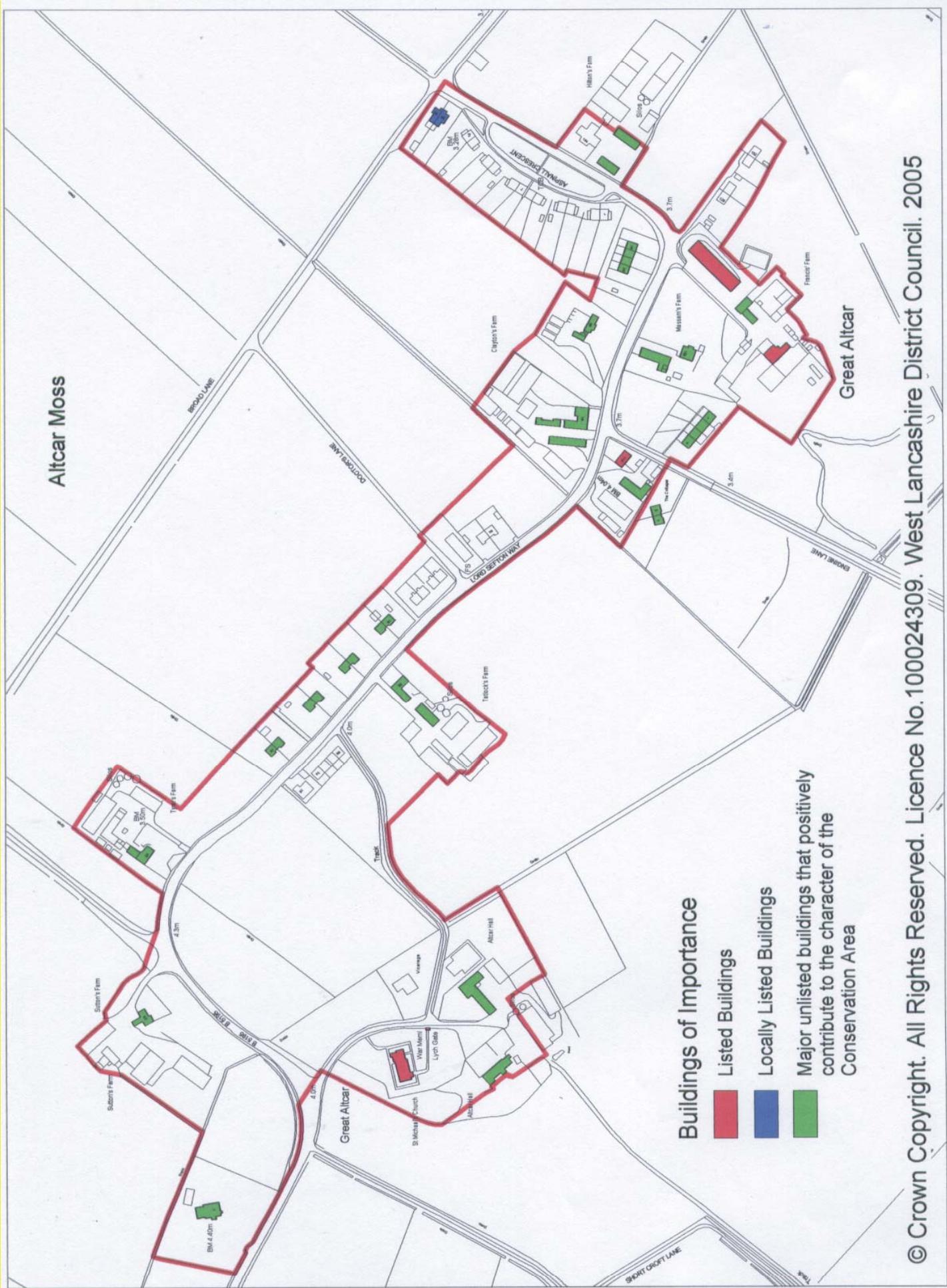
undertaken a programme of hedge replanting along Broad Lane, just outside the conservation area.

Most of the residential 'estate' properties have attractive metal **gates** with a consistent style of mostly vertical bars with flattened ends, alternating in height.

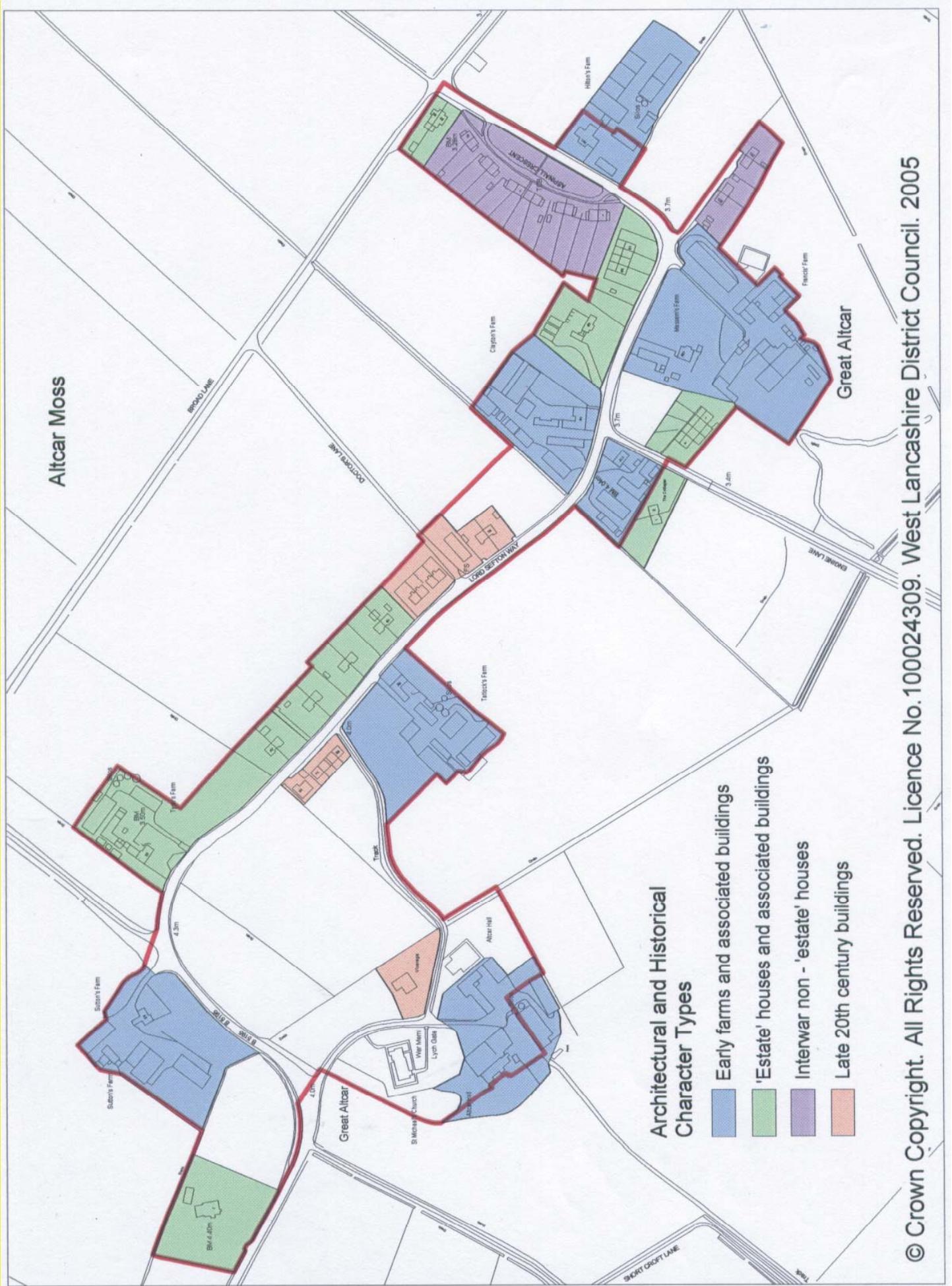
The **open spaces**, green areas and fields all contribute to the rural character of the village.

In terms of hard standing, the **cobbled farmyards** are a feature of this Area that should be protected and encouraged.

There is a **public footpath** that leads from the village, along the side of Hilton's Farm to the outlying farms to the east. If the proposed boundary change is adopted then this will be an important link between the farms and the village.



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## PRESSURES AND DETRACTING FEATURES

The Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The effect on the character or appearance of the area has to be considered in all development. Policies EN4 and EN5 in the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan (see Appendix C) provide the basis on which the Council will consider all development in the conservation area.

However protecting the special character of the area cannot be carried out in isolation. A substantial amount of the changes, both to buildings and the surrounding land and natural features does not come under the control of the Local Authority. Minor changes, may appear small seen in isolation but the cumulative effect can, over time, harm the special character of the area. The long term future of the Great Altcar Conservation Area relies a great deal on the sustainable and sensitive approach of the residents who live in the area and the other interested parties, such as the Leverhulme Estate.

Often within Conservation Areas the **street furniture** can be considered to be a detracting feature, however with Great Altcar the lack of street furniture is itself an issue as there are no places to stop and savour the special character of the area. The only 'street' furniture is in the churchyard. The Area might benefit from some high quality furniture although care must be taken not to 'clutter' the streetscene.

There is a variety of **lighting** in the area, which does not positively contribute to the character of the area. There are some lights that are not on columns but attached to telegraph poles and these are particularly untidy. There is one attractive cast column close to the lychgate near the church, this could benefit from some repair and maintenance work. The low light levels can be considered to be appropriate and to replace the existing lighting is likely to affect the appearance and character of the conservation area, especially if extra columns were needed to fulfil current highway requirements. Therefore we would not look to provide replacements, except to examine options for those that are attached to telegraph poles. The overhead cables in some parts of the conservation area are also a detracting feature and if the opportunity arose to have the cables sited underground the Council would support this.

The village hall is an extremely valuable community resource but due to its utilitarian nature, in terms of its design and materials, it cannot be considered to enhance the character of the conservation area. Other examples of poor quality work were also noted, such as garages and some of the later property development. It is extremely important that any new development, extensions or other works respect the special character of the Area and enhance it where possible. PPG15 (paragraph 4.17) advises that replacement buildings "should be a stimulus to **imaginative, high quality design and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area**" and this should equally apply to smaller works.

The replacement of windows with uPVC double glazing has altered the appearance of some of the properties within the Conservation Area to the detriment of its character. The incremental loss or unsympathetic alteration of windows, doors, porches and other **traditional building features** can erode the character and appearance of conservation areas. This is particularly important in Great Altcar where there a particular 'estate' architectural style has been identified.

While the Conservation Area has a quiet rural atmosphere the **road** running through it is extremely busy. While it is outside the District Council's remit, it is proposed that the Local Planning Authority support any measures that may be proposed to reduce traffic speed or quantity.



## CONCLUSIONS

A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. This appraisal clearly demonstrates that the Great Altcar Conservation Area contains both architectural and historic interest, which continues to justify its conservation area status.

This appraisal provides an opportunity to highlight some of the important features and buildings in Great Altcar Conservation Area, as well as promoting a better understanding of the issues that specifically relate to the area as a way of retaining the area’s special character or appearance.

Many individual properties are of significant value within the local context and have been highlighted as making a significant contribution to the special character of the area.

The settlement provides a cohesive example of the development of a small rural settlement starting with scattered farmsteads situated on the slightly higher ridge of ground. Later outbreaks of concentrated periods of development provided infill development from different periods, with the period of building by the Sefton estate producing a recognisable architectural style. The property development in the Area can be divided into four distinct groups:

- Early farms and associated buildings
- ‘Estate’ houses and associated buildings
- Inter-war non-estate houses
- Late twentieth century development

The settlement contains a variety of informal vernacular architecture and more formal architectural styles. The boundary walls and mature screening vegetation are important to the character of the Area and significantly contribute to its amenity value.

## **GREAT ALTCAR CONSERVATION AREA PROPOSALS**

It is the duty of the local planning authority to determine whether the existing boundary of the conservation area is still appropriate and whether any further parts should be designated as a conservation area or indeed deleted from it.

The local planning authority must also from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Any enhancement proposals formulated, under this section, will be submitted for further public consideration.

This appraisal document has raised several issues, which should form part of any proposed action and be considered alongside policies for the area as set out in the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan.

In common with other conservation area appraisals produced by the local authority, the following issues have been recognised for consideration in respect of St Michael's Church Conservation Area:

- whether the existing conservation area boundary is appropriate
- whether it is necessary to sanction additional controls over development in the form of the imposition of an Article 4 (2) direction
- to look at further development in the Conservation Area
- to assess the need for environmental improvements in the Conservation Area

### **The Conservation Area Boundary**

*Following a full assessment of the area, it is recognised that the Great Altcar Conservation Area still retains a special character, which is well defined and worthy of protection and designation as a Conservation Area.*

The small group of farms to the east of the village, joined by the public footpath are indicative of the origins of the village and indeed continue the architectural 'estate' style of property that is so characteristic of this area.

It has been identified that the open fields surrounding the settlement are a vital part of its character and significantly contribute to views into and out of the Area.

*The Cottages (2 and 4) on Engine Lane are of the 'estate' style of architecture and contribute to the character of the area, while forming a part of the settlement 'heart' - these are recommended for inclusion within the conservation area boundary.*

*The grounds of Altcar Hall Farm and Hilton's Farm are currently partly within and partly outside the conservation area. It is recommended that the boundary is adjusted to include the defined curtilage of the farms.*

*It is recommended that the boundary of the Conservation Area be extended to include the farms to the east as identified on the map earlier in this document. The footpath between the*

*village and these farms should be included as an important physical link between these areas.*

These recommended extensions are shown on the map earlier in this document.

### **Article 4(2) Direction**

There is currently no Article 4(2) Direction in place at Great Altcar Conservation Area and owners can currently carry out certain small alterations to their residential properties such as replacing windows and doors and partially removing boundary walls for example without needing planning permission.

An Article 4(2) Direction allows the Council to remove some of these permitted development rights available to residents meaning that planning permission would then be required for such work albeit only on those elevations which front a highway.

Properties that are not houses do not benefit from the same permitted development rights, and planning permission is required for any works that would materially affect the appearance of a building.

However, it has been noted that some areas of the Conservation Area are vulnerable to minor uncontrolled development and alteration, which have over time been identified as detracting from the area's character and appearance. In particular, this affects 'estate' properties that have common architectural features and a shared style of design. While an Article 4(2) would not prevent all of the inappropriate additions it would serve to provide some control over the area.

*After careful consideration the Council considers that the application of an Article 4(2) Direction over the whole of the Great Altcar Conservation Area would be an important 'tool' in restricting the permitted development rights of property owners and could result in a reduction on minor, uncontrolled development within the Area.*

### **Further Development in the Conservation Area**

It has been indicated that new recent development has done little to enhance the character of Great Altcar Conservation Area and indeed that poor or bland design detracts from its character. The character of a small isolated rural settlement, surrounded by open fields and scattered farmsteads should be maintained and protected.

The large plot sizes of many of the properties may lead to sub-division and an increase in housing density due to demand for housing. It is recommended that this be resisted. Infill development is likely to adversely affect the character of the area.

Any new development would have to be considered very carefully if it is not to compromise the character of the area.

## Works to Trees in Conservation Areas

Most trees in Conservation Areas are subject to controls that exist to protect this special character. If a tree is not protected by a Preservation Order (TPO), but is within the conservation area, 6 weeks notice must be given in writing to the District Council of an intention to carry out works to trees (pruning or felling) or any root systems. This is often difficult to monitor on private land that covers a large area. It is important therefore that before undertaking any works to trees in conservation areas, however minor they may seem, that owners and occupiers contact the Council in advance of any work.

The Council is keen to promote good tree management within the conservation area and the Council's Arboricultural Officer offers advice to owners both indirectly through leaflets and directly with specialist advice.

## Environmental Improvements in the Conservation Area

The Appraisal identifies several detracting features within the Conservation Area. Some of these features, and the action required to remedy the situation, are set out below:

Detracting Features	Action Required	Implementation
The cumulative effect of minor alterations and extensions (inc. demolition) to buildings, which affect the character and erode the special character and appearance of the area.	Better understanding of architectural designs and the wider conservation area and better control and enforcement where necessary.  Consider making an Article 4(2) Direction.	The appraisal should become adopted by the Council and be used by Development Control.  The appraisal should be used to inform and support decisions made by Council officers in relation to the relevant policy in the Local Plan.  Consult with the local community regarding the implementation of an Article 4(2) Direction.  Consider grant scheme for repair / reinstatement of traditional features, if funding becomes available, especially for those buildings and features that have been identified as important
Inappropriate additions and unsympathetic improvements	Help and guidance to owners to help them make the best informed decisions relating to alterations.	Through advice from the Conservation Unit.  Consult with the local community regarding the implementation of an Article 4 (2) Direction.
Street furniture and lighting (as	Consider enhancement of street	Through discussion and potential

specified above)	scene through provision of appropriate street furniture.  Consider if any improvements can be made to some of the lighting in the conservation area	partnership with LCC and the Leverhulme Estate if funding becomes available
Paucity of new building design which positively contributes to the Area's character.	Encouragement of good design using good quality materials and workmanship	Through advice from Development Control and the Heritage & Environment Section.
Loss of character and historic features	Help and guidance for owners / occupiers with the repair and replacement of traditional features.	Partnership with Leverhulme Estate to develop a repair and works specification using conservation guidelines and this appraisal.  Consider grant scheme for repair / reinstatement of traditional features, if funding becomes available, especially for those buildings and features that have been identified as important
Detrimental effect of the busy road	Support any traffic calming proposals that take into account the need to protect the special character of the conservation area	Through discussion and partnership with LCC

## Summary

The Great Altcar Conservation Area is an area of architectural and historic interest, centred on the section of Lord Sefton Way (B5195) between Short Croft Lane and Broad Lane.

The Appraisal has identified many positive features and properties within the Conservation Area. It has also identified some opportunities for enhancement, many of which will involve partnership working between the various authorities, the Leverhulme Estate and residents. This type of co-operation will be vital if the special character of Area is to be enhanced and maintained for future generations.

How the works are financed largely depends on the ownership situation and on the availability of public sector finance to support those works that are not viable for the landowners. The list above should be used as a starting point for determining the areas for priority action and for where funds should be targeted in the future should they become available.

In addition this appraisal has identified that an extension to the Conservation Area boundary

is recommended, as the farms to the east are seen as integral to the history and development of the village and contribute to its special character.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PRINCIPAL EFFECTS OF CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION**

By designating a conservation area the Council is confirming that it regards the area as a place where special care should be taken to maintain and improve its visual character. This means that change in a conservation area is subject to greater control than elsewhere, principally:

1. Special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
2. Conservation Area Consent is required from the Council for the demolition (with some exceptions) of buildings and walls.
3. The Council must be given six weeks notice of any proposal to carry out any work to any tree within the area.
4. Permitted Development Rights (i.e. those building works that do not require planning permission) can be removed if the Council makes an Article 4(2) Direction to do so, and these rights are in any case more limited than outside a Conservation Area. Even without an Article 4(2) Direction, building works within the curtilage of a single dwelling house in a Conservation Area require planning permission if they involve:
  - the erection of a side or rear extension which is more than 50 cubic metres or 10% of the volume of the original dwelling house, whichever is the greater;
  - the cladding of the exterior with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles;
  - the erection of any new building with a cubic content greater than 10 cubic metres;
  - the enlargement of the dwelling by adding to or altering its roof;
  - the installation of a satellite dish/antenna if it is on a chimney, on a building which exceeds 15 metres in height or on a wall or roof which fronts a highway.

[The legislation relating to permitted Development Rights is complicated and could be subject to change. It is, therefore, advisable to check with the planning authority before carrying out any building works].

### **PRINCIPAL EFFECTS OF LISTED BUILDING CONTROL**

The statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic interest is compiled by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and includes a wide variety of structures. Inclusion of a building on the list identifies that building as having special interest and brings any alterations to that building under planning control.

There is a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings because they represent a finite resource. Controls apply to the whole building, both internal and external, and to all works which would affect a building's character. Works of basic maintenance are exempt from control - on a like for like basis, unless there is an element of alteration or rebuilding.

It is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised alterations to a listed building, so it is always best to consult with the Local Authority to determine whether consent for work to a building is required.

## **APPENDIX B**

## REFERENCES

Anon. 1907. *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Lancashire. Vol. 3* (Archibald Constable & Company Ltd.)

Cook, A.L.M. 1989. *Altcar: The Story of a Rifle Range*. (Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association for the North West of England & The Isle of Man)

NJSR Chartered Architects. 1995. *St Michael & All Angels Church, Great Altcar, Lancashire* (unpublished)

Lee, R (Canon). 1995. *A Generous Gift*. (leaflet)

Palliser, G.F. 2002. *A Snippet of the Late Victorian History of Altcar (Lancs) (Based on a Local Diary 1880-1892)*.

Warburton, W. 1896. *Notes on Altcar Parish*. (Publisher unknown)

## Websites

[www.mapzone.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.mapzone.lancashire.gov.uk)

[www.lancashirechurches.co.uk](http://www.lancashirechurches.co.uk)

## APPENDIX C

### RELEVANT LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

#### West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001-2016

##### Policy EN4 Conservation Areas

The special historic or architectural interest of West Lancashire's Conservation Areas will be preserved or enhanced by:-

- i. assessing the special interest of Conservation Areas by preparing Conservation Area Appraisals and producing schemes to preserve or enhance their character and appearance;
- ii. requiring all development in conservation Areas to accord with the objective to preserve or enhance the area's character or appearance and in particular harmonise with its surroundings in terms of mass, scale, form, use of materials and overall design quality;
- iii. requiring all development in Conservation Areas to retain and improve important landscape elements, including walls, tress and hedges, attractive open spaces (especially those elements which are an essential part of the setting to a historic building), traditional paving, plots and thoroughfares and natural building materials;
- iv. requiring all development to respect the setting of important views into and out from Conservation Areas;
- v. the refusal of applications for the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Where the demolition of a building would leave an unsightly gap in a built-up frontage, any consent would be conditional on the building not being demolished before a contract for carrying out work of redevelopment to a high standard of design is made, and for which planning permission has been granted;
- vi. not permitting development which would have a detrimental effect upon trees or require the removal of trees which make a significant contribution to a Conservation Area or important green or open spaces.

N.B. Although the Conservation Area boundaries shown on the Proposals Map were accurate when this Plan was printed the Council has a statutory duty to review the character and appearance of its Conservation Areas, from time to time, in order that an Area's status can be justified. This may involve some variation in Conservation Area boundaries. Up to date plans and details are available from the Council's Conservation Officer.

##### Policy EN5 Buildings of Historic Importance

The total or substantial demolition of any Listed Building will not be permitted unless there is clear and convincing evidence that:

- a. an assessment shows that it is not economically viable to retain the building. Any such assessment should include details of the condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining and the value derived from its future use. Any such assessment should be based on consistent and long-term assumptions and should take account of the possibility of tax allowances, exemptions and possible grant aid;
- b. all reasonable efforts have been made without success to continue the present use or find compatible alternative uses for the building; and

- c. alternative proposals for the site would bring substantial benefits for the community by contributing to the economic regeneration or environmental improvement which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition. The partial demolition of a Listed Building will only be granted consent or recommended where it can be proved that the relevant part of the Listed Building is a later addition of no intrinsic architectural or historic interest, or where its poor structural condition requires that it be rebuilt.

Work involving substantial alterations, including the partial demolition of a Listed Building, will only be granted consent or recommended where it can be proved that the relevant part of the Listed Building is a later addition of no intrinsic architectural or historic interest, or where its poor structural condition requires that it be rebuilt.

Applications for works to repair, improve, alter, extend, or change the use of Listed Buildings will only be allowed, if:-

1. they do not detract from the special architectural and historic interest of the building including their interiors or other buildings within their curtilage; and
2. they respect the existing character and function of the original building in terms of either their mass, scale, form, design quality, appearance and materials.

Applications for planning permission/Listed Building Consent will only be approved if they will not have a detrimental effect upon the setting of the Listed Building.

Applications for planning permission which affect buildings which are of local architectural or historic interest will only be approved if they incorporate measures to secure the preservation of authentic original features of architectural or historic significance.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD ENTRIES**

PRN 786 - Church of St Michael, SD 3198 6520

PRN 787 - Cross fragment found in 1879 in St Michael's Churchyard, SD 3197  
6520

PRN 788 - Altcar Hall, SD 3197 6450

PRN 9517 - Well at Hodgsons Farm, SD 3235 6370

PRN 9518 - Well at Francis Farm, SD 3258 6250

PRN 18477 - Lychgate, SD 3200 6510

PRN 18478 - Longtons Farmhouse, SD 3243 6350

PRN 18479 - Francis' Farmhouse, SD 3251 6230

PRN 18481 - Dutch barn at Francis Farm, SD 3257 6280