



Character Appraisal  
March 2019

# St. Michael's Church Conservation Area

## Foreword

The St. Michael's Church Conservation Area Character Appraisal should be read in conjunction with the following documents or their successors:

St. Michael's Church Conservation Area Management Plan (2018);

The National Planning Policy Framework (2018);

Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy (2016) including saved policies from the Knowsley Unitary Development Plan (2006).

Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance.

**Any building, site or feature within the St. Michael's Church Conservation Area not referred to in this document, may nevertheless be of historical and/or architectural interest. It is strongly recommended that discussions are held with Knowsley Council at an early stage and before any works to a building, site or feature within the conservation area are undertaken.**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 St. Michael's Church Conservation Area

St. Michael's Church Conservation Area is located in the town of Huyton in the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley.

The conservation area was designated as 'Huyton Church Conservation Area' in 1978. It is centred on the high ground in the immediate vicinity of St. Michael's Church encompassing the remnants of the historic village of Huyton. While the area is suspected to have been settled for over a thousand years, the conservation area is comprised of mostly Victorian housing with substantial tree cover and important green spaces.

### 1.2 Planning Policy Context

Conservation areas are designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The definition of a Conservation Area is stated within the same Act as, "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes it the duty of any Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas. Additionally, Section 72 specifies that in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or the appearance of that area.

Article 4 Directions are made under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. These enable the Local Authority to restrict what works can be done without planning permission and gives greater power to the Local Authority to control minor development which cumulatively over time would be detrimental to the Conservation Area.

National government policy regarding conservation areas is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) (NPPF) supported by National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Knowsley Council has also set out its local policy through the Local Plan Core Strategy (2016), particularly Policy CS20: Managing the Borough's Historic Environment and Policy DQ5: Development in Conservation Areas, which is a saved policy within the Unitary Development Plan (2006).

In recognition of the statutory requirement stated within the Act and the policies of the NPPF, this appraisal identifies and assesses the special architectural and historic interest of the St. Michael's Church Conservation Area, consistent with Historic England's Advice Note 1: 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management'.

## 2. Location and Setting

### 2.1 Location

Huyton is a large urban town located in the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley within the Liverpool City Region and County of Merseyside. Huyton is approximately seven miles east of Liverpool City Centre and is the administrative centre of the Metropolitan Borough. It is bordered to the north and east by the Knowsley Hall Estate and the M57, whilst the southern boundary is defined by the M62. The contiguous settlement of Roby adjoins to the west and gives the area its older name “Huyton-with-Roby”. Huyton Railway Station serves the town for direct trains to Liverpool, Wigan, Manchester and Preston. The River Alt rises near the centre of Huyton and flows northwards, but at this stage, it is little more than a brook.

The St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area is centred on the parish church dedicated to St. Michael which is thought to have been founded before the Norman Conquest and may be the site of an Anglo-Saxon Church. The earliest settlement in the area is likely to have been around the church and given the elevated sandstone ridge it is built on, may be the origin of the name Huyton – from the Anglo-Saxon ‘Hitune’ meaning ‘high settlement’. The location of the conservation area therefore is important, as it is the historical location of the centre of the early village.

Figure 1 Map showing the location of Huyton within the wider context of the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley

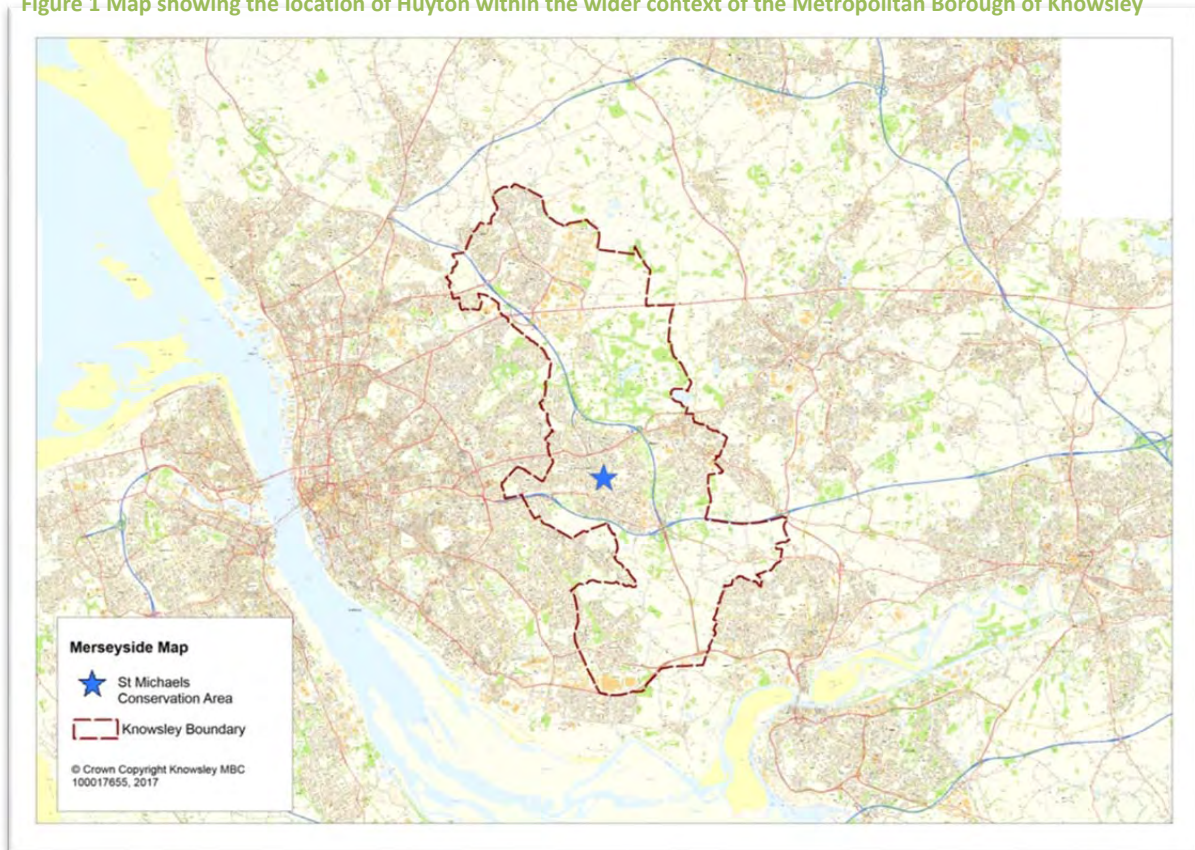




Figure 2 Map showing the location of the St. Michael's Church Conservation Area in the wider context of Huyton-with-Roby and Prescot.

## 2.2 Relationship to Surroundings

The conservation area is surrounded to the north and west by a mixture of 19<sup>th</sup> Century and inter-war housing, to the east by modern post-1970 housing and to the south by the modern Huyton Village; a large-scale redevelopment of the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Huyton village was redeveloped in the 1970s when virtually all the 19<sup>th</sup> century properties were demolished to make way for a new commercial and retail development. This intervention also saw the widening of Archway Road/Huyton Lane into a dual carriageway, isolating St. Michael's Church and the adjoining residential area from the village centre. The widening of the road is in stark contrast to the traditional, tightly enclosed roads that characterise the early village and parts of the conservation area. An example of this characteristic enclosure is where Blue Bell Lane meets the dual carriageway, which is bounded tightly by the wall of St. Michael's Church and Blue Bell Cottages with their jettied upper storey.

St. Michael's Church Conservation Area is located in close proximity to Huyton's other conservation areas, 'The Orchard' Conservation Area and 'Victoria Road / Huyton Church Road' Conservation Area'. All three conservation areas adjoin the modern retail centre of Huyton Village and are largely comprised of Victorian development. The Orchard, and the Victoria Road/Huyton Church Road Conservation Areas were developed as planned Victorian suburban estates as a direct result of the development of the Railway and their character as planned Victorian suburbs is the central part of their interest. St. Michael's Church Conservation Area, by contrast, is of earlier origin and while the Victorian development here was also encouraged by the railway, rather than being formally planned, its layout relates to previously existing settlement patterns and routes, and development was more 'ad hoc'. This difference in origin and development history means that in contrast to the Victorian estate feel of other conservation areas in Huyton, St. Michael's Church Conservation Area retains a certain village character.

There is significant tree coverage in the conservation area, especially around the village green and on the sandstone plateau to the north of the church. This wooded environment continues outside the conservation area along Huyton Lane and Archway Road to create a mature 'green gateway' to the conservation area, which also serves to underline the area's rural qualities.

The immediate surroundings to the north, east and west of the St. Michael's Church Conservation Area are mostly terraces and semi-detached housing estates from the 1930s and post-Second World War. These are of no particular architectural interest but some parts have an intriguing history (see Section 3 Historic Development and Archaeology).

### Influence of Uses

The conservation area is mostly residential, with commercial activity being limited to Archway Road. There is a repurposed Victorian villa used as a Credit Union and the Barker's Brewery Public House. There is also a day centre discreetly located in Capper Grove.

The activities at the edge of the conservation area are a signifier of the close influence of the modern Huyton Village Centre, and recollect the historic connections between the two. The church is a key draw for people to cross the dual carriageway.



St. Michael's Church has a major influence on activity in the Conservation Area. It supports an active community and the church is regularly open throughout the week as well as Sunday contributing a sense of vitality. The Church and cemetery also have an important social role through forming part of a landscape of remembrance, creating a purpose for people from outside the area to visit.

These buildings and the uses within them, especially the public house and church help maintain a relationship with Huyton Village Centre and constitute the major non-residential activity in the area.

### 2.3 Topography and Geology

Huyton lies on an outcrop of Upper Carboniferous red sandstone which contains coal measures. Huyton is situated at the southern limit of the Lancashire coalfields which stretch from Skelmersdale in the west to beyond Oldham in the east. Most of the stone is overlaid with layers of boulder clay, sands and gravels. The sandstone is tough and weather resistant and which makes it ideal as a building material. Huyton stone was commercially quarried until 1958. Many of the old stone walls and buildings in the conservation area were built with this local stone and this contributes to a visual relationship between these features and adds considerably to the area's distinctive character.

The land at Huyton rises gently to about 30m above sea level but otherwise is mostly flat. St. Michael's Church and its churchyard sit at the highest point on a sandstone plateau. The exposed sandstone outcrop can be seen beneath the churchyard wall facing Archway Road and at the rear of the church where a 19<sup>th</sup> Century ornamental carriage drive has been cut through the bedrock to give access to the old vicarage. It is believed that part of the church sits directly on this sandstone. The area of behind the church is heavily wooded with mature trees and dense undergrowth.

Moving away from the church, the land in the conservation area falls away on all sides. To the east the land falls towards the Huyton Wetlands, a site of water-meadows and disused coal shafts that is now a nature conservation area, and is also the source of the River Alt. To the south the land falls towards Huyton Village, to the west down Stanley Road, and to the north it falls more sharply down Blue Bell Lane towards the culverted River Alt.

## 3. Historical Development and Archaeology

### 3.1 Historical Development

Huyton is one of the earliest settlements in Knowsley with origins that may date to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The name 'Huyton' probably means 'high settlement' and is believed to derive from the Anglian "hegh" – "high" and "-tun" – "settlement". Huyton falls into the typical settlement pattern in South West Lancashire where it is believed that the higher ground away from the coast was settled by the Angles whilst the lower level coastal areas and wetlands were settled by Scandinavians.

St. Michael's Church has a distinctive circular boundary; a typical form of a pre-conquest church dating back into at least the Anglo-Saxon period. The Church is dedicated to St. Michael (an Archangel who defeated the devil). Dedications to St. Michael are common for Anglo-Saxon churches built on hilltops and are thought to signify the 'victory' of Christianity over Pagan beliefs; it also suggests that the church was built on a previously pagan site. Further evidence of an early church is an Anglo-Saxon/Norman decorated font discovered in the church during renovations in 1872. It is likely that the earliest settlement was around the area of the church.

The first written evidence of Huyton is from the Domesday Book of 1086 it is written as 'Hitune' and in subsequent centuries as 'Hutona' (1189) and 'Hyton' (1292). It is around the eighteenth century that the name finally regularised to 'Huyton'.

Domesday tells us that Huyton and Tarbock were owned by the thegn Dot who had one hide of land *'quit of every due but the geld. There is land for 4 ploughs. It was worth 20 shillings.'* 'Geld' refers to the 'Dane Geld', a form of taxation payable to the Viking invaders to maintain the peace. After the Norman Conquest, Huyton, along with most of Lancashire was given by the king to Rodger De Poiters. Huyton itself was subdivided into two manors named Huyton Hey and Wolfall.

From there the manors came into the hands of the Lathom family and through marriage to the Stanley family, the Earls of Derby then to the Harringtons, Wolfalls and eventually the Molyneux-Seel family. Each has left their mark on the area, particularly reflected in place names and the memorials in St. Michael's Church.

It is thought that in the medieval period the nucleated settlement of Huyton was surrounded by a common open field system, which was worked co-operatively by the inhabitants of the village. The growth of population during the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries led to the need for more arable land and a process of enlarging field systems called 'assarting' took place, where wasteland and wood was cleared to make usable land. We know that this process was occurring in Huyton from before 1250. Evidence of early agricultural activity was found in an 'open area south west of the church' identified in 2002 as 'ridge and furrow' landforms. That land is now the site of number 2 and 4 Stanley Road. The remaining undeveloped land on the corner of Bluebell Lane may hold further archaeological evidence.

The medieval St. Michaels Church was substantially rebuilt in 1647 with later additions and rebuildings in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The growth of Liverpool made its presence felt in

Huyton as early as 1726 when the Liverpool – Warrington Turnpike opened its first stage to Prescot including a branch road to Roby and Huyton. Bluebell Lane and Huyton Lane are recorded as early as 1771 as part of the Turnpike route but may have pre-existed as historic routes from Huyton to Knowsley and Prescot. There is little evidence of the circumstances of Huyton during the later Georgian period but the enlargement of the church in 1810 (to provide an additional 120 pews) suggests that the area was prospering and the population increasing.

Around 1819 a village green was established when the Vicar, Ellis Ashton erected a cross in order that the land opposite the church no longer be used for bullbaiting and cockfighting. In 1897 the green was formalised with a low sandstone wall and ornate metal railings. The original 1819 cross was designed by Thomas Rickman; this was replaced by a mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century cross (see fig. 3) and finally a 1897 replica of the 1819 design. This replacement cross is often called ‘a copy after Rickman’.

Huyton maintained its almost purely agricultural nature until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, evidenced by the fact that in 1830 it is still recorded as having an ‘open town field’ which in many areas had long since



Figure 3 - St Michael's Church about 1878 showing a replacement Village Cross and the old buildings at the foot of the church, including the original Wheatsheaf Inn.

been enclosed. The agricultural aspect of the area would change dramatically with the coming of the railway age.

Huyton is located on the route of the 1830 Liverpool and Manchester Railway and was therefore one of the first villages in the world to have a mainline railway connection. This allowed wealthy Liverpool merchants and businessmen to use the railway to commute to and from their work in Liverpool whilst maintaining a residence in the country.

The OS map published 1850 (See Appendix 1) shows that by this time significant development had taken place around the area north of the station mainly of detached villa-type housing and cottages. The land along Derby Road between the Station and St. Michael's Church had also started to be developed.

The 1850 OS map also shows that Derby Terrace had been built to the north of the Village cross. To the

west side of the village cross however remained a row of older thatched buildings facing the road (now demolished), which followed a curved route. A

huddle of early buildings (also now demolished) are also still in evidence around St. Michael's Church (see figure 3). A collection of scattered cottages lined Blue Bell Lane, including a short terrace called Brookbank Cottages attached to Brook Cottage, (now nos. 137-143 Blue Bell Lane). The 1850 map also marks the location of a medieval 'chantry well', somewhere at the location of the present Stanley Terrace. The largest buildings in the village at this time are the Church, Vicarage and the Brewery.

By the 1890s, the buildings at the foot of the church had been demolished and two more terraces of buildings had been erected along the east side of Blue Bell Lane. These terraces still exist as nos. 113-135 Blue Bell Lane. Large semi-detached houses were also built on Stanley Road and Archway Road and to the south of the village around the railway station large new planned Victorian suburbs 'Huyton Park' and 'The Orchard' had also been laid out. Away from the main roads the land is still largely rural with fields and farms surrounding the growing settlement.

In 1894, Huyton fell under the administration of the new Huyton-With-Roby Urban District Council. Moreover, although Stanley Terrace was built in 1908, housing was still generally being constructed at a slow pace meaning that between 1900-1930 there was little change in the character of the village. One notable development of this period was the further expansion of the St. Michael's Churchyard Extension.



Figure 4 - The new village green and cross as laid out in 1897 to replace the original. The original had been erected by the vicar Ellis Ashton in 1819 to stop cock and bull fighting taking place. This photograph shows the still semi-rural character of Huyton in this period.

The next major change was in the 1930s when large areas of farmland around Huyton belonging to the Earls of Derby were sold to Liverpool Corporation to create new housing estates. By the 1930s, the first parts of the Blue Bell and Woolfall Heath estates had been built; by the outbreak of WWII many of the buildings were complete but uninhabited. The government decided that these properties would be an ideal location for an internment camp for enemy aliens. The roads were cordoned off with barbed wire fences and patrolled by armed guards. There were overall three camps in Huyton, one for 'enemy aliens', one for prisoners of war and one for the US Military. A number of highly educated and skilled internees who had fled Nazi Germany were subsequently interned at the 'Woolfall Camp' which gave the area its wartime nickname 'Huyton University'.

These internees included Nikolas Pevsner, Martin Bloch, Burt Trautman, Kurt Jooss and Hans Gaal. The camps were in use 1940-1948, after which the houses were converted back into local authority housing as had originally been intended.

Beginning in 1962 and continuing until the early 2000s, all of the pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings of Huyton Village south of Archway Road were demolished and replaced with new modern buildings. The majority of the work took place between 1963 and 1972, creating a new retail and office centre. Derby Road, the former principal street was pedestrianised. Archway Road was widened which led to the demolition of the Rose and Crown Public House, and the old Police Station. This sequence of development significantly altered the character of Huyton, visually and physically isolating the church and conservation area from the village centre and this has had a lasting impact.

As part of this redevelopment it was proposed to also demolish Blue Bell Cottages (112-118 Blue Bell Lane), a terrace of mock-Tudor cottages, in order to widen the road to create a better junction at Blue Bell Lane. This caused considerable public outcry and it is this which grew into the proposal for the area around the church to be designated a Conservation Area in 1978. Soon afterwards, the old vicarage became derelict and was eventually demolished. The land was partly redeveloped for housing, with Capper Grove and a new vicarage being constructed. The new vicarage had only been in use for about twenty years when a replacement was built partially on the site of the original Victorian vicarage. The second vicarage became a private house. Capper Grove today consists of a large detached day centre building, a detached c1970s dwelling and four post-1974 semi-detached dwellings.

### 3.2 Archaeology

Two Neolithic stone axes have been discovered in the south of the township and also a Romano-British coin, indicating prehistoric and Roman activity in the area. In the conservation area there have been finds of two brass Nuremburg Counters which were found in the churchyard in 1873 and possibly date to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. These counters were often used as gaming tokens and were common until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 2014 as part of a scheme of necessary repair work to the walls of the churchyard, an archaeological investigation was carried out. This investigation exposed evidence of human remains and a series of post-holes, which were interpreted as being the original boundary of the early church. Due to the long history of the area and the likelihood that the conservation area covers the earliest settlement of Huyton, it is possible that any further building work in the area could affect its archaeological interest. As with most of Merseyside, lack of finds indicates a lack of investigation, rather than a lack of archaeological potential.

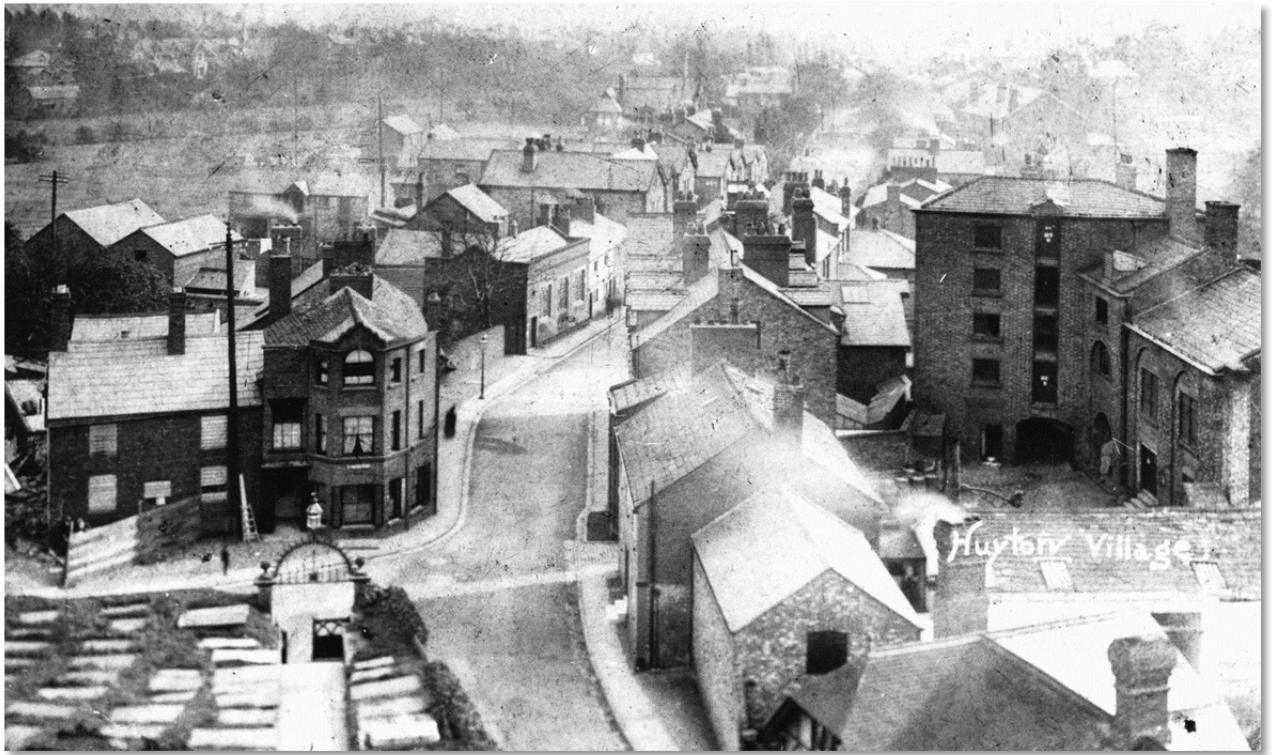


Figure 5 - A photograph of Huyton Village pre-1936 looking south from the church tower showing the edge of the churchyard, the old Rose & Crown Pub (with bay window) and Richard Barker's Brewery (the tall building to the right). Blue Bell Cottages are partly visible at the bottom right.



Figure 6 - A 2017 photograph taken from the same position as Fig.5. Only the churchyard gate and Blue Bell Cottages remain. The significant impact of the 20th Century redevelopment and changes to the road layout can clearly be seen.

## 4. Spatial Analysis

### 4.1 Layout and Street Pattern

The street layout of the conservation area and the development of Huyton Village show the influence of St. Michael's Church as a landmark and centre of the village; it can be seen from many locations in the area. The early roads form a node adjacent to the churchyard wall and later roads such as Stanley Road were clearly built to take advantage of views of the church.

Properties which add character to the conservation area are generally terraced or semi-detached residences set fronting on to roads, most with a small front garden affording some privacy. The scale of the plot around dwellings varies. Larger plots are associated with houses of a higher status, and older 'cottage' properties tend to have smaller plots.

#### 4.1.1 Nodes

The junction of Blue Bell Lane, Archway Road and Huyton Lane is a key node and gateway of the conservation area, framed by the Church, and the churchyard walls, Barker's Brewery Public House and also Blue Bell Cottages. This junction was once a crossroads with Derby Road and ran through the village but this has now been truncated with Derby Road becoming a pedestrianised area in the modern Huyton Village. The expansion of Archway Road/Huyton Lane to be a dual carriageway has unfortunately increased the sense of division.

The village green is another key node of the conservation area. This area was laid-out in its current form in 1897. It is a four sided enclosure with low sandstone walls and a central village cross, surrounded by grassed areas, planting beds and established trees. The juxtaposition of the green with the polite cottages set around it creates what Pevsner described as an 'estate village character' to the area. The railings which originally surmounted the wall would have added to this quality. Derby Terrace encloses one side set back from the road with fairly tall boundary walls. 1-3 Stanley Road encloses another side. While they are of a different architectural detail, age and character they are similarly laid-out, behind a small garden, and of similar overall size and proportions and so give an impression of unity.

#### 4.1.2 Grain & Street Patterns

##### Blue Bell Lane

Blue Bell Lane is variable in carriageway and pavement width, with the pavement ending adjacent to the churchyard wall, creating a tight enclosure with the road. The road however widens further north and the pavement returns to a functional width. In front of Blue Bell Cottages the footpath is partially overhung with their jettied upper floor. This variation in road width, especially the narrower sections, is reflective of Blue Bell Lane's early date and organic development from a rural lane.

Blue Bell Lane runs downhill from the village green and is enclosed by a mixture of terraced and semi-detached properties with small front gardens bounded by walls. Those in the conservation area have visual consistency by virtue of being of a similar scale and form. They are generally in groups, small scale, two storey, two-bay, double depth properties with pitched roofs and chimneys. The plot sizes, proportions, and the position of the properties within the plots is largely consistent, and this adds to a sense of coherence.

Blue Bell Lane Cottages are unusual as their small plot sizes and lack of front gardens are the only examples of such in the Conservation Area. These were built on the plot of some original timber-framed cottage buildings, which are apparent on the 1850 tithe map and had a comparable footprint.

Stanley Road has a regular width and straightness, which is reflective of the later Victorian period in which it was laid out, when development was less haphazard and more regular patterns were often favoured. Housing either side of Stanley Road frames a superb view of the St. Michael's Church tower. Although the road roughly follows a pre-existing field boundary the view was clearly intentional as it was only achieved with the demolition of the old cottages on the village green, which previously would have obscured views of the church.

### Stanley Road

Stanley Road contains small-medium sized semi-detached pairs of mid-late Victorian date as well as some modern buildings. Unifying features of development on both sides of the road are the consistent set-back nature of the houses fronted by similar sized planted gardens with brick walls. The gardens, along with the relatively consistent building lines, building sizes, and regular plot proportions give Stanley Road a more planned feel although the individual differences between the houses reveal the piecemeal way the street developed. The largest of the houses are on the south side of the road but these have an overall smaller plot size. Those on the north of the road have extensive gardens running backwards for three to four times the length of the house, terminating at the old field wall surrounding the cemetery.

The houses on the north of Stanley Road are comfortably spaced apart with regular gap sizes. This continuity is enhanced by their general layout with living rooms/bay windows and chimneys sharing the party wall whilst doorways are towards each side of the building. This pattern is repeated throughout the houses on Stanley Road and creates a strong group relationship between the properties.

On the south side of the road, the historic spaciousness has been undermined by infill development and extensions creating a less regular street pattern. The insertion of an access road to reach garages behind the houses has also disrupted this regularity.

### Archway Road

Archway Road (B5199) was historically characterised by large villa developments within regular plots, there are large gardens to the rear and front gardens. The front gardens were probably designed as driveways due to the presence of two entrances for each plot each identified with large sandstone gateposts.





Figure 5 - A view from the church tower showing the layout of the Village Green, Derby Terrace and Cemetery.

The Barkers Brewery public house (formerly The Wheatsheaf/Rose and Crown) is set back from the road and with a large driveway/car park area at the front facing the junction, typical of a 1930s improved pub. Whilst prominent in its own right, it sits on lower ground and defers to the church which is the main focal building in the conservation area.

#### **Capper Grove and Former Church Grounds**

There has been development in the conservation area since its designation; this consists principally of the development of the large plot of land that formed the garden of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century vicarage. The vicarage was demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the land subdivided to be sold for the development of Capper Grove and the Garth, two culs de-sac. Although subdivided, the original plot of the Vicarage can still be identified as a discrete area as it is still surrounded by a high wall/fence/hedge/treed edge, which matches the historical extent of the plot, and maintains a sense of enclosure. The Garth however does not form part of the Conservation area.

The Capper Grove buildings all face inwards towards and as such retain a feeling of detachment from busy Huyton Lane, this form is not characteristic of the conservation area however by maintaining the historic and hedged boundary and heavily wooded character this development has minimised its visual impact on the wider conservation area, and contributes to the green character of views along Huyton Lane.

#### **4.2 Open Spaces, Trees and Landscape**

There is a significant amount of green space within the conservation area, the majority being associated with St. Michael's Church and its burial grounds. There are also pockets around the village green and along Huyton Lane. Nearly all the dwellings in the conservation area have planted front gardens and many incorporate trees. Most of the planting in the gardens is of a typical suburban style befitting the residential nature of the area. Both the public and private greenspaces add to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

#### **Approaches to Conservation Area**

The three main approaches into the conservation area, Blue Bell Lane, Archway Road and Huyton Lane all benefit from significant greenery with large mature trees creating a 'green gateway' and framing those approaches. The trees on the central reservation on Archway Road enhance that gateway, and create a green thread leading into the conservation area.

In approaches from the east, the former cricket grounds to the east of the conservation area retains its open green character and has a hawthorne hedge and stone slab boundary to Huyton Lane which contribute a rural character to the setting of St. Michael's Church and the conservation area, enhancing the sense of the 'village'.

There is a well established yew hedge that faces Huyton Lane and demarks part of the old curtilage of the vicarage. Behind this is a private garden with coniferous planting, the only significant group of this type in the area ensuring that this lane is green all year around. This is enhanced by four yew trees that are located in Capper Grove and a large holly-bush at the entrance to Capper Grove. The presence of these trees is reflected in the name of the day care centre on Capper Grove 'The Yew Trees'. Yew trees are often found in church grounds, a tradition which is ancient and symbolic. Their presence in Capper Grove is an indicator of the previous use of the land and helps to preserve its relationship with the church as well as limiting views into the modern development.

### Church Grounds

Around St. Michael's Church there is a large area of thick tree-covered woodland. Tree species include sycamore, elder and holly, and there is dense ivy covering the ground and enveloping trees. This area has significant beneficial effects on the character and appearance of the conservation area and enhances the setting of St. Michael's Church. The density of the tree coverage and their substantial height wrap around the church and create a green backdrop from both Stanley Road and Huyton Lane. The trees also create a pleasing reveal when travelling through the conservation area from Blue Bell Lane. Furthermore, the trees beneficially screen the unimpressive 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings from views from within the conservation area. Nonetheless, the woodland has an unmanaged character and the understorey is very overgrown which has led to it becoming unusable and a magnet for rubbish accumulation.

### Land at Stanley Road

When the conservation area was designated there was substantially more tree coverage, as the large plot of land that is now occupied by 2- 6 Stanley Road was undeveloped. There is only part of this surviving on the corner of Stanley Road and Bluebell Lane. It is of an unmanaged appearance and in common with the woodland around the church it comprises largely sycamore, ground elder and ivy, the sandstone boundary wall around it adds to the quality of the village green, being built in matching detail.

### St. Michael's Cemetery

Accessed off the green is the cemetery (also known as Michaels Churchyard Extension), it was created in the 1860s as a response to the overcrowding of the churchyard. The cemetery was further extended in 1939. It is located across the road from the church, but it is largely concealed from view of the surrounding streets. This offers a place of quiet reflection and is an oasis of calm among the busy traffic heavy roads of Blue Bell Lane and Archway Road. It further provides a physical barrier between the old village and the newer suburb beyond.



Presently, only the older part of the cemetery is included within the conservation area; however, there is no physical boundary between the sections of different dates. The cemetery is bounded by a mixture of stone, brick, concrete walls and timber fencing, which is untidy. However, this does give the feeling of an enclosed space and prevents overlooking from the neighbouring properties. There are numerous shrubs. At the far boundary of the 1939 expansion, there are 2 boundary stones each engraved with “1939” and a Maltese cross. There are several ornamental trees including some unusual species (variegated mountain ash) which are unique in the conservation area and may be memorial planting.

Sixteen commonwealth war graves can be found within churchyard expansion, most memorialize local men. There is also the burial place of Stuart Sutcliffe, a man of international fame as the original bass player for The Beatles and a close friend of John Lennon. Stuart tragically died in 1962 from a brain injury when he was only 21. His grave has become a site of visitation by Beatles fans and forms part of the wider Liverpool Beatles trail.

The churchyard expansion was last used for burials in 2001 when it was formally closed.

### 4.3 Focal Features and Views

There are a number of focal features in the St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area. Those which are particularly prominent due to their architectural characteristics and their position are:

- St. Michael’s Church, churchyard and walls
- Barker’s Brewery Public House
- Blue Bell Cottages
- The Village Green and Cross

The most prominent building is St. Michael’s Church which is also Grade II\* Listed.

The church itself is set back comfortably on a raised churchyard and surrounded to the north by woodland, so despite the building’s size it does not overwhelm or overshadow other buildings in the conservation area. The major roads in the area still respect the large circular boundary of the churchyard.

It is a large church and the only major stone building in the conservation area. Its hilltop location on a raised churchyard and prominent sandstone clock-tower, crowned with golden vanes means it is at a significantly higher level than its surroundings. On approaching the conservation area along Huyton Lane, Bluebell Lane and Archway Road the tower of the church is slowly revealed from within tree cover. From Bluebell Lane in particular, the land dips and rises more sharply and the church appears to be particularly dominant. On sunny days the gold vanes of the church tower glint in the sunlight offering a dynamic and attractive feature on the skyline.



Figure 9 - St. Michael's Church and The Barker's Brewery Pub, the red roofed Blue Bell Cottages can be glimpsed.

Barkers Brewery is a large 1936 'improved' roadhouse public house. Barkers Brewery was originally built by Peter Walker Ltd as a modern replacement for the much older "Rose and Crown" public house, which occupied a building opposite and was demolished as part of the Archway Road expansion. It is in a symmetrical neo-Georgian style and has a prominent position at the corner of Bluebell Lane and Huyton Lane, set back from the road. It is highly visible when approaching the junction. This is a characteristic setting for an 'improved' pub, the philosophy of which was to modernise and 'improve' the old Victorian public house to make it a more welcoming and cleaner design. 'Improved' public houses were typically built on large plots of land with car-parking facilities provided for motorists, they had large spacious rooms, kitchen and restaurant facilities.

The Barkers Brewery is (at the time of this report) a Wetherspoon's Public House and takes its current name from Richard Barker's Brewery, which stood on the site until the 1930s. The pub is an important feature that speaks of the first wave of modernisation to sweep Huyton in the 1930s when the surrounding residential estates were laid out. This pub is a key building, not only for its use as a community amenity but also in the context of a particular style of pub.

Adjacent to the Barkers' Brewery are Blue Bell Cottages, 112-118 Blue Bell Lane. These are notable for their mock-Tudor appearance with a jettied upper floor, which is unique in Knowsley. The

precise date of this building is unknown, however, it appears there has been a building on this site following the same footprint since at least the 1850s. It is likely that the current building is a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century re-development of an earlier building. The half-timbered building offers a striking focal point when approaching from Huyton Lane and again when travelling up Blue Bell Lane. Because of its jettied first storey and the relative narrowness of Blue Bell Lane at this point, it is a tangible indicator of the proximity buildings were to the churchyard before the redevelopment of the area in the 1960s/70s.



Figure 10 – Approaching Blue Bell Cottages on Blue Bell Lane looking towards Archway Road and the large sandstone wall of St. Michael’s Church.

The Village Green and Cross is an enclosed area of grass, large trees and formal planting surrounding the central village cross. The green provides a formal space and despite being on busy Blue Bell Lane provides a central focus, which evokes the village character of the conservation area. The railings that once surmounted the wall have been lost; it is likely they were removed during WWII to help with the war effort.

Surrounding the village green are the cottages on Stanley Road and Derby Terrace. These overlook and enclose the village green and enhance the feeling that this is a communal space, although their strong boundaries set on the back of the pavement evoke Victorian propriety and clearly delineate the public and private spaces.

### Views

Stanley Road frames a striking view of St. Michael’s Church. The road gently rises from Rupert Road and the line of the road leads the eye to the churchyard and tower of the church. The road is lined with mainly post-war semi-detached houses at the western end giving way to Victorian semi-detached pairs with well-kept front gardens towards the east. Travelling towards the church the village green is revealed and the village cross comes into view. Although many of the houses on this road are not in the conservation area, their consistent forms and regular layout, set back from the road with front gardens, adds aesthetic value to the setting of the conservation area and St. Michael’s Church.



Figure 11 - This view along Stanley Road shows the prominence of the church, but also the negative impact the road markings and speed cushions have on the appearance of the area.

Views towards Blue Bell Lane from Derby Street, in the modern shopping parade are maintained at a distance, with the mock-Tudor timberwork and red-tiled roof of 118 Bluebell Lane just visible in front of the church tower however, hedging and mature trees partly obscure the views. Various highway-related features and the wide road also detract from the attractiveness of the composition in closer views.

There is also an attractive view into the conservation area from the Lathom Road/Huyton Lane T-junction, which allows the viewer to see the church on its raised churchyard, the Barkers Brewery and the gables of 112-118 Blue Bell Lane. Unfortunately, this view is harmed by the dilapidated metal roof that covers the yard of the old firestation/hearse house. This derelict and non-original

part of the building obscures the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century building behind it and is detrimental to the character of the conservation area.

As the conservation area is approached from Blue Bell Lane the church stands as a prominent landmark on the skyline with its pointed stone finials and golden vanes. Drawing nearer, the street begins to rise and to be enclosed by short rows of terraces, giving way to the characteristic brick buildings of the conservation area. Tree-cover offers a shady gateway into the village green before revealing the full tower of the church.

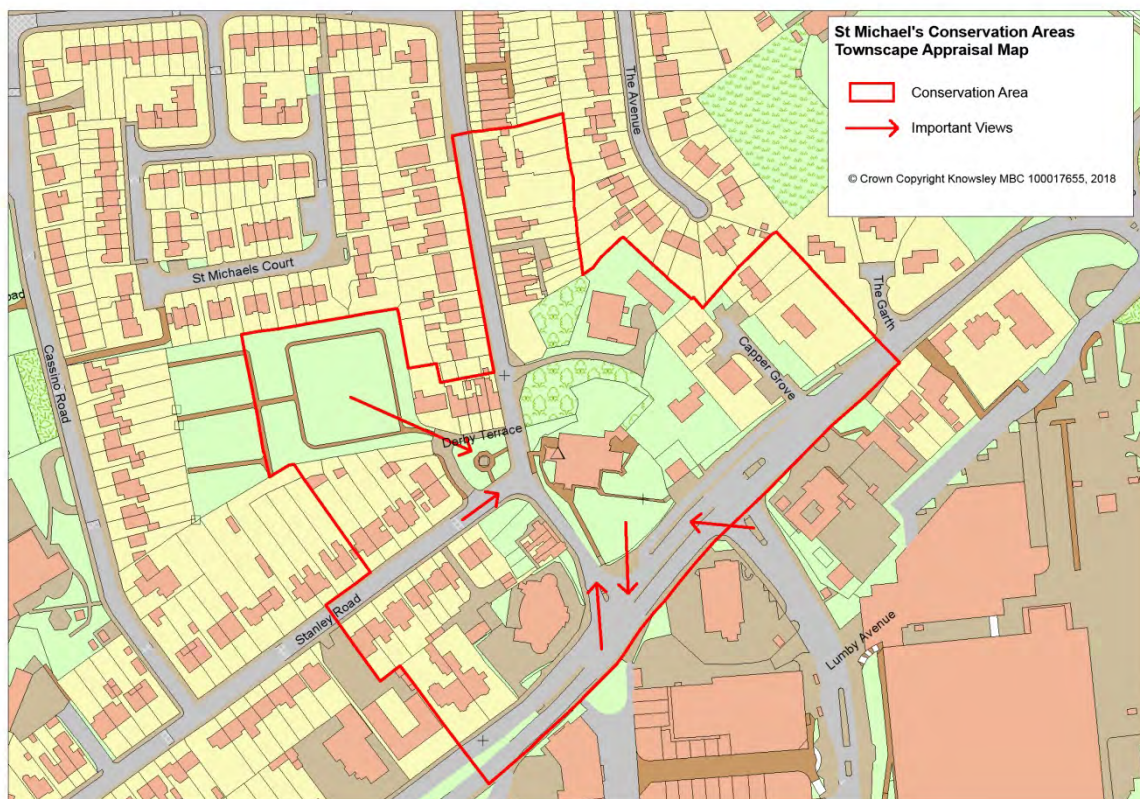


Figure 12 - Key Views indicated by arrows.

The views from the grounds of the church are valuable in demonstrating the height of St. Michael's Church compared to the surrounding areas. This emphasises its historic hilltop setting and the prominence of the original village in the landscape. From each of the main roads the land falls away emphasising the location of the church, but does not provide any positive visual contribution to the quality of the conservation area. Indeed, the view from St. Michael's churchyard across Huyton Lane/Archway Road are substantially harmed by the seven-story DWP building which dominates the vista and the large trees and guard rails which detract from through views to the core of the modern village.

## 5. Architecture, Details and Materials

### 5.1 Building Age

The buildings in the St. Michael's Conservation Area vary in date. Although the majority are 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there may be some with 18<sup>th</sup> century fabric within them but they are unlikely to include any earlier elements. The only exception is the tower of St. Michael's Church, which contains medieval fabric.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century development in the area includes the 1936 Barkers Brewery Public House, the 1960s Parish Hall and late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential developments in Capper Grove. Stanley Road includes a small group of 21<sup>st</sup> century dwellings, which are built in a pastiche of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century style to reflect the character of the area using traditional decorative features and forms.

### 5.2 Architecture

The range of styles in the conservation area is reflective of the fashions and styles popular in the 19th century when the buildings were built. Differences in age and status are more apparent from their size and detailing rather than materials. The architecture for each building is broadly in-keeping with its respective status and age, i.e. large villa buildings are more architecturally ornate than the smaller cottage buildings and later buildings more ornate than earlier. There are vernacular buildings, and others in Victorian-pattern book and Domestic Revival styles in evidence.

There are 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings in the area which range in quality from the high quality neo-Georgian Barkers Brewery Public House to low quality and visually harmful ancillary buildings.

#### 5.2.1 Terraces

The terraces are all of a small two-storey scale consisting of 3-5 properties apiece. They display varying architectural styles reflecting their age of construction. The earliest terraced properties are irregularly laid out and display vernacular Georgian architecture, later terraces display an increasing variety of Georgian and Victorian architectural styles, are more ornate, and form stronger architectural compositions.



Figure 13 - Stanley Terrace on Blue Bell Lane



Figure 14 - Later 19th Century Semi-Detached Villas on Archway Road



### 5.2.2 Semi-Detached Pairs

Semi-detached pairs are typical of the later 19<sup>th</sup> Century development in the conservation area and reflect Huyton's change from a rural to suburban village in terms of size and character. Each pair is of its own design; however, they do share certain common features which help define the character of the area.

These range from simple early semi-detached cottages to grander villas. The later villas are typified by strong front facing gables and more ornate architectural details such as gothic elements and decorative timberwork. Pairs were originally symmetrical but individual changes to finishes, alterations and extensions have broken up the symmetry and disrupted the rhythm of the street.

Later 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings have been designed to take cues from older properties and therefore generally have a neutral impact on the conservation area, although their proportions and materials mark them out.

### 5.2.3 Frontages

Frontages play a key role in informing the character of the conservation area. Frontages in the area are typified by the use of decorative brickwork in the form of string courses, window surrounds and roof brackets, with varying degrees of ornamentation.

The terraces are generally regularly sized with strong repetitive features, built in common red and/or brown brick and using a variety of decorative brick bonds, the earliest properties have plainer, simpler elevations in brown handmade brick and use inconsistent bonding patterns. Later properties are more decorative and there are examples incorporating pressed red-brick and moulded terracotta.

Earlier and smaller semi-detached pairs use common bricks with red pressed brick for detailing whilst later and larger, higher status, pairs use the higher quality red pressed for their principle frontages and use common bricks for the side/rear of the properties.



**Figure 15 - Nos 2-8 Stanley Road. Two 21st Century Semi-Detached Pairs Either Side a 19th Century Dwelling, Illustrating Differences in Window Details and Plot Spacing.**

There has been some rebuilding and repointing to some elevations, however occasionally replacement bricks have failed to match existing and these detract from the visual appearance and authenticity of the scheme.

Blue Bell Cottages, standing at a key node, are unique in the conservation area, as they have a mock-Tudor wrap-around with a jetted upper storey. This timberwork does not appear to be structural and may represent an updating of an earlier building to fit the fashion of the day. The frontages are characterised by asymmetrical gables of differing heights facing the road. This is an important and prominent feature, which emphasises the domestic revival character as the tall gables can be glimpsed above the churchyard wall when approaching the conservation area from Huyton Lane.

#### **5.2.4 Roofs and Chimneys**

The roofs of most of the historic buildings were of natural slate. Roofs are pitched and on the smaller properties are simple gable roofs neither shallow nor steep. A large number of properties have had their original roofs replaced with modern tile. The larger villa pairs have multiple gables and dormers with clay ridges and occasional finials creating a dynamic and interesting roofline.

Blue Bell Cottages are a notable exception and have distinctive red-clay roofs to the front and side elevations with matching ridges and finials on its frontal gables, however the rear roof is slate. This unusual feature appears to be historical and may indicate the use of tile as a more expensive

material at the time and so was reserved for only the public facing elements of the roof. It is likely this occurred at the same time the mock-Tudor façade was created.

The chancel of the Church of St Michael has a stone-flag roof, and is the only example of this early form of roofing in the area.



Figure 16 - Nos 1-3 Stanley Road, Showing Distinctive Chimneys, Brickwork and Prominent Gables

Chimneys are distinctive elements of the conservation area and are generally large brick stacks with a range of details and decoration. The earlier properties have plainer deeper stacks with rows of chimney pots whilst later building have more ornate and detailed features including corbelled layers with clustered pots, reflecting the architectural style of the host property. 1&3 Stanley Road have expressive chimneys consisting of gabled stacks with multiple vented pots – a form often seen in the borough and probably associated with the estate architect of Knowsley Hall.

Where original terracotta pots are still present, they are of a traditional form but of various ages and styles suggesting historic ad-hoc replacements when needed. Stanley Terrace appears to be the only terrace with a near complete set of original chimney pots, which adds considerably to its regular appearance and attractive qualities.

There is regularity of form in the semi-detached pairs through the location of a central chimney stack with main living rooms adjoining and doors to the sides of the property. This form is consistent through all of the semi-detached pairs on Stanley Road.

Roofs above bay windows and porches are typically of the same material as the main roof of the house.

### 5.2.5 Gables

Gabled fronts are a strong feature used in some of the semi-detached pairs and often incorporate decorative timberwork. Gables with decoration usually face the road and in some of the larger pairs have inset windows relating to a third attic storey. Within the domestic revival buildings, gables are used to add asymmetry and are varied in size and design.

As a general principle the larger the building, the more ornate the timberwork, with the largest properties having pierced bargeboards and fascias, in rounded and ogee pattern. An exception to this is the largest villa-pair on Archway Road, which would have originally had decorative timberwork, though this has now been removed.

### 5.2.6 Windows

Windows are an important element of the architecture of all properties in the conservation area. The use of the correct style, materials, finishes and details considerably enhances the overall appearance of the individual building and collectively this helps establish the character of the conservation area.

The earlier terraces originally had multi-paned wooden horizontal or vertical sliding sash windows with painted finishes in reveals. Horizontal 'Yorkshire' sash windows are more typically found in cottages and smaller buildings and are likely to be the earliest windows in the conservation area. Original examples in the area of these are now confined to the rears of Derby Terrace. Victorian era buildings would have also had sash windows but would have had either 2/2 or 1/1 designs, reflecting the new availability of larger panes of glass.

The domestic revival buildings have cottage-style windows, which enhance their architectural character. Blue Bell Lane Cottages retain their traditional wooden casement windows of three panes each painted white and in groupings of two to four.

The attractive wooden turned mullion posts within number 149 Blue Bell Lane are believed to be original, and would have been used throughout the terrace originally. This detail is beneficially replicated at no 145. Originally, the windows would have been matching vertical sliding sash windows throughout, though now all are casements of varying forms. The loss of the original Victorian detail and the increasing variety in the style of windows detracts from the overall character and coherence of the terrace.

Decorative details around window openings vary in form from brick arched heads to stone lintels and cills. In later buildings pressed red brick is used to frame the windows. This regularity in treatment enhances the terraces and semis.

Bay windows are a prominent feature of the semi-detached pairs in the conservation area, they are typically canted and on the ground floor only.

There are a number of original wooden sash windows present. There have been uPVC replacements which detract from the character of the area, especially where they create bulky looking windows with inauthentic details such as changes to opening details, 'stuck-on' or encapsulated mullions and glazing bars and overlapping 'weatherproof' frames.

### 5.2.7 Doors, Doorways and Porches

Doors, doorways and porches are important elements of the conservation area. Many of the terraced properties in the conservation area have highly visible doors facing the street. There are some original painted timber doors remaining, their designs being in keeping with the architectural style of the building, usually vertically boarded, or with raised and fielded panelling. There are several more recent (and inappropriate) styles of doors, including those of PVCu. These break up the harmony of the terraces by incorporating dropped fanlights, or incorporating fancy patterns in the panelling.

137-141 Blue Bell Lane have traditional delicate timber latticework porches, which ornament the otherwise plain cottages and enhance the rural character of the buildings.

The doors of Blue Bell Cottages are recessed beneath the jettied upper floor creating a short arcade. These doors are majority vertical boarded timber construction and all treated black, this consistency within the group enhances their character.

Timber door canopies are typical on Archway Road; however, there are brick porches that appear to be roughly contemporary with the buildings. Where porches are not original to the design of the property, they should not generally be added, as they change the character of the building, and are likely to conceal original details.

Where there are no porches, door surrounds are varied. Earlier properties have plainer details, for example with simple wedge lintels while later properties, particularly those of higher status, tend to have more elaborate surrounds incorporating features such as brick or terracotta arches and carved timber.



Figure 17 - Land north of St. Michael's Church Showing 20<sup>th</sup> Century Buildings and the Houses in Capper Grove

### 5.3 Building Materials

Until the 1950s Huyton had its own stone quarry which was commercially used for flagstones but there is evidence that there were also quarries by the Blue Bell Inn (now demolished), and elsewhere in the area. The distinctive red pebble bed bunter sandstone is the most common stone used in the area although certain elements are of Milnrow sandstone, which was possibly quarried nearby at Hey Delph in Knowsley Park.

Sandstone is a prominent material in the conservation area, primarily used in walls. The most prominent example is St. Michael's Church and the Churchyard wall, which faces onto Huyton Lane and Blue Bell Lane. It is a long and high wall sitting on an outcrop of sandstone. It has been refaced or rebuilt in certain areas, thereby adding to the interest of the whole. Local sandstone slab walls are also a historic feature of this area.



Figure 18 – Distinctive sandstone walls add to the character of the area.

Other characteristic building materials are mainly red/brown brick of local clay and Welsh slate, with a small element of red clay tile. The primary bonding patterns are Flemish, English garden wall and plain stretcher. On the more ornate buildings there are bands of brick specials in various forms, usually of red-brick or terracotta. Exceptions are The Barkers Brewery Public House which is primarily a buff-coloured brick with darker brick detailing, and the modern buildings forming the vicarage/Capper Grove which are of a darker red/brown brick.

The majority of the roofs of the area are either Welsh slate or modern tile, most are square cut but there are a couple of examples of fishscale slate. An unusual and characterful detail is the roof of Blue Bell Cottages where rear slope of the roof appears to be of grey slate whilst the front and side slopes are of red roof tile, which possibly was a more expensive and prestige material at the time of construction.

There are some rendered properties in the conservation area and one in pebble dash. These are all the result of modern alterations to a building that was originally brick; this type of alteration significantly changes the appearance of the building, masking its original form and is harmful.

Timber joinery is a common feature. There are a number of original sash windows in the area, there are also timber doors, door surrounds, barge boards, soffits, fascias, half timbering to gables and timber porches. Joinery is painted rather than stained. Windows are now largely painted white, however originally many would have been dark colours in line with the fashions at the date of their construction.

Original windows that survive make a significant contribution to the character of the building in which they are set and the wider area. Unfortunately, there have been many replacements with PVCu or timber which do not display the same quality of detailing or have the same appearance.

## 5.4 Boundaries

The historic walls and boundaries are a key feature contributing to the character and appearance of the conservation area. They are fairly consistent in character and in their position relative to plots. They are largely of brick, local sandstone or sandstone flags and are of a medium height, high enough to provide visual strength but low enough to encourage views into front gardens. There are variations in style, though most have a fairly simple design and appearance. There are also hedges and some railings, which provide boundaries within the conservation area especially on Huyton Lane and in the Cemetery.

Generally, the more recent boundaries tend to make a lesser or negative contribution, especially those which incorporate concrete details, uncharacteristic bricks and/or fences. Fences are particularly harmful when they have been placed on top of walls.

Early brick walls in the area are largely plain with rounded stone copings, more recent walls however tend to include brick string courses or fancy railings which look somewhat out of place.



**Figure 19 - Blue Bell Lane Showing Stone-Slab Walls with Modern Insertions and Irregular Plot Sizes and Building Lines of this Early Terrace.**

Sandstone slab walls, with the stone rounded at the top and placed into the ground lengthwise are a feature on Blue Bell Lane, adjacent stones are joined with iron staples. Many of these staples are now missing and those that remain are rusted, but the mounting holes can still be seen. They are a form that has been used for centuries, and was once more common in the borough. There have clearly been more modern replacements which lack the iron staples but these are of a good quality natural stone. There is breezeblock replacement which is jarring and uncharacteristic

Derby Terrace has quite high brick walls around the front gardens, these serve to give the properties slightly greater privacy, perhaps reflecting their position facing the village green.

Many historic gateposts remain in evidence; these are of cut and finished sandstone blocks that often still bear the carved or painted property names on them. These are a traditional feature of the area and add historic flavour. Brick gateposts with concrete caps are also in evidence in front of more modern properties; however these are not a feature which add to the character or appearance of the area.

The village green is surrounded by a low sandstone boundary wall that was surmounted with decorative iron railings until WWII. A wall of similar construction runs from the gable end of number 112 Blue Bell Lane and follows the corner around onto Stanley Road. This has seen the removal of



sections to allow for entrances to the modern housing. The wall is attractive and a visual indicator that the plot of the new houses and the remaining area of informal vegetation were historically linked.

The cemetery is surrounded on three sides by metal railings which have largely had wooden panelling attached by the adjoining households which creates a rather patchwork appearance. Roughly half-way across the cemetery there is a small, overgrown stone bank. This is probably the remains of a former field boundary and marks the original limit of the St. Michael's Churchyard Extension. The western edge of the cemetery is formed of a wooden panel fence, which creates a strong boundary between the cemetery and the houses beyond; the fence makes a neutral contribution to the conservation area. At the base of this fence are two sandstone boundary stones engraved with a Maltese-cross and the date 1939, marking the new boundary and date of the cemetery expansion.

Along Huyton Lane there is some unattractive concrete post and wooden panel fencing but also a significant mixed yew and beech hedge that surrounds 'The Old Vicarage'. This hedge contributes positively to create a 'green gateway' to the conservation area and the use of native and traditional churchyard species reinforces the areas historical character.

On Archway Road, the original front boundary walls of Hill House have been replaced by a non-traditional metal fence with hedging behind. The original sandstone gateposts with the name 'Hill House' on them however fortunately survive.

## 5.5 Public Realm

In the conservation area there is a noticeable amount of highway features, signs and lines which have an urbanising and intrusive influence on the character of the area. These are particularly prevalent at the Blue Bell Lane junction and along Archway Road.

There are significant lengths of guardrails along Archway Road, installed for reasons of public safety. They are of a uniform design but in variable condition. They are all unpainted galvanised steel, which has in places begun showing signs of oxidisation and rust. These do not positively contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area but rather clutter the street scene and contribute to the sense of separation between the town centre and the conservation area.

Because the area is heavily used by traffic, there are extensive areas of road markings and features in the conservation area which have been added to improve safety and issues with congestion. Stanley Road is lined with speed-cushions in red asphalt and large road markings. There is also a red band of asphalt where it meets Blue Bell Lane. Particularly noticeable is the yellow box hatching at the Blue Bell Lane/Archway Road junction. These, combined with the use of standard design double-yellow lines add an 'urban' quality and detract from the simple village character and appearance of the conservation area.

Street lighting and signage poles are currently treated black, including the rear faces of street signs, which helps to ameliorate their impact on the street scene. Poles associated with the pedestrian crossing and traffic lights are black and there is a galvanised redundant air quality monitoring pole outside the Barkers Brewery Public House which is noticeably out of character. Around the Cross

and Village Green are two modern, but traditional style streetlights which are more appropriate to the conservation area, again treated black.

All telegraph poles in the conservation area are traditional wooden-type. There is a further grey utility pole on Archway Road, currently used to support CCTV.

Just north of the boundary of the conservation area the pavement widens and there are four grey concrete bollards enclosing a small area of tarmac – although not in the conservation area these are unattractive and create a ‘dead’ space.

The pavement surfaces are a mixture of black/grey asphalt and mixed paving slabs. There are occasional patches of historic cobbled surfacing around the west side of St. Michael’s Church. Kerbing is pre-cast concrete. There is little overall harmony in the modern surfaces which is reflective of the piecemeal way repairs and replacements have been carried out.



Figure 20 - Utility cabinets at Stanley Road are intrusive and jarring.



Figure 21 - Speed cushions are of unsympathetic colours and visually disruptive.

The infrastructure associated with various utilities have a noticeable impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Cabinets set on the highway are mixed in colour, some being dark green and others in pale grey. There is evidence of graffiti and flyposting on these boxes. One particular area of note is the collection of four cabinets at the top of Stanley Road opposite the village green. They are all of large size, closely concentrated and of a pale grey colour. They prove particularly jarring in this prominent location.

## 5.6 Listed Buildings

There are five listed buildings in the St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area. These heritage assets are listed for their special architectural or historic interest. They are important nationally as examples of their type, and locally add much to the historic interest, street scene and general character of the conservation area. They are:

### The Church of St. Michael (Grade II\*)

St. Michael’s Church is constructed of dressed red sandstone and is largely C19th in appearance but there are many earlier sections. It is certainly the oldest building in the conservation area. The

tower is a striking feature on the skyline, and the focal point of several key views in the area. It is built in a perpendicular Gothic style with gargoyles and pinnacles at bell stage, which may be 15th Century.

The eight pinnacles at the top of the tower, each surmounted by a golden coloured vane in the form of a banner, showing the arms of the churchwardens or local families. These are particularly eye-catching as they glint in the sunshine. They are believed to be 1664 in date. There is a peculiar band of carved stonework above the west doorway, which is likely to be 14<sup>th</sup> Century in date and is possibly a re-use from an earlier building on the site. The north and south aisles date to 1815 and 1822 respectively.

There was a substantial rebuilding program in 1927 when the nave and chancel roof were replaced, it is also possible that some alterations/renewal of tower stonework occurred at that date. It is notable that there is a conical but flat-topped pinnacle at each apex of the north aisle roof, a similar feature, used as a chimney, is found at Prescott Church, perhaps indicating work by the same local stonemason or a local style. Beneath the entrance ramp/steps at the west of the church there is a blocked doorway facing Blue Bell Lane, this led to a space that at one time served as the village lock-up.

#### **Entrance Gateway to Church of St. Michael at North East Corner of the Churchyard (Grade II)**

The entrance to the church on the north east corner consists of a wrought iron overthrow with 9 decorative finials set inside Tuscan style gateposts. This overthrow is in reasonable condition. It has a central panel reading: "R.L/J.S/Th.Bs/C.W/1765] The gateway previously contained gates but these were lost before it was listed



Figure 22 – Entrance Gate to the North-East Corner of the Churchyard.

Figure 23 - The Entrance Gateway to the South of the Churchyard



### Entrance Gateway to Church of St. Michael at the South corner of the Churchyard (Grade II)

The gateway consists of an iron overthrow fixed into sandstone columns with nine decorative finials and a central panel in gold painted "R.L/J.S/T.B/C.Wn/1765" and so is not identical to that associated with the north east entrance. The tops of the columns are modern replacements and the finials have parts of their decorative scrollwork missing. The ironwork shows signs of deterioration.

These gateways and elaborate overthrows signify the importance of the church and are distinctive features in the conservation area commemorating past parishioners.

### Village Cross (Grade II)

The cross is an 1897 replacement for an earlier 1819 cross. The original cross was designed by Thomas Rickman. This was replaced in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with an ionic column with a pointed floral finial.

The current cross is a slender gothic column rebuilt in 1897 to Rickman’s original design. The cross stands on a five stepped octagonal base and pedestal culminating in a niche-like structure with a statue of St. Michael on the east side. Photographs show that originally there was a small cross at the top of the niche, which is no longer present. The listing also includes the surrounding low sandstone walls. This square and the structures together form a focal point in the conservation area.

### Monument to East of North Aisle of St. Michael’s Church (Grade II)

This is a pedestal monument possibly from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There are panels on each side that have weathered to the point they are illegible.

The monument is highly decorated with detailed carvings and an urn on top and cast iron railings with decorative heads surround it. It is located in a fenced off area of the churchyard which means it is little appreciated.



Figure 24 – Monument within Churchyard



Figure 25 – The Village Cross

## 5.7 Locally Listed Buildings

Currently, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council does not have a Local List. However, the Council will create a list of locally important buildings.

Potential inclusions for the local list include:

- Blue Bell Cottages (112-118 Blue Bell Lane)
- 1-3 Stanley Road
- Derby Terrace

- 137-143 Blue Bell Lane

## 6. Summary of Special Character

The St. Michael's Church Conservation Area encompasses the last remaining parts of historic Huyton Village and offers the last tangible link to the ancient past of the area through its church and churchyard. This is specifically important because the majority of Huyton Village was redeveloped in the 1960s and 70s destroying much historic fabric. The conservation area has retained elements which speak to Huyton's rural origins and also place into context the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century development which signifies the transition of the rural village to a suburban settlement.

St. Michael's Church Conservation Area is a relatively small area with an abundance of character. Each street's character is of a slightly different nature. However, the interplay between them is important, each one should be considered in context with the others.

All sites, buildings and views are affected by the dominant presence of the St. Michael's Church and its cemetery. The village green forms an important node within this area, its central location at the junction of two major roads reinforces the central quality of this area and the historic buildings around it serve to give it context, their smaller relative scale reflects the church-village relationship.

### 6.1 Key Characteristics

- It is the surviving core of an historically rural village.
- Prominent focal features set at nodal points include the Grade II\* Listed Church and its churchyard walls, the Grade II Village Cross and green, the Barker's Brewery Pub and 112-118 Bluebell Lane contribute to several important views.
- Mature planting, planted front gardens and areas of tree cover enhance the 'rural village' character of the area
- Housing of differing styles; ranging from early 19th Century cottage terraces to later semi-detached villas chart the historic development of the area.
- St. Michael's Cemetery Extension is a quiet green space that contains features of cultural and historical value, it also forms a backdrop to the area is a place for quiet reflection, and helps create a sense of divide from the adjoining suburban area.
- Semi-detached Victorian villa housing provides visual and historical links with the other conservation areas in Huyton.
- Use of locally distinctive materials specifically red sandstones, local brick and Welsh slate.

## 7. Issues, and Opportunities for Enhancement

### 7.1 Conservation Area Boundary Review

The St. Michael's Church Conservation Area boundary as it currently stands would benefit from review in accordance with Historic England Advice Note 1 (2016) 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management'. The existing boundary designated in 1978 is now outdated as changes on the ground mean it now seems illogical and it does not encompass all sites that contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

#### 7.1.1 Proposed boundary amendments

It is proposed that the currently undesignated part of the St. Michael's Cemetery Extension be brought within the boundaries of the conservation area. This is proposed for a number of reasons; primarily to create a logical boundary without distinguishing between two parts of what is essentially the same site, and secondly, the cemetery extension has developed a strong associative historical significance, as it is the burial place of Stuart Sutcliffe, an original member of The Beatles. When the boundaries were originally designated The Beatles were not as recognised as being of historic importance but since then their status has grown and now Beatles associations are considered important to the heritage of the Liverpool City Region. Extending the boundaries would bring the Stuart Sutcliffe grave within the conservation area.

It is proposed that numbers 9-19 Stanley Road be added to the conservation area. These collections of Victorian semi-detached pairs are part of the first phase of development that occurred on Stanley Road. Numbers 13-15 are the oldest buildings on that side of the street, first appearing as isolated houses on the 1892 OS Map. This addition would bring all of the nineteenth century houses in this part of the street into the conservation area, thereby recognising the value of these buildings and allowing for a more consistent approach to their management.

The conservation area boundary currently cuts through the middle of the garden of 5 Derby Terrace, 'The Bungalow' next to Derby Terrace. To improve this confusing situation, it is proposed to include the whole of the garden of 5 Derby Terrace to the conservation area. This land is historically associated with the plot and this extension would give a more coherent and logical boundary.

### 7.2 Upkeep and Alterations to Features

Many of the buildings in the conservation area have been previously altered and much of the alteration has been unsympathetic. One of the most notable unsympathetic types of alterations has been the replacement of traditional wooden sashes. There have been some efforts in certain properties to try and replicate sash windows with 'heritage style' PVCu, although these are varied in quality and detail; all fail to mitigate the loss of the original timber sashes. Where such changes have been made to dwellings which form part of semis and terraces there is a detrimental effect on the coherence of the group.

Other harmful alterations include the replacement of slate roofs (e.g. with tile, felt etc.) and the rebuilding or additions to boundary walls in uncharacteristic materials (e.g. breeze block, decorative concrete) and rendering over original masonry. All of these alterations destroy and obscure traditional historic characteristics and have had a negative effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Sandstone masonry and brick walls in the area also require regular upkeep and some walls are in need of repair and repointing. Repointing should be undertaken with an appropriate mortar of matching colour and texture. Cement based mortars are usually inappropriate as they are inflexible and direct evaporation through the softer masonry, leading to faster erosion.

The wall around the green lost its decorative iron railings during WWII, some stonework is dislodged and is generally it is showing signs of a lack of general maintenance.

Some houses have decorative joinery porches and roof-details, which if not sufficiently maintained are liable to deteriorate. Decorative woodwork is often the result of high Victorian craftsmanship and maintenance is preferable and cheaper than replacement. Where replacements and repair are unavoidable, it is advisable to use higher quality timber as cheap softwood will deteriorate more quickly. Similarly, the use of roofing felt and other cheaper alternatives to traditional lead should be avoided.

### 7.3 Setting of the Conservation Area

The St. Michael's Church Conservation Area is surrounded with largely 20<sup>th</sup> century development; however, there are older properties peppered throughout its surroundings creating a link between the historic village and the wider area. Many of the surviving older properties are significantly modified; however, those close to the boundary of the conservation area of a similar form and layout. They add to the setting of the conservation area, due to the similarities in their age and appearance, their presence broadens understanding of how the village developed into a town. The fairly low level and lower density layout of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban housing draws some parallels with the layout of the conservation area and generally does not detract from its setting.

A short distance to the east of the conservation area lies the former Huyton Cricket Club. The pavilion, built 1875 is one of the earliest cricket pavilions, but is now disused. The cricket ground is now laid out as football pitches. Its boundary with Huyton Lane is formed of a stone slab wall and hawthorne hedge, the openness of the field coupled with this rural style boundary is reminiscent of the area's rural past and appears much as it would have been in the late Victorian period. This adds to the sense of the area as a historic 'village'. The Garth which lies between the Cricket pitch and the conservation area is a modern housing development, the fencing offers a poor appearance, however the mature trees largely conceal the housing and add to the streetscene and rural approach to the conservation area.

### 7.4 Traffic and Pedestrian Movement

The St. Michael's Church Conservation Area has a very heavy traffic flow, lying on an important historical junction which is now one of the main arterial roads through the area. The junction at Blue Bell Lane and Archway Road is challenging for both drivers and pedestrians.

While there is a puffin crossing linking the conservation area to the commercial centre, this set slightly to the west of the junction. The pedestrian guardrails visually clutter the junction, and create a generally unwelcoming environment for pedestrians, this adds to an unhelpful sense of disconnection between the modern retail centre and the conservation area.

Stanley Road has parking restrictions and there are traffic calming measures in place. The large red speed cushions and signs are urbanising features, out of character with the village character of the conservation area.

When opportunities arise to review or revise these features, consideration should be given to whether the works can enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

## 7.5 Sites at Risk

### 7.5.1 The Old Fire Station/Hearse House

The building adjacent to the churchyard is thought to have originally been a hearse house and stable for the vicarage, part may have been a cottage. As such it is thought to be of a similar date and design to the vicarage with good quality Victorian brickwork and slate. It was later used as a corporation depot, where school meals were stored, and latterly as Huyton's fire station until the current 1960s building was built. The building originally faced onto a yard enclosed by a high wall with gates in it, facing Huyton Lane. Sometime during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a steel framed corrugated iron roof was placed over the yard.

This iron roof is now the major part of the site that is visible from the public highway and is in poor condition. This deteriorating roof is visually harmful in itself but also has the negative visual effect, of hiding the Victorian building. It is also clear that at least part of the roof of the historic building has also collapsed. A mixture of block and mesh and ad hoc fencing now surrounds the building.

The site is in a prominent position and visible in one of the key views of the site and in its current state is detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, it could still be a potential asset if a proper inspection of the Victorian building is carried out and the obsolete corrugated iron roof removed.

### 7.5.2 St. Michael's Church and Churchyard

Another site that is 'at risk' is the churchyard and grounds of St. Michael's. This is a vitally important site in the conservation area and it contributes to the setting of four listed buildings. The churchyard is suffering from neglect and vandalism as evidenced the missing stone ball-finials of the Grade II Listed Gate piers (2013 replacements are currently in storage within the church).

Grave monuments in the churchyard are in a poor state and the decorative sundial that once existed is now in a ruinous state.



Figure 26 - The remains of the sundial.



Figure 27 - The Old Fire Station/Hearse House

Although the grass is generally maintained, vegetation at the edges of the churchyard and within the wooded area around the Parish Hall would benefit from improved management in order to avoid damage to structures. There is also significant evidence of graffiti on certain areas of the church and unsightly modern additions such as palisade fencing and a roller shutter on the vestry window.

Further damage is evident in the form of graffiti on the historic church stonework and the protective plastic coverings affixed over the church windows. This mainly affects the rear of the church where public oversight is restricted and damage is less likely to be noted.

## 7.6 Public Realm

The conservation area would generally benefit from improvements in the public realm.

There is good progress towards utility poles and lighting columns being treated more appropriately in the conservation area. Current poles and the rear face of signage are coated black; however, there are one or two poles that have not had this treatment, and therefore have a greater, jarring, visual impact.

There are long lengths of unsightly guardrails at the junction of Blue Bell Lane and Archway Road. Alterations here could provide an opportunity to enhance the connection between the conservation area and the modern village. The guardrails are not just a physical barrier but are also a psychological barrier, however, if they could be treated in a more appropriate manner, for example painted a darker colour, their effect on the character of the conservation area would be lessened. A reduction the extent of guardrails or improvements to their appearance would also be beneficial.

Because of the major junction and heavy traffic in the area, there are multiple examples of intrusive road-markings. It would be beneficial if 'primrose' yellow were used for road markings and narrower 50mm lines.

It would also be beneficial if the use of red tarmac for 20mph zones and red speed cushions was reassessed and alternatives explored, such as black speed cushions or bands of setts to calm traffic.

Unappealing standard concrete bollards outside of the conservation area, on the opposite side of Bluebell Lane detract from the appearance of the approach to the conservation area from the north. Replacement with a more attractive traditional type of bollard would be beneficial.

The current paving in the conservation area is mostly black tarmac, although there are localised areas of concrete paving slabs. Unfortunately, many of these slabs are cracked and damaged; this detracts from the visual appearance of the conservation area and improvements in the consistency and quality of pavements would be welcomed. There are some areas of historic cobbles, which are examples of traditional surfaces, and these should be retained and conserved.

### **7.6.1 Trees and green spaces**

Whilst the majority of private trees and green spaces in the conservation area are well kept and managed, there is a significant amount of green space around the cemetery and churchyard, and the area around the cross, which could benefit from a scheme of management and improvement.

It is particularly evident around the borders of the churchyard and graveyard where there are unpruned trees, collections of rubble and architectural masonry and general untidiness.

## 7.7 Article 4 Direction

There is currently an “Article 4 Direction” in force in St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area. This Direction was originally made in 1981. The use of Article 4 Directions enables local planning authorities to control minor alterations to unlisted residential property, which otherwise could be carried-out by property owners without planning permission using ‘permitted development’ rights.

As permitted development rights have been removed in the St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area, alterations such as the installation of replacement doors and windows, re-roofing in alternative materials, the removal of chimneys, the addition of porches, or the removal of front boundaries and the creation of car parking in front gardens all require planning permission. The aim of the Article 4 Direction is to encourage property owners to use traditional materials and details appropriate to the conservation area, and to prevent the gradual erosion of its special interest, which can result from uncontrolled incremental changes to the buildings and spaces within it.

If the proposed boundary amendments to the conservation area are approved, the properties that would come into by the conservation area would not be subject to the Article 4 Direction as this relates only to the original boundaries.

Should the boundary be reviewed, a review of the article 4 direction should be also undertaken to allow for consistent and appropriate management.

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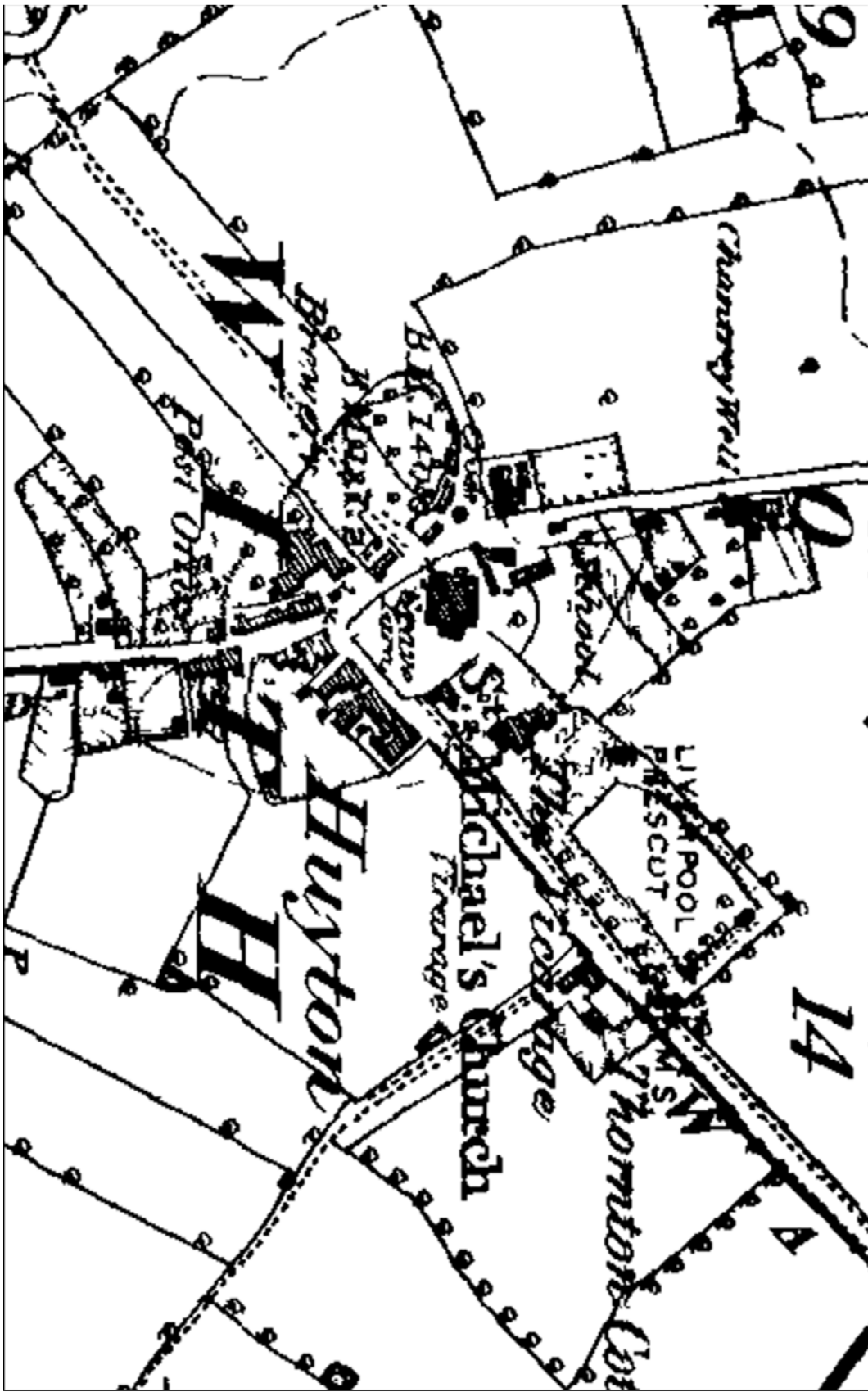
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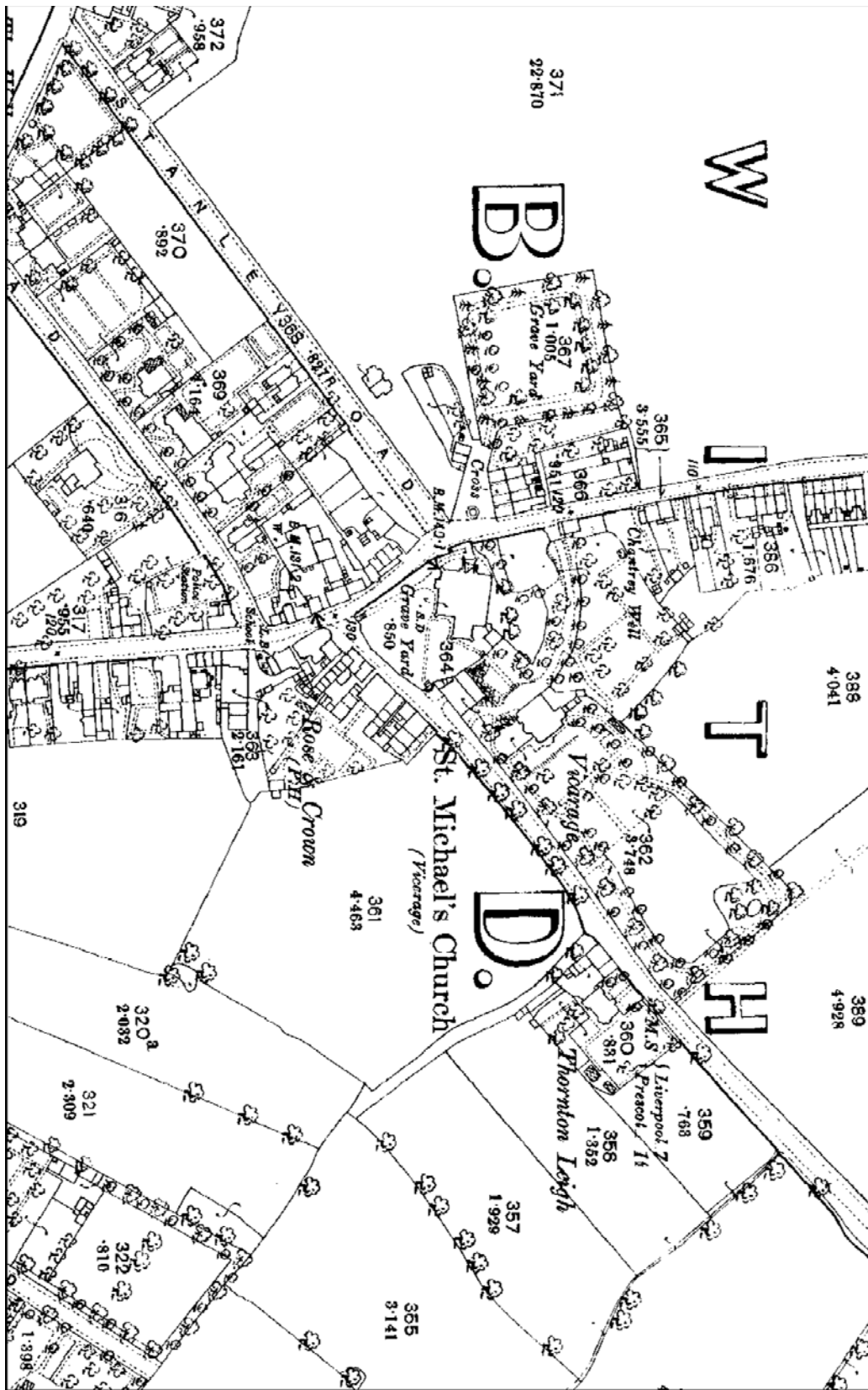
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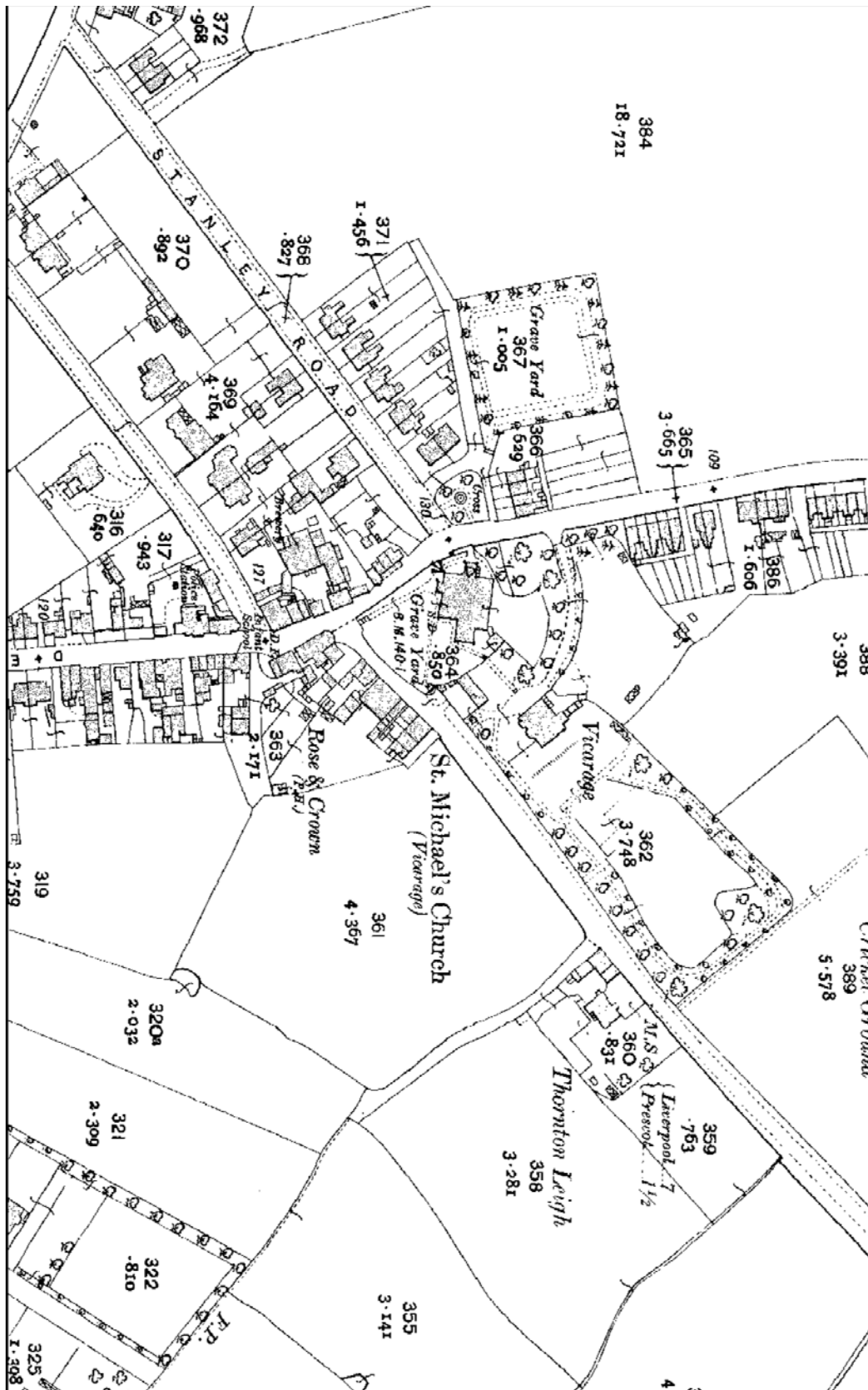
APPENDIX 1 - Historic Map 1850

## APPENDIX 2 - Historic Map 1894-98

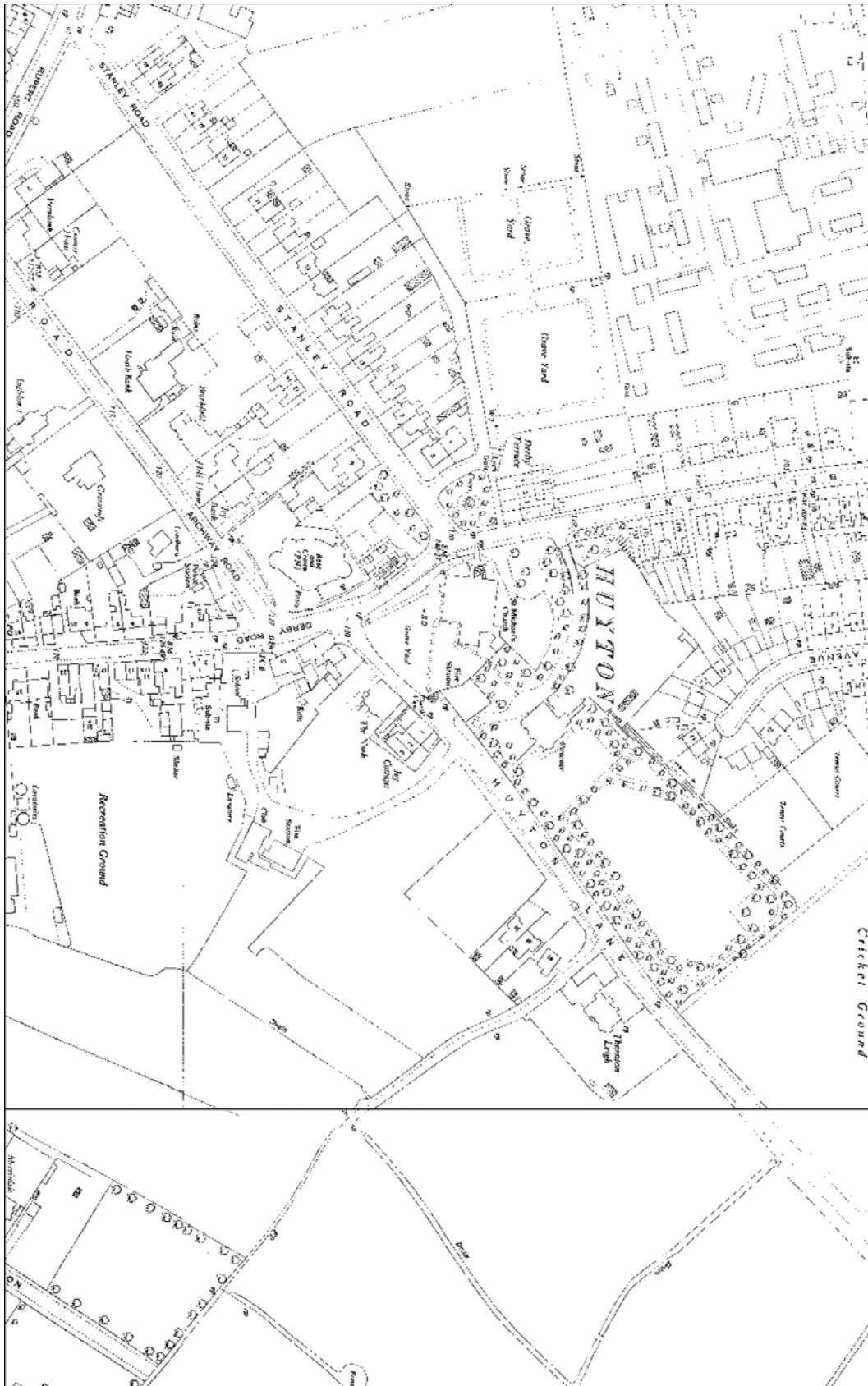




## APPENDIX 3 – Historic Map 1927



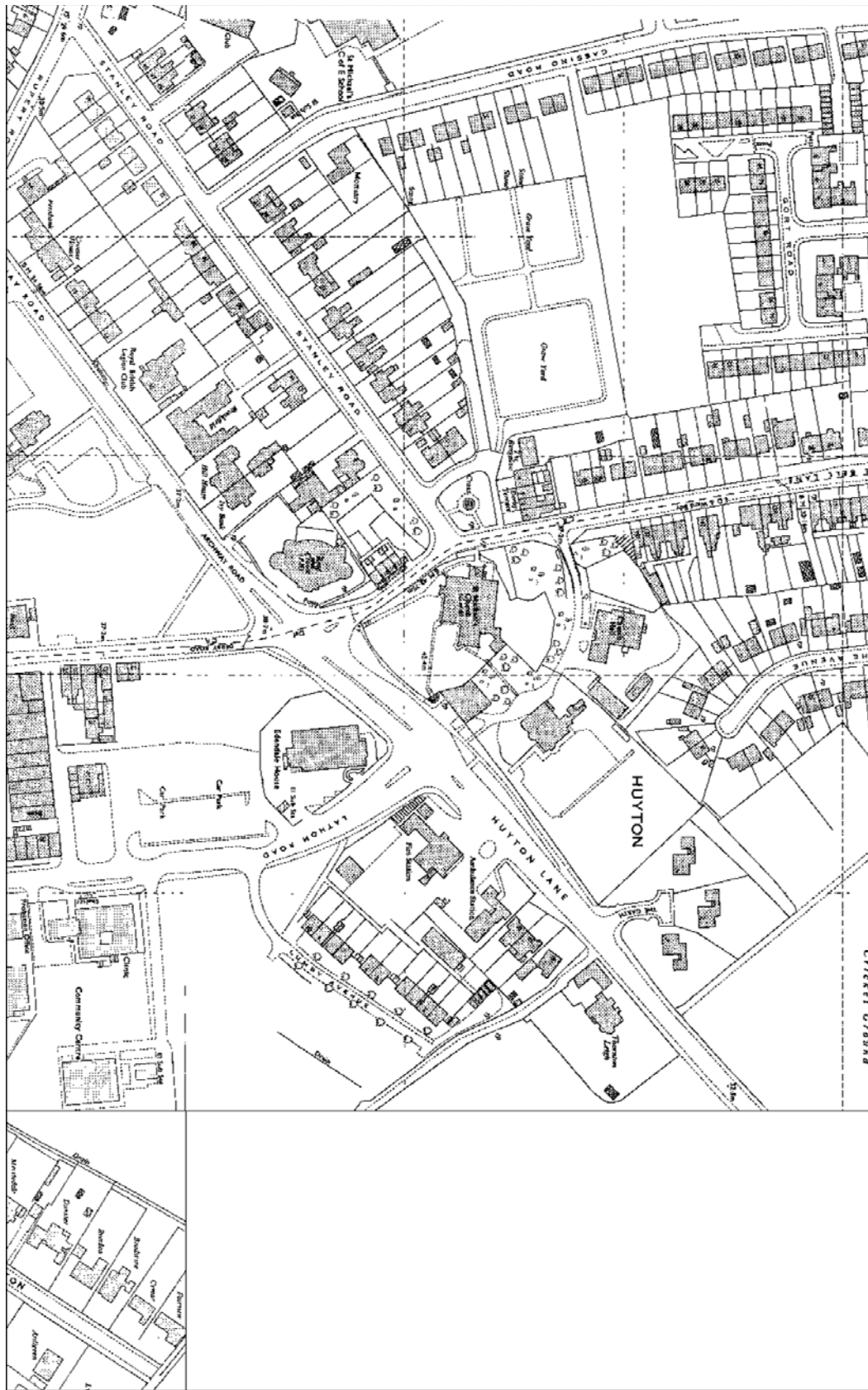
## APPENDIX 4 – Historic Map 1950s



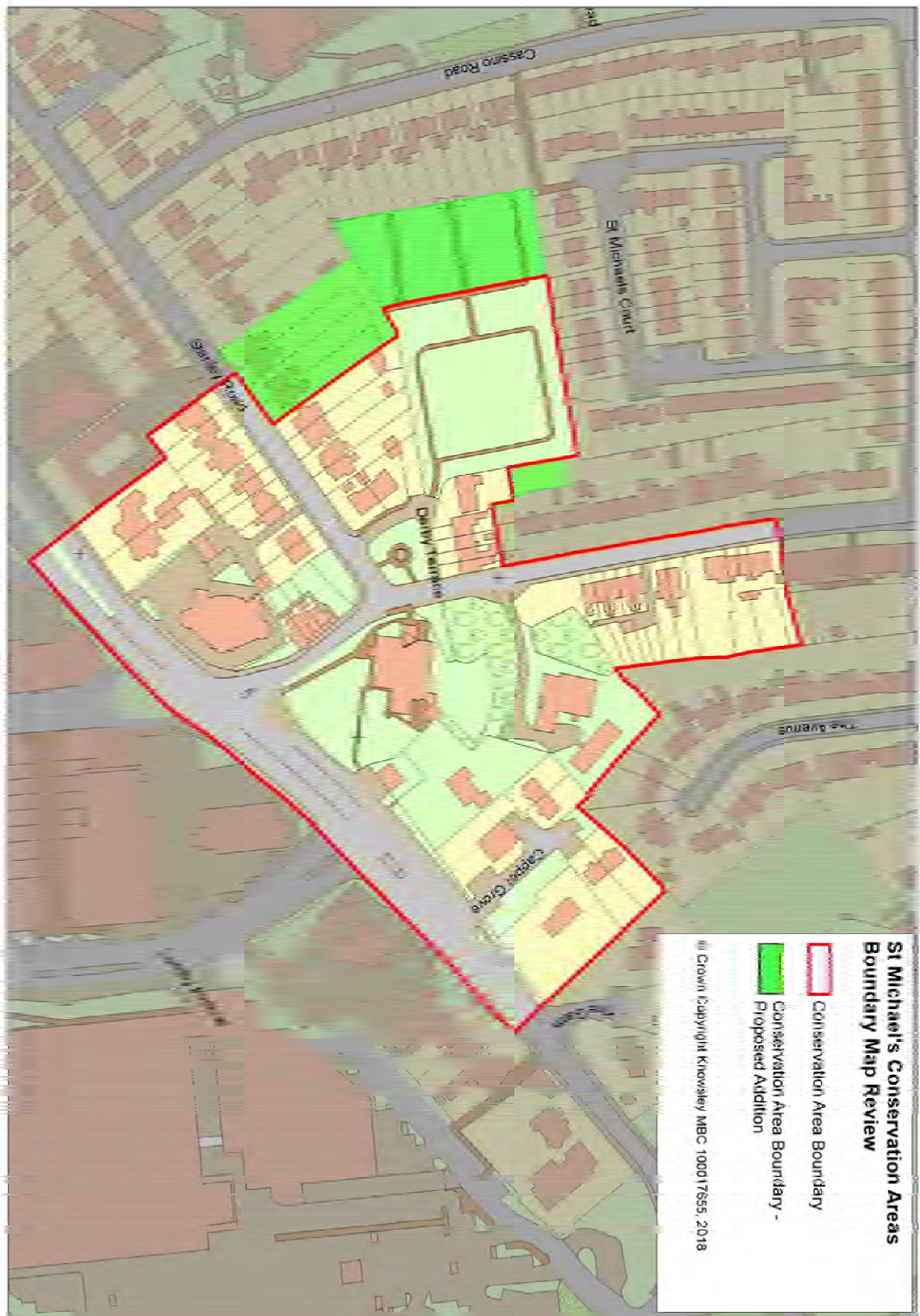
## APPENDIX 5 - Historic Map 1960s



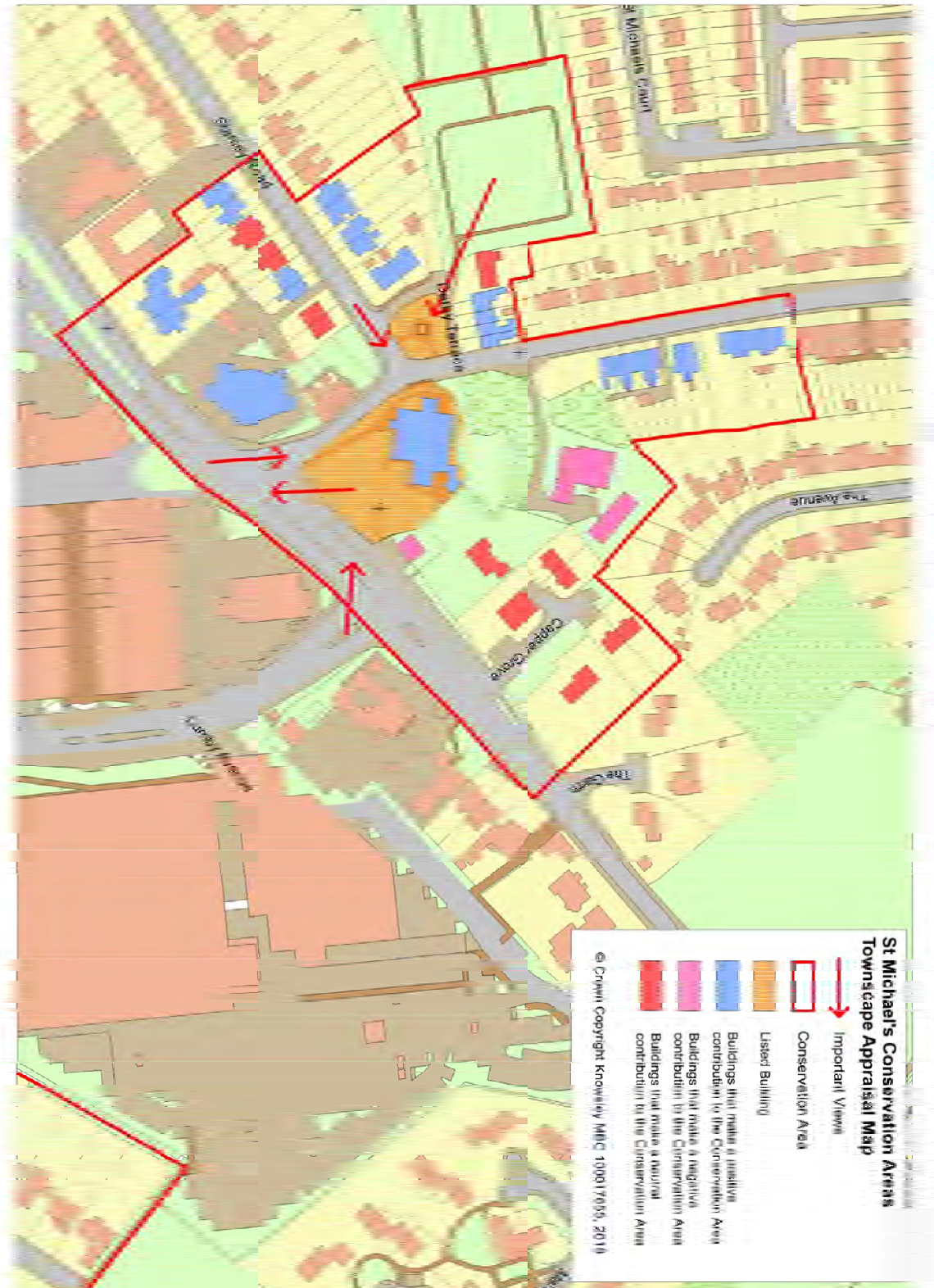
## APPENDIX 6 – Historic Map 1970s



## APPENDIX 7 - St. Michael's Church Conservation Area Proposed Boundary Changes



## APPENDIX 8 – St. Michael’s Church Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map



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