Marton Moss conservation area appraisal

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Marton Moss Conservation Area Appraisal

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1. Introduction

1.1 In 2009 the Council commissioned Archaeo-Environment Ltd to undertake a historic characterisation report for Marton Moss. This was the last in a series of characterisation exercises which had been carried out covering Blackpool's most historic areas. The studies covering the town centre, North and South Shore areas and Promenades, Raikes Hall and Layton were carried out by the Architectural History Practice.

1.2 As a result of the characterisation reports two new conservation areas were designated in 2015 (Foxhall and Raikes Hall), the Town Centre Conservation Area was extended, and further conservation areas are under consideration, including Marton Moss.

1.3 Marton Moss is predominantly agricultural in use and adjoins extensive areas of open countryside in neighbouring Fylde Borough. The former high concentration of glasshouses on Marton Moss resulted in a form of development different from typical countryside areas, and from the rest of Blackpool. Horticultural use has declined in recent decades, with large areas of the Moss now used for a mix of horse grazing land, glasshouses, and dwellings set in large gardens, but overall it retains its rural character.

1.4 The decline of market gardening across the Moss has led to an increase in residential redevelopment in its place, particularly to the north of the proposed conservation area so far. Despite Marton Moss being designated a Countryside Area under saved policy NE2 of the Local Plan, development is encroaching upon, and beginning to compromise, the character of the Moss. Conservation Area designation will strengthen existing powers to enable preservation and enhancement of its rural and agricultural character.

1.5 Public consultation on the draft appraisal was carried out from 1 October – 9 November 2018. The appraisal was published on the Council website, and printed copies were available in the Council's main reception and Local History Library. In addition, an article appeared in the local newspaper and copies were sent to the ward councillors. Eleven representations were received, all in support of Conservation Area designation.

1.6 The Conservation Area is bounded by the southern edge of Progress Way to the north, east side of Common Edge Road to the west (running at the rear of modern buildings as necessary), along the middle of Division Lane to the south, and the borough boundary with Fylde to the east. Marton Neighbourhood Forum would support the extension of the boundaries so that they coincide with the boundaries of the Forum, but it is felt that this would include too much modern development. However, a completely separate conservation area of the historic area to the north of the Moss could be considered for designation in the future if appropriate.

2. Policy context

2.1 A conservation area is an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance", as set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2.2 Under this legislation, local authorities have a duty to designate such areas and to review them, and to use their planning powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within a framework of managing change with a positive approach. Designation automatically entails control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthens controls over minor development and gives special protection to trees within the area.

2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the historic built environment is an irreplaceable resource, and strategies should be developed through Local Plans so that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

2.4 The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012 – 2027) was adopted in January 2016. Any new development will be required to protect and enhance the character, quality and setting of its existing conservation areas and notable buildings of heritage value. Certain policies in the Saved Blackpool Local Plan have been superseded by policies in the Core Strategy; other policies in the Saved Blackpool Local Plan will remain in use until Part 2 of the new Local Plan is produced. The Saved Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 was adopted in June 2006 and the majority of its policies saved by direction in June 2009. Policy NE9 Countryside Areas is a saved policy.

3. Historical development of Blackpool

3.1 Modern Blackpool developed from the medieval manorial holdings of Bispham to the north, Layton to the south, and Marton and Carleton to the east, with each being further divided into townships. A settlement pattern of small nucleations in the manors probably changed little from the medieval period to the 18th century. The reclamation of mosslands, on which Blackpool is built, began in the 16th century. Following reclamation, enclosure of the land for farming led to the development of a small farming community with larger farmsteads including Foxhall and Raikes Hall; farming was supplemented by fishing.

3.2 In the early 18th century very few visitors braved the journey to the embryonic resort of Blackpool, which consisted mainly of a few humble cottages straggled along the shoreline and Fox Hall itself, a large late medieval half-timbered house belonging to the Tyldesley family. By the end of the 18th century, however, the town had become a fashionable sea bathing resort for the wealthy, and the first visitor accommodation was built to meet this demand.

3.3 In the early 1820s the population, excluding visitors, was about 750. The steady growth through the first half of the 19th century was focused along a one mile stretch of coastline. However, further expansion was hampered by the town's relative remoteness and patterns of landholding. The town became more accessible from 1846 with the opening of the Preston and Wyre branch railway to Blackpool North station.

3.4 By the 1870s the resident population of Blackpool was around 7,000 and visitor numbers were estimated at more than one million, as the decade saw the first large-scale visitor attractions promoted by entertainment companies, with large-scale theatrical presentations heralding modern show business. The first purpose-built theatre was the Theatre Royal (1868). In 1871 the Raikes Hall estate was sold and the house and its extensive grounds became Blackpool's first large scale entertainment centre which also offered indoor attractions. The Winter Gardens opened in 1878, and by the 1890s Blackpool became the resort with the greatest number of attractions in Europe, crowned by the opening of the Tower in 1894.

4. Historical development of Marton Moss

4.1 Much of the Lancashire lowlands consist of Permo-Triassic red mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, but this solid rock geology is covered with glacial and post-glacial deposits. Up until the last two centuries, the Lancashire plain was predominantly marshland formed by rising sea levels after the last glaciation.

4.2 As the ice sheet retreated it left behind a blanket of glacial till which now forms the coastal cliffs north of Blackpool, and also created many badly drained hollows which gave rise to the mosses and meres which dominated the area until relatively recently. Place names incorporating 'moss' and 'mere' are numerous today, and are associated with an abundance of well-maintained ditches and drains.

4.3 Agricultural drainage systems of steep-sided ditches with localised reed beds and steep embankments are a dominant feature of mosslands, and are responsible for the dramatic transformation from marshes to a rich, fertile and ordered landscape of neat fields,

such as can be found at Marton Moss.

4.4 Originally the mosslands were studded with meres with heavy clay soils, making this an inhospitable landscape where only the drier ridges could be developed for settlement. The largest ridges were located where Great and Little Marton and Lytham now stand, but there were also smaller areas of dry land around Walkers Hill, Peel Hill, Midgeland Farm, Marton Fold and Blowing Sands.

4.5 A flint scatter near Cropper Road suggests that some areas were occupied, even for just a short time, in prehistoric times, and the discovery of a bronze axe near Midgeland Farm suggests that this early farm site may well have attracted some sort of settlement for considerably longer.

4.6 Between the 1760s, when the moss land north of Division Lane was unenclosed but used for peat cutting, and 1839 when the tithe map was drawn, significant progress was made in creating an infrastructure which encouraged investment in the mosses. This was probably due to the Clifton family at Lytham Hall, who laid out a series of small lanes creating access between farms occupied by their tenants. New farms were built, or old farms were rebuilt, as part of a process of agricultural improvement. The Drainage Acts of 1846 and 1850 allowed public money for improvements, encouraging more private investment.

4.7 Ordnance Survey maps for Lancashire were first published in the 1840s. The settlement pattern at this time was much the same as seen on the 1839 tithe map and consisted of a few cottages nestled in field corners or strung out along roadsides, with a cluster at the junction of Blowing Sands. Midgeland Farm is shown but not named. Midgeland Road itself is the earliest road through the mossland, shown but not named on a 1532 map of the area[1].

4.8 The second edition OS map in 1891 shows little change other than School Road (previously unnamed) being extended with the addition of a school. However, as Blackpool evolved, from a farming community with some fishing to a tourist resort, there was an increasing need to feed the growing population. OS mapping 1911-12 shows the level of settlement along the Moss roads had increased with short terraces, detached villas and market gardens.

4.9 The 1938 OS maps shows that glass houses were the predominant building type in the area, but housing had not grown particularly in distribution, with large swathes of land still devoid of residential development. By the 1960s additional development had taken place but this was largely the expansion of the nursery businesses rather than settlement growth.

4.10 Following the end of the Second World War there was an increase in food imports from Spain, Holland and the Channel Islands, the latter of which particularly impacted on the tomato growing industry[2]. In addition, the growth of large scale monoculture began to encroach on previously market garden dominated areas.

4.11 With the decline of horticulture on Marton Moss in the last decades of the 20th century, the market gardens began, and continue to be, redeveloped for housing. This is particularly noticeable to the north of Progress Way, and there has also been infill development along Common Edge Road, with the loss of historic farms such as Marton Fold.

4.12 Grade II listed Blowing Sands, protected by its statutory listing and once part of a hamlet, is now a solitary survivor surrounded by modern development at the junction of Progress Way and Common Edge Road. The grade II listed cottages on Fishers Lane have recently had their semi-rural setting compromised further by new housing.

4.13 The relatively low level of redevelopment within the conservation area to the south and south east of Progress Way has, so far, ensured that it has retained its overall rural and agricultural character.

5. Summary of character

5.1 The Marton Moss Characterisation Report describes the area as one of small piecemeal post- medieval enclosure surrounded by busy arterial routes.



Sandy Lane Looking North

It consists of the earliest cobbled buildings through to modern detached bungalows. Within the busy communication infrastructure it is an enclosed leafy landscape based around lanes, rectangular fields and drains with views limited to gaps in hedgerows on the narrow lanes, and across open paddocks.

[1] *Historic Characterisation of Marton Moss* 2009, p. 11

[2] *Marton Moss and its Neighbourhood,* Monks, H., p. 48

5.2 The network of lanes which grew up around the historic field pattern, some of which had evolved into tracks suitable for horse and cart, some remaining as footpaths, are now often accessible by car but have remained largely rural in character.

5.3 The area also adjoins extensive areas of open countryside in neighbouring Fylde Borough, although the land immediately to the east of Queensway is now being developed for housing.

5.4 The high concentration of glasshouses on Marton Moss resulted in a form of development different from typical countryside areas, and from the rest of Blackpool. The decline in horticulture on the Moss has meant that many glasshouses have been demolished and replaced by housing to the north of the Conservation Area. However, a sufficient number of glasshouses remain in the Conservation Area to illustrate its horticultural tradition, together with a mix of horse grazing land and dwellings set in large gardens.

6. Architectural and landscape character

6.1 Buildings within the mosslands owe their architectural traditions mostly to the 18th century and later. On drier land, where settlement occurred earlier, buildings dating to the 15th or 16th centuries were probably cruck built. The lack of building materials also resulted in a long association with cobblestones and manure as building materials in the 17th and 18th centuries with limited brick for patching. The cobbled surface was whitewashed which helped to hold the structure together and acted as a fungicide and pesticide. Such cottages were normally two or three bays, depending on the status of the owner, with a central porch. The traditional roofing material of this area was thatch, the mosses providing a sustainable source of reeds. Some thatching can still be seen dotted throughout the Moss but it is relatively rare as, during the 19th century, many thatched roofs were replaced with corrugated iron.

6.2 Most of the cobble cottages on Marton Moss dating to the 18th century or earlier have been demolished, or altered to the extent that their historic origins cannot be recognised. The most prominent remaining cobble cottage is the grade II listed Blowing Sands, which sits on a busy junction far removed from its original setting.



Bowing Sands, Common Edge Road

6.3 Grade II cottages on Fishers Lane also remain, although their original setting has been gradually eroded due to encroaching modern housing development.

6.4 Locally listed Midgeland Farm was probably originally completely cobble built and, in its rural setting, is the least compromised of the Marton Moss historic buildings. The current farmhouse is probably early 19th century re-constructed from handmade brick, with earlier attached cobble built barn and shippons with brick patch repairs. Unlike other 'improved' farmhouses, which were usually roofed in slate, Midgeland retains its thatched roof under the damaged asbestos sheeting, which suggests it was one of the earlier sites to be altered. The farmhouse sits on the edge of a former landfill site owned by Lancashire County Council, and is currently in a dilapidated state. It is surplus to the County Council's requirements and potentially at risk of demolition.



Extract from 1893 tithe map. Midgeland Farm is set in the middle of field 992.



Locally listed Midgeland Farm in an advanced state of disrepair.

6.5 The open green spaces to each corner of the nearby intersection of Midgeland Road and School Road are the remnants of the fields which were farmed by the historic owners and tenants of Midgeland Farm.



Midgeland Road, looking north to the intersection with School Road.

6.6 The locally listed Butcher's Farm Cottage on Worthington Road is late 19th century but maintains the Moss tradition of thatched roof covering.



Butchers Farm Cottage, Worthington Road.



Paddock to north east corner of intersection of School Road and Midgeland Road.

6.7 The wider locality has remained relatively undeveloped and forms a semi-rural approach to the more rural setting of Midgeland Farm. School Road,



Paddock to south west corner of intersection of School Road

and Midgeland Road.



St Nicholas School

which forms the intersection with Midgeland Road, originally began as the most westerly section of the historic lane known as Kitty Lane, named after a resident who had a cottage on the lane. By 1893 School Road had been extended in a direct line east and a school built to educate the children of the surrounding farms. The locally listed school was originally named Marton Moss Church of England Day School, but by 1930 it was known as St. Nicholas Mission Church and Day School.



View east along School Road from the corner of Sandy Lane.

6.8 A common building type in the area is the glasshouse, associated with the many nursery businesses which once existed on the Moss, although its prevalence has declined in recent years. The development of Marton Moss for horticulture was due to its fertile soil which was ideal for intensive forms of cultivation, specialising in out-of-season salad crops and those grown under glass. In 1936 it was regarded as the centre of the glass industry in the county[3]. The main cropping and marketing months were March and April, although cutting lettuce could begin as early as December.



Nos. 181-195 School Road.

Sweet peas would often occupy a path between rows of tomato plants. By September the tomatoes were cleared and replaced with winter-flowering chrysanthemums. Other crops included forced mint, forced bulbs, cucumbers and cauliflowers. An acre of glass could keep 6 to 8 men employed. Although the growth of Blackpool as a seaside resort had initially been a factor in building up the market gardening industry, the bulk of the trade of the Marton growers was eventually with the populous centres of Yorkshire.

6.9 The glasshouses typically occurred in rows filling up one plot with a house adjacent which originally housed the main nurseryman. A Victorian brick detached villa with stone dressings and sash windows would probably be occupied by wealthier owners. Additional design features included terracotta ridge tiles, pierced ornate bargeboards, ornate window mullions carved in wood or more simple stone mullions.

6.10 Nursery gardens also required staff, and groups of two or more terraced houses were constructed to meet this need along the main roads and Lanes. They were also constructed of brick with stone dressings and slate roofs. These terraces may have been more modest, but they were still supplied with ornate details including sash windows, decorated bargeboards and solid front doors. Original detailing has been lost on many terraces, particularly original joinery, and with rendering of individual properties.

6.11 The terrace to the east of St. Nicholas primary school close to the intersection was built c. 1935 and is a typical design of the period with double height curved bay windows. The front elevation is rendered and painted, and the red tile roof covering makes an attractive contribution to the streetscene, although some of the boundary walls have been removed, which undermines the uniformity of the terrace.

6.12 There is no dominant architectural style along the lanes representing the mid to late 20th century. Instead styles are highly individualised and bear little relation to English architectural history. Styles are borrowed from far and wide particularly along Division Lane. Most are detached houses set well back from the road, some with ornate lamps, water features and wide drives.



View east down Kitty Lane.

6.13 The largest farm in the locality was The Fold on Moss Edge Lane (Common Edge Road), which had been demolished by 2000 after decades of gradual dilapidation, and is now the site of modern housing. Kitty Lane ran to the south of The Fold directly up to Midgeland Farm. This was one of the main historic routes from Moss Edge Lane to Midgeland Road. The development of School Road as a main east-west route has meant that Kitty Lane has retained its rural character, although Kitty Kirkham's cottage was demolished in 1958. Modern residential development has taken place along its length but it is low density, one or two storeys high, and screened by high hedgerows.



6.14 Other nearby historic routes also retain their historic character due to the development of School Lane, Common Edge Road and Squires Gate Lane as the main arterial roads. These include

Late Victorian terrace in area formerly known as Little Midgeland

the east-west St Nicholas Road, and Jubilee Lane which runs north-south off School Road in an area named on historic maps as Little Midgeland. The mid-Victorian terrace at the junction of Jubilee Lane, probably agricultural workers cottages, originally had Yorkshire sliding sashes throughout [4].

6.15 On the 1847 OS map the historic route known as Stockydale Lane ran parallel to Midgeland Road almost as far as Midgeland Farm, originally running

along the eastern boundary of the small field at the north east corner of the School Road/Midgeland Road intersection. An east-west path joined the two main routes at the current east-west section of Stockydale Road (to the north of Progress Way outside the Conservation Area). By 1893 Stockydale Lane north-south terminated at the corner of the east-west path, and New Hall Avenue was partially laid out along field boundaries as changes were made to field patterns.



View along field boundary abutting historic route of Stockydale Lane.

6.16 The historic row of cottages known as Robbins Row, which appeared on the 1847 OS map set back from the junction of Kitty Lane and Midgeland



440 - 450 Midgeland Road facing Midgeland Farm

Road, had been demolished by 1893. They were subsequently replaced with 444 to 450 Midgeland Road, an attractive brick terrace with slate roofs and front gardens, which were probably to house workers in the nearby large market gardens.

6.17 The south side of Laundry Road has late Victorian development in the form of terraced housing, and a handful of detached dwellings where it turns north, together with some glasshouses.



Terrace housing on Laundry Road.



Glasshouses visible behind the hedge on New Hall Avenue.

6.18 New Hall Avenue is given over largely to glasshouses to the south with a few detached dwellings where it turns to the north. This lane also has an enclosed feel being lined with hedgerows.

6.19 Development along Jubilee Lane tends to be single or two storey set within large gardens with adjacent paddocks or glasshouses.



View down Jubilee Lane.

6.20 Midgeland Road to the north of School Road has low density development at the northern end with open ground to the west associated with South Shore Tennis Club. At the junction with St Nicholas Road there is a detached Victorian villa with adjacent terraces, probably constructed for a nursery owner and his employees[5].



South Shore Tennis Club



Terraces at the junction with St Nicholas Road

6.21 Midgeland Road to the south of School Road also has very low density development along its length. Midgeland Farm and surrounding agricultural land is a notable undeveloped site and arguably provides the most complete and unaltered example of Marton Moss's historic past.

7. Views and open spaces

7.1 Midgeland Farm is situated on higher ground than the surrounding area, and views outwards are therefore extensive. However, the presence of hedgerows along the surrounding roads and lanes, together with the open paddocks at the junction with School Lane and fields surrounding the farm, mean that the views have so far retained a semi-rural character.

7.2 Despite the farm being on higher ground, views towards it are partially or completely hidden by the nearby hedgerows, and trees on the farmland itself, particularly during the spring and summer seasons.



View towards Midgeland Farm from the junction with School Road.

7.3 The views along historic lanes are generally enclosed and lined by hedgerows, such as Kitty Lane, Sandy Lane and Jubilee Lane, or open out in places to have views across fields and paddocks, such as at the junction of School Road/ Midgeland Road and on Worthington Road.



View towards Midgeland Road Farm from Wild Lane (latter outside the Conservation Area)



View down Sandy Lane from School Road.



View across north west paddock towards St Nicholas Road

8. Boundaries

8.1 The majority of the field boundaries in the Conservation Area are formed by high hedgerows which line the roads and lanes, and make an important contribution to its character.

8.2 The open land at the intersection with School Road has a variety of boundary treatments. The south west paddock is surrounded by timber fencing whilst the paddock to the north east has concrete railing which is missing in places.



Timber fencing to south west paddock

8.3 There is a variety of boundary treatments along School Road and Midgeland Road to the north of the junction, although low brick walls form the majority, some with railings. Hedging, timber fencing and occasionally stone or rendered boundary walls are also used. In future brick walls, hedging and timber fencing will be the preferred boundary treatments, and homeowners will be encouraged to re-build boundary walls where they have been removed to provide off-road parking.

9. Summary and conclusions

9.1 The Conservation Area can be summarised as drained mossland with an agricultural tradition which was sustained during the 20th century by the glasshouse industry. Development has tended to be low density and concentrated along the main arterial routes.

10. Threats and opportunities

10.1 The cobbled buildings which were once common in this area are now very few in number. Midgeland Farm is a locally listed building which has been allowed to fall into decay. Its repair and conservation should be seen as a high priority as it is one of the key historic buildings in the area.

10.2 Another historic building falling into disrepair just off Division Lane is Werneth House, a fine 19th century villa complete with carth ouse, laundry and coal store and several acres of nursery. It has been uninhabited for many years and requires urgent remedial repair if it is to be saved.

10.3 The locally listed old school house off Division Lane is in substantial disrepair, overgrown with ivy and also at risk of loss.

10.4 Modernisation of some Victorian villas and terraces has resulted in a loss of original features which has undermined historic character, particularly the insertion of upvc windows and rendering of brickwork. In future, when planning applications are being considered, reinstatement of historic features or finishes will be encouraged wherever possible.



Typical Fylde longhouse.

10.5 Development has been of a piecemeal nature, which compares to the piecemeal post-medieval enclosure of the field system in this area. However, the range of architectural styles varies from Victorian villas and terraces for nursery workers to modern bungalows. The typical 18th and early 19th century house was the Fylde longhouse, made of sea cobbles, patched and altered with brick and held together with lime render. Roofing was in thatch and windows were multi-pane Yorkshire sliding sashes. Very few of these survive, although more may be masked by later modifications. However, the low and long cottage style lends itself well to creating a modern vernacular for the area should further development be considered appropriate. Any development should, however, be low density and maintain the rural and semi-rural character of the Conservation Area.

10.6 The number of glasshouses associated with Marton Moss's horticultural businesses has declined, particularly to the north of the Conservation Area. However, as a building type with its associated communal and evidential value, glasshouses are highly significant to the historical development of Marton Moss, and a strategy needs to be developed for ensuring that the risk of loss of the remaining glasshouses is minimised.

10.7 A significant proportion of post-medieval enclosed mossland, such as Marton Moss, has been lost to urban expansion or later agricultural rationalisation. The proportion remaining relates an important story of post-medieval agricultural improvement within the county (and nationally) and mirrors social and technological changes taking place within both the countryside and adjacent burgeoning industrial towns.

10.8 Any future development should therefore also take account of the Historic Land Characterisation Report for Lancashire, which states that enclosed mosslands may provide evidence for time-depth within the landscape by containing important relic landscape features, both buried and visible, relating to earlier land uses and environments together with evidence for earlier attempts at mossland drainage.

10.9 Public rights of way were originally historic tracks which connected farmsteads and cottages, and care should be taken that these are not compromised by development at any time.

10.10 Several of the representations received during the public consultation claimed that historic drains and ditches are often poorly maintained, and also that housing development on the Moss in recent years has exacerbated flooding problems. It is essential that drains and ditches, which enabled the Moss to be inhabited and farmed in the first place, are properly maintained, and any development which is considered appropriate in the future must take account of this need.

10.11 There is an active Marton Moss Forum which is currently preparing a Marton Moss Neighbourhood Plan. The Conservation Area Appraisal will help inform the Neighbourhood Plan, and the Forum's input will be sought when the Conservation Area Management Plan is being prepared.

11. Next steps

11.1 A Conservation Area Management Plan will be prepared in due course, which will include recommendations for heritage protection. The plan will analyse what is positive and negative in the Conservation Area, and identify opportunities for beneficial change or the need for additional protection through the use of article 4 directions to remove a number of permitted development rights. The use of article 4 directions would help to protect vulnerable features such as boundary walls and chimneys.

12. General advice

12.1 General Conservation Area Guidance is available on the Council website.

12.2 Contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for informal advice on 01253 476332 or email builtheritage@blackpool.gov.uk

[3] Monks, p. 47

[4] Marton 2000: A Pictorial Review Monks, H. and Walsh, P.

[5] Ibid

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