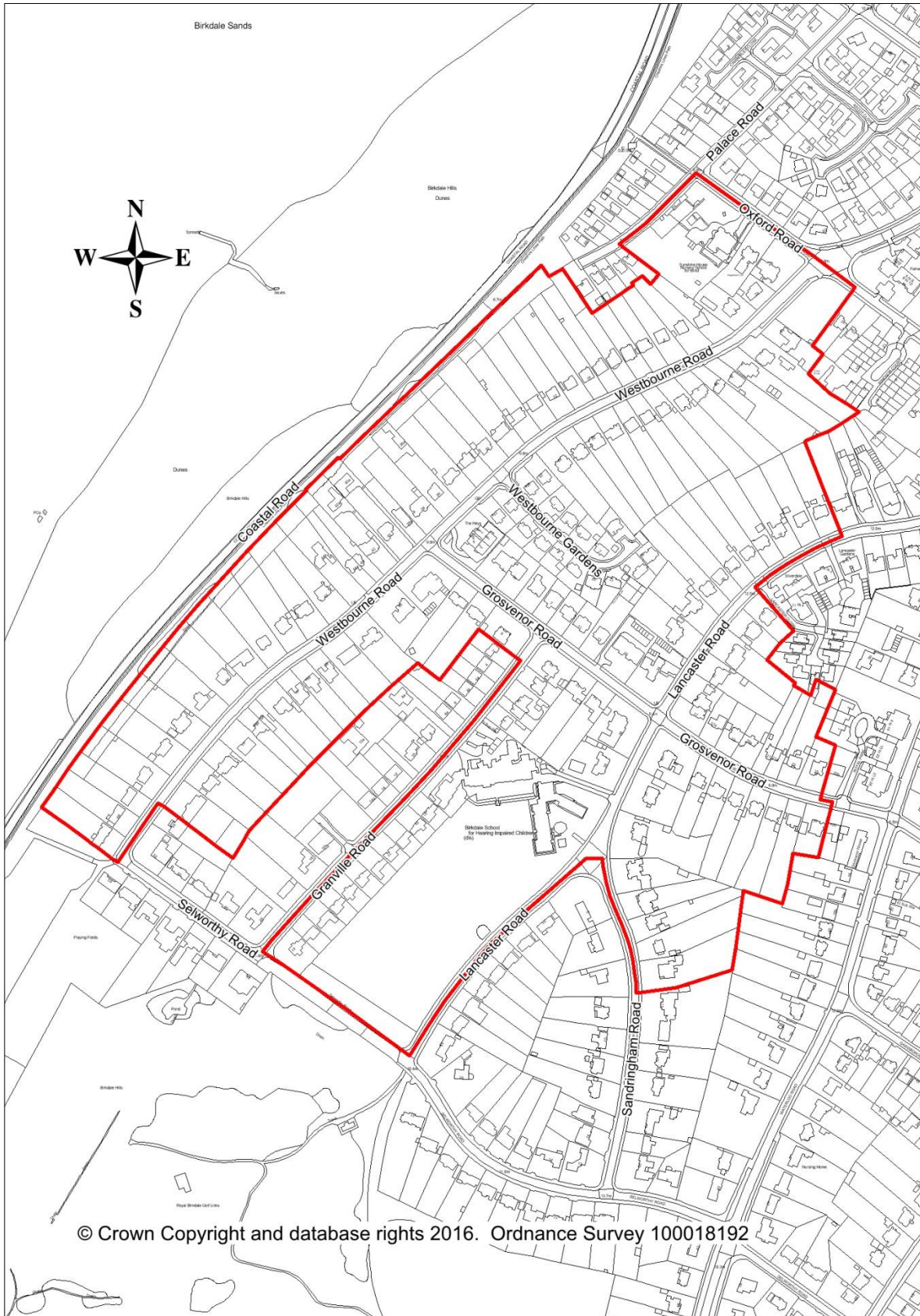




**West Birksdale**  
Conservation Area Appraisal  
Adopted March 2008



This conservation area appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates in August 2007, amended following public consultation in November 2007 and fully adopted including the suggested boundary changes shown below in March 2008. For more reasoning on boundary changes please see Section 8.0



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# WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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# WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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## PREFACE

### Legislative Background

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act local authorities have been empowered to designate as Conservation Areas those areas within their districts which were considered 'special'. The subsequent Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 consolidated those powers and defined Conservation Areas as:-

*"areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".*

Such areas are diverse. They may be large or small; residential or commercial; civic or industrial; old or relatively modern. They may represent social ideals or civic pride. They may be specifically designed or speculatively produced; modest or grand. They may contain Listed Buildings of architectural or historic interest or may simply have local historic association. However, common to all will be an identifiable environmental quality which should be protected from unsympathetic redevelopment or alteration.

Sefton Council has declared 25 Conservation Areas throughout the Borough reflecting the variety of building styles and environments exhibited within its borders.

### Policy Framework

The content of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is clarified by national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment and is supported by more recent Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13), which identifies as a key objective the need to ensure active management of the regions environmental and cultural assets.

The principles of these documents are further supported by Sefton Council's local Heritage Conservation policies contained within its Unitary Development Plan.

This legislation and policy framework enables the authority to exercise greater control over development within Conservation Areas and, where appropriate, this may be supplemented by the use of 'Article 4 Directions' to remove permitted development rights. In this way, minor changes, such as window replacement or loft conversions, which may be cumulatively detrimental, can be controlled.

National policy stipulates that local authorities have a duty to review, from time to time, their regions to ensure that places of special architectural or historic interest are being protected. The boundaries of existing Conservation Areas may be revised, new areas may be designated and those areas which have been eroded to the extent that their special character has been lost may be de-designated.

## **How status affects Planning decisions**

Whilst the Council recognises that, for Conservation Areas to remain 'live' and responsive to a changing society, changes must and will occur, it nevertheless undertakes to ensure that all changes make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of its Conservation Areas and do not result in any serious loss of character or features.

Planning legislation supports the authority in this by increasing its control over development. It does this in the following ways:

- Buildings and structures may not be demolished without formal consent from the Council (Conservation Area Consent).
- Trees are protected and all work to them requires consent from the Council.
- New development is expected to reflect the quality of design and construction of the surrounding area and should make a positive contribution to the area's character.
- Local planning authorities may, if necessary, exercise even greater control by removing the basic permitted development rights of householders.
- Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council has a legal obligation to ensure that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance" of the area when formulating decisions on planning applications.

## **Need for an appraisal**

The first step to protecting the inherent qualities of a Conservation Area is having a thorough understanding of its character and Planning Policy Guidance PPG15 advises that "the definition of an area's special interest should derive from an assessment of the elements that contribute to (and detract from) it".

This should then underpin local policies for the areas protection. Such a definition requires a thorough appraisal of the area to assess the contribution of each element (e.g. buildings, boundaries, trees, surfaces, etc.) to the areas overall character. PPG15 notes that "the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions".

Whilst an appraisal aims to identify the essential elements which give an area its character, it is not intended as a detailed evaluation of each building and feature. Therefore any buildings, features and details may still have importance even though not specifically referred to in the document and any omissions do not indicate lack of merit or interest.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

This report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd on behalf of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. Its purpose is to clarify the designation of the Conservation Area, which will protect and enhance the character of the historic core of West Birkenhead. Designation as a Conservation Area provides the Local Planning Authority with additional powers to protect and enhance the area's special characteristics.

### **1.2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this Conservation Area Appraisal is based on the guidelines published by English Heritage and represents a factual and objective analysis. In accordance with the guidelines, the following framework has been used as the basis for this analysis:-

- Location and population
- Origins and development of the settlement
- Prevailing former uses and their influence on plan form or building type
- Archaeological significance
- Setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape
- Character and relationship of spaces
- Contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, etc.
- Architectural and historic qualities of buildings
- Contribution made by key unlisted buildings
- Prevalent and traditional building materials
- Local details
- Extent of loss, intrusion or damage
- Existence of any neutral areas

The document has been structured to encompass these areas of study and concludes with recommendations for the area including amendments to the Conservation Area boundary.

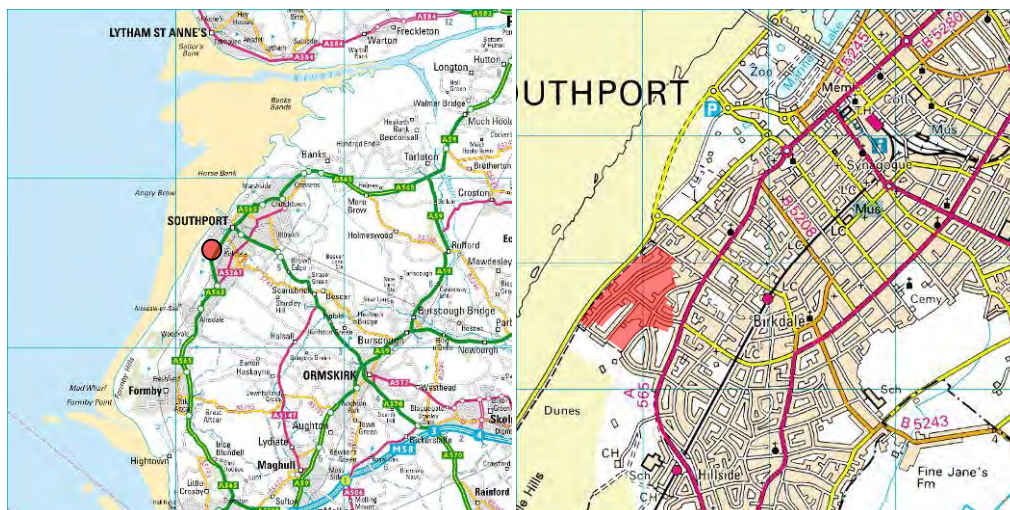
It is the aim of this appraisal to identify and examine those elements which individually and collectively define the essential character of the area.



## 2.0 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 LOCATION

The West Birkdale Conservation Area is located adjacent to the west coast of the region approximately 1 ½ miles south-west of the centre of Southport. The local village centre of Birkdale is approximately ¾ mile to the south-east of the conservation area.



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**Plan 01 – Showing the Location of West Birkdale Conservation Area**

### 2.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Prior to the development of West Birkdale in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area seems to have been almost entirely covered in sandhills and marram grass.

The conservation area is predominantly flat, and ranges from around 5-15 metres above sea level. Beneath the superficial deposits of silt and sandstone, it is thought that there is a bed of Triassic sandstone.

### 2.3 USES

The West Birkdale Conservation Area consists almost entirely of residential buildings, with the exception of the two redundant school buildings and occasional medical clinics.

### 2.4 CONSERVATION CONTEXT

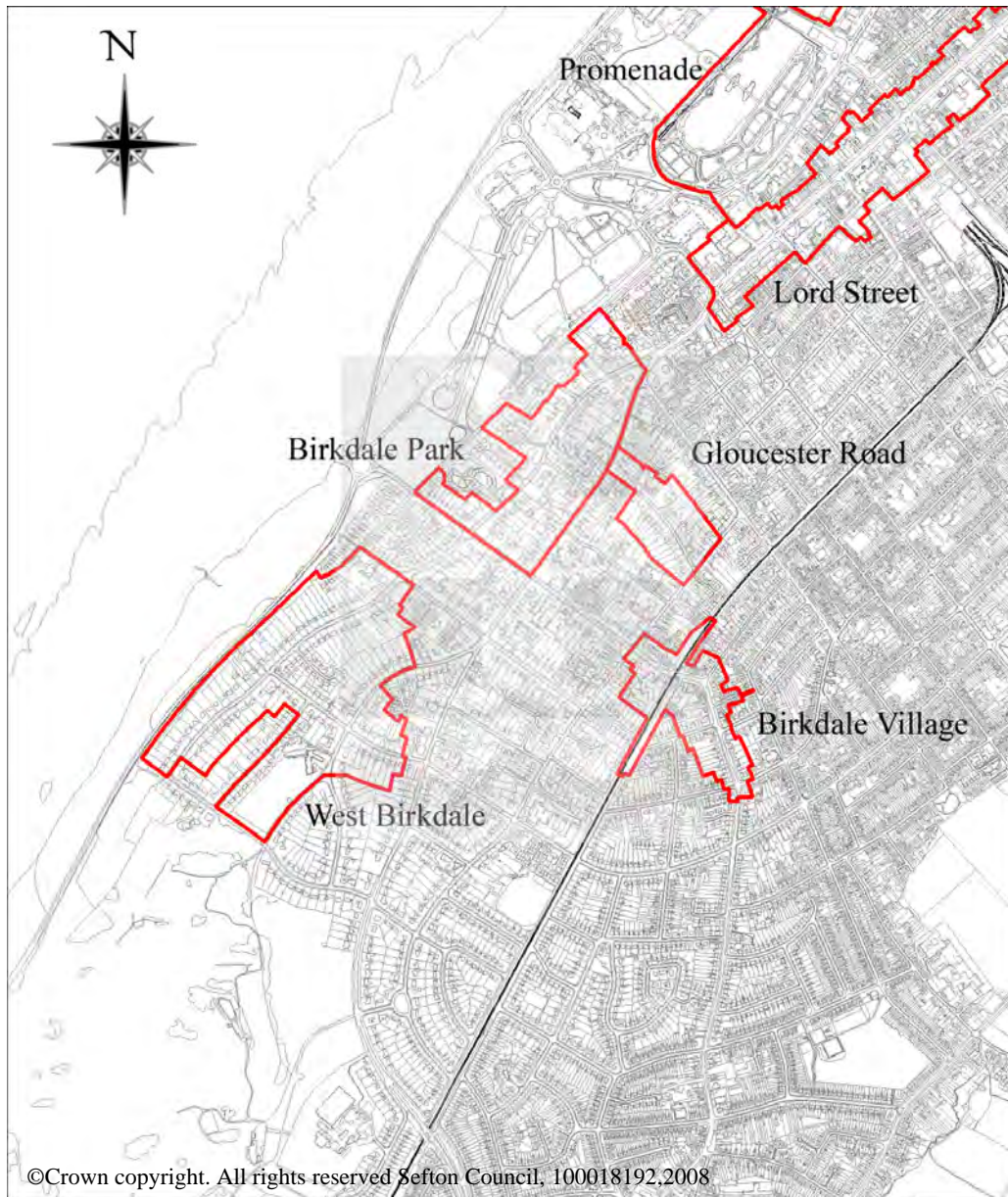
The West Birkdale Conservation Area is situated around ½ mile to the south-west of the Birkdale Park and Gloucester Road Conservation Areas, with the Lord Street Conservation area around ½ mile beyond. The Birkdale Village Conservation Area is also nearby, being situated around ¾ of a mile to the east.

The Birkdale Park and Gloucester Road Conservation Areas consist of a wide range of building types, but the large, detached or semi-detached, Italianate villas built between the 1850s and the 1870s perhaps most characterise the area.



Buildings in the Lord Street Conservation Area date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, following Southport's rapid growth as a bathing resort. Lord Street is characterised by a rich tapestry of mid-late Victorian elegant public buildings and rows of shops sheltered by late 19<sup>th</sup> /early 20<sup>th</sup> century cast iron verandas.

Birkdale Village Conservation Area, contains buildings dating from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the construction of the railway line. An exception to this is 74 Liverpool Road (a low, rendered cruck frame house with a thatched roof) which remains standing as an example of the type of buildings that would have perhaps been seen in the area in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. West Birkdale, followed on from the development of these areas.

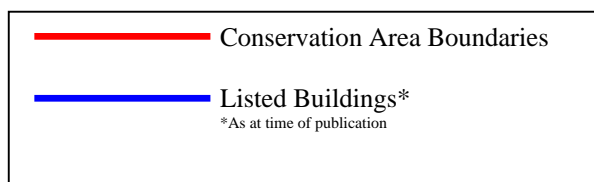
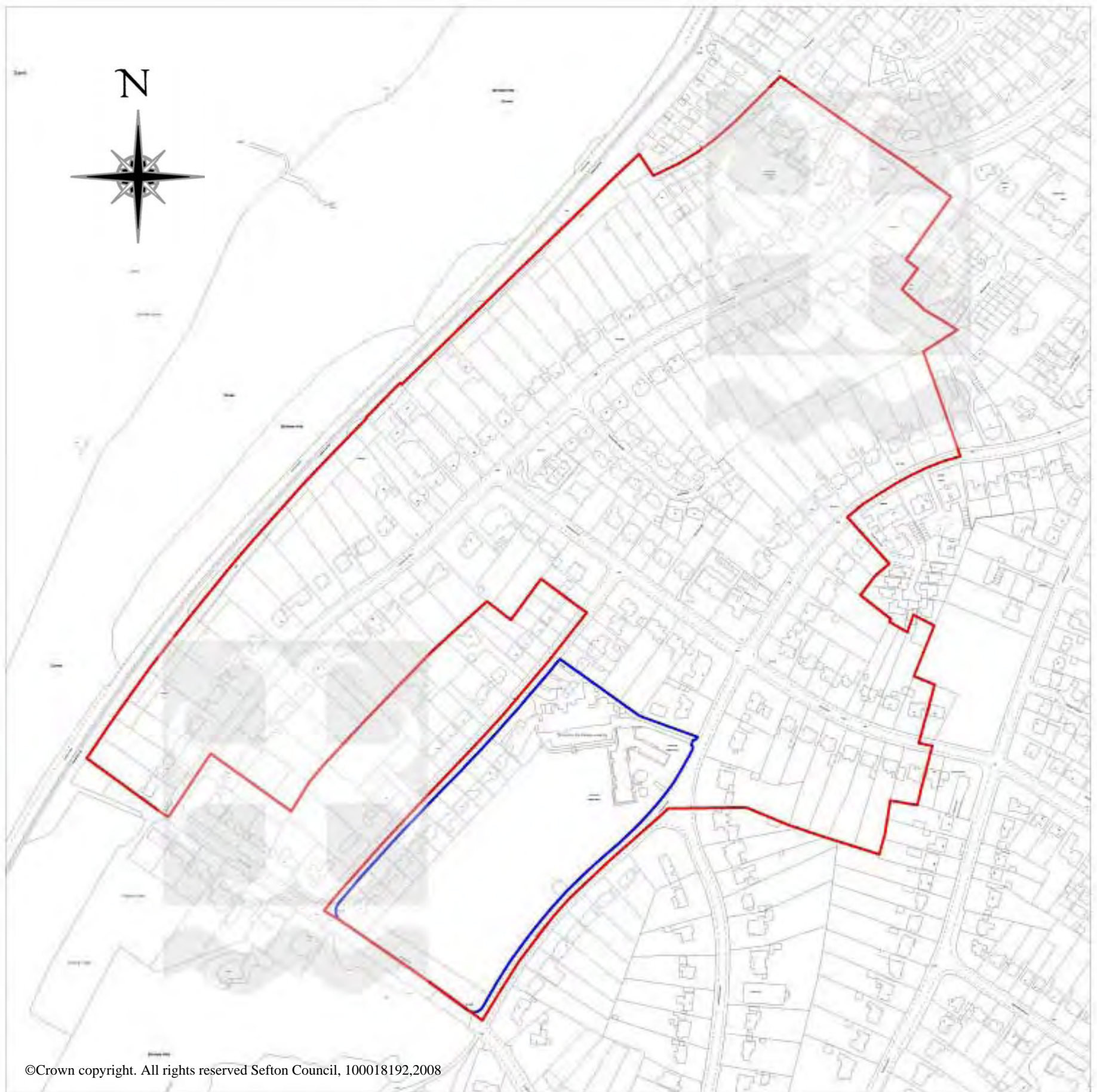


**PLAN 02 – CONSERVATION AREA CONTEXT**  
**Showing proximity of other Conservation Areas**

## **2.5 STUDY AREA BOUNDARY**

The West Birkdale Conservation Area boundary runs along a ½ mile length of Coastal Road to the rear of Westbourne Road properties, before turning off along the south-westernmost section of Palace Road. The conservation area's eastern boundary is irregular, taking in a short length of Oxford Road before cutting across Lancaster and Grosvenor Roads. The southern part of the boundary rejoins Lancaster Road and continues around a block which includes the former grounds of Terra Nova (until recently a school for the partially hearing) extending to Selworthy Road and Granville Road. The boundary extends inwards again to disregard a section of modern housing on the north-west side of Granville Road before returning to meet the south-western end of Westbourne Road.





## WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

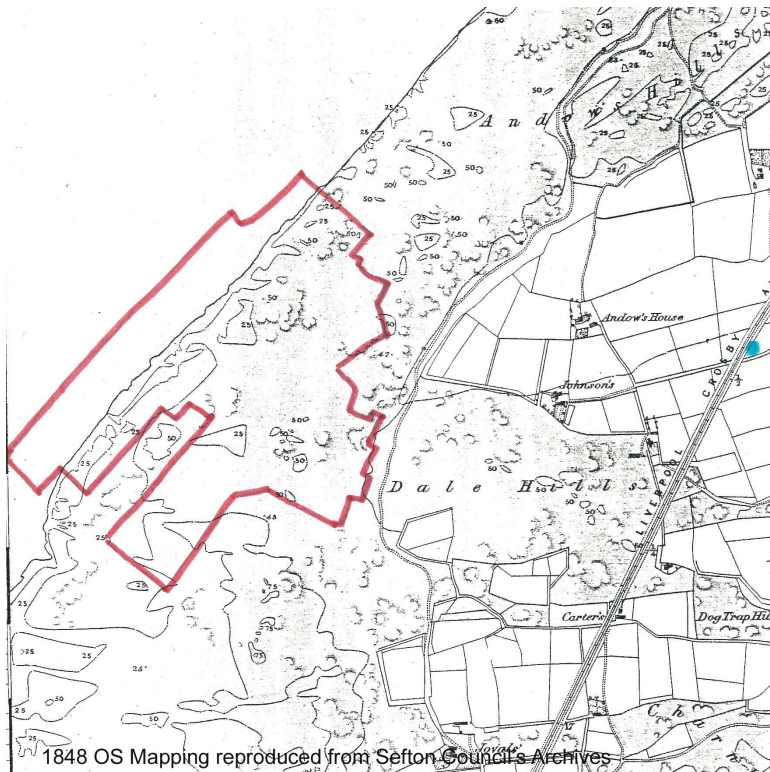
### PLAN 03 – CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

Donald Insall Associates Ltd., August 2007

### 3.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

(see Plan 04 at the end of the section for the relative ages of buildings and features)

#### 3.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS



**Plan 04 - Historical map dated from 1847-8. The approximate site of the existing conservation area is shown in red and Birkdale station shown in turquoise.**

There is known to have been a settlement around Birkdale since around the time of the Domesday Book, although the name 'Birkdale' did not emerge until later. The name was used in the chartulary of Cockersand Abbey in around 1200. Birkdale is thought to be a corruption of the old Norse words 'birki' (meaning birch-copse) and 'dalr' (dale).

In 1632 Birkdale and neighbouring Ainsdale were sold to Robert Blundell of Ince-Blundell. Birkdale continued, however, as a series of scattered farmstead without a focal church or manor house. It was described by Butterworth in 1834 as being 'a cheerless, bleak forlorn little region partly occupied by sandhills and meagre pasture grounds'<sup>1</sup>. Figures show that the population of Birkdale rose gradually from around 150 in the late 1600s to 600-700 in 1848. It is thought that most buildings up to this time were modest in character with thatched roofs.

During this time, Birkdale had continued in the possession of the Blundells. However, in 1837, the ancestral line ended in females, with the land, including the Ince-Blundell estate, passing to the Weld family. The new owner, Thomas Weld Blundell, assumed the family name of the previous owner in accordance with the terms of Charles Robert Blundell's will.

<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from A History of Southport by F.A Bailey



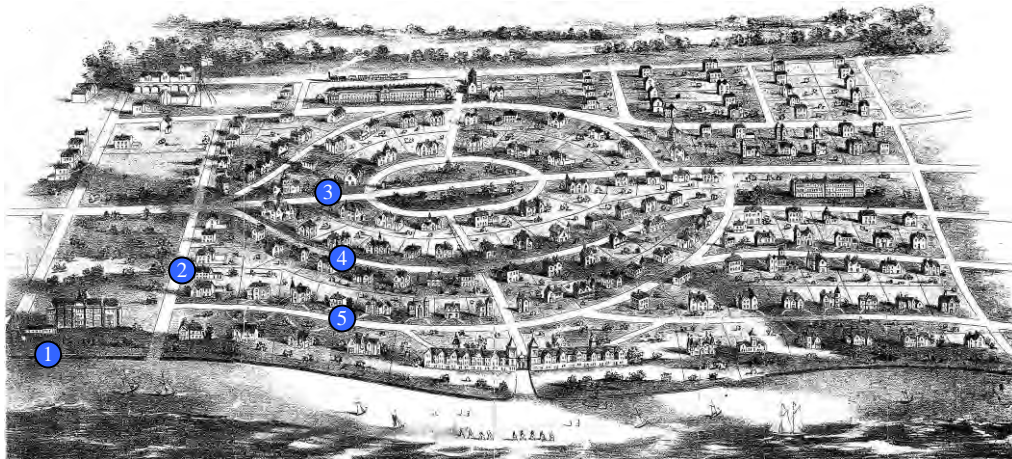
Southport flourished in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a health resort popular for sea bathing, but development was effectively halted at its southern end by the boundary ditched known as the Nile. The stimulus to change was in 1848, when construction began on the Liverpool to Southport railway line. Not co-incidentally, also in 1848, Thomas Weld Blundell, the grandson of the aforementioned landowner, secured an act of parliament, enabling him to offer for sale the area of land that was to become Birkdale Park, to the immediate north of the conservation area.

Neighbouring Birkdale Park was set out to an overall plan by landscape designer Edward Kemp, with individual plots sold off to speculative builders. The original plan showed approximately 100 detached, or occasionally semi-detached houses, each set in spacious grounds. Although development was slow at first, by the 1860s Birkdale Park was expanding quickly, with all of its roads and churches in place.

### 3.2 DEVELOPMENT (SEE PLAN 04 AND THE HISTORIC MAPS)

In 1866 Thomas Weld-Blundell commissioned architects Reade and Goodison to design a layout for what was to become phase 2 of Birkdale Park. The designated area lay to the south of the earlier development, beyond Weld Road where previously housing had finished.

The original Reade and Goodison perspective illustration shows around 175 detached houses set in spacious grounds. Together with the houses on the drawings are 3 larger buildings, which were presumably to be hotels or institutional buildings such as schools. The development was to be centred on a circus, with a series of concentric curved roads and axes radiating out from it. At the very centre was to be a public park. The buildings shown on the plan were distinctly gothic in character, with steeply pitched roofs with complicated arrangements of gables and towers.



Reade and Goodison's original 1866 perspective for the layout of the second phase of building at Birkdale Park. Although quite different to what was actually built a few currently existing / well documented features can be discerned on the plan: 1) The Palace Hotel; 2) Oxford Road; 3) Waterloo Road; 4) Lancaster Road; 5 Westbourne Road.

The perspective also illustrates the newly constructed Birkdale Palace Hotel, on its bottom left corner. The hotel which opened in 1866, was situated between Weld and Oxford Roads, on a site that is now between the Birkdale Park and West Birkdale conservation areas. The grand building was 200ft or 17 bays long built amongst 20 acres of landscaping.



The inland-facing elevation of the nearby Birkdale Palace Hotel which was demolished in 1969.

Whereas at the earlier development at Birkdale plots had been sold individually, at West Birkdale Weld-Blundell sold 250 acres of land to the newly formed Birkdale Park Land Company. The company was formed in 1874 by Liverpool solicitor James Richardson with the board principally made up of his clients and friends. Also on the board was local building contractor Walter Smith who had worked on the Liverpool to Southport Railway. As a director of the company, Weld-Blundell not only received ground rent but also dividends.

Like many other developments of housing for the wealthy at that time, it had been the intention to lay out a park, which would be an attraction to prospective purchasers. Reade and Goodison had designed a similar park at Blundellsands near Crosby the previous year. However, in this instance the board of the Birkdale Park Land Company did not agree to finance the park, equally the local authority refused, therefore the plan was abandoned. Instead, the residents of Birkdale Park chose their recreation grounds to be the natural area of sand dunes and slacks known as 'Happy Valley' to the south of the Palace Hotel.

Sales of houses and therefore their rateable value rocketed in Birkdale Park during the mid-1870s but then rapidly slowed. At one point the only profit made by the Birkdale Park Land Company was on the sale of the sand taken away during the levelling of the site. The early houses were probably built around the north of the conservation area, on Oxford Road and the north-eastern end of Lancaster Road, for instance.

By the 1880s, the Palace Hotel was also having financial difficulties. It had been slow to take off in popularity and the lack of road or tram access contributed to its initial problems, causing it to go into liquidation. Only 15 years after it opened, in 1881 the hotel was refurbished and reopened with hydrotherapy facilities and modern amenities such as electric lighting. At this time its grounds had been reduced to 5 acres. The hotel operators had a lot of power in local decision making and encouraged improvements to the access within the area that would have benefited their business.

The Southport and Cheshire Lines Extension Railway opened in 1884 which included a station at Birkdale Palace Hotel. Previously rail journeys to Liverpool or Manchester had ended at terminus stations making travel beyond problematic. The

new line gave improved access to Yorkshire and the Midlands. As part of the development of the railway, the company agreed to provide a promenade and sea wall. As well as a recreation ground that was to become Victoria Park, the act allowing the construction of the railway also insisted on the proper laying out of Rotten Row, which had previously been little more than a track.

It is around this time, particularly from 1890 onwards, housing in what is now West Birkdale Conservation Area was rapidly constructed. The original Reade and Goodison plan had by this time been apparently abandoned. Development progressed south-westwards through the area. The 1908 historic map shows that most of the original houses in the conservation area had been constructed with just a few gap sites that were to be filled in the 1920s and 30s. Sandringham Road and the western end of Lancaster Road display some simpler, but nonetheless attractive houses from this slightly later period.

As with almost all historic towns and villages, the area experienced a decline in its wealth and status in the mid twentieth century. Birkdale Palace Station was closed in 1952 and the Palace Hotel closed and demolished in 1969.

Large detached houses in spacious gardens, requiring paid assistance for their upkeep became unrealistic for all but the wealthiest of homeowners following the Second World War. Development of purpose-built flats and conversions in the wider area of Birkdale Park started in the 1960s and quickly accelerated to such an extent that the local planning committee imposed a temporary moratorium in 1974 on such developments until a policy could be approved. The Redevelopment Policy was written in 1976. The guidance stated that existing buildings should be retained if possible and extensions should be limited to a size that does not materially affect the appearance of the property or necessitate large parking requirements. Planning conditions would be imposed requiring the retention and maintenance of existing garden features. New buildings were to be set back at least 20ft from the road and were to accord with the existing site requirements. Monotonous frontages were to be avoided and buildings were to be of a domestic scale and character. Windows and roofs were to be sympathetic to, although not necessary replicate their older counterparts.

The overall form of West Birkdale is little altered, although there have been a number of infill developments of higher density modern housing and instances of buildings replacing existing houses on a similar scale.

### **3.3 ARCHAEOLOGY**

Very little of archaeological interest is known to have been found around the conservation area. The only find identified at the Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record is a listening post which was opened in 1937 and used in the war before being re-sited. The location of this post was immediately to the east of 51 Selworthy Road.

It should be noted, however, that lack of finds generally indicates a lack of investigation, rather than a lack of archaeological / historical interest.





**Key**

- Buildings built before **1893**
- Buildings built between **1893** and **1908**
- Buildings built between **1908** and **1927**
- Buildings built after **1927**

**WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**PLAN 05- SHOWING RELATIVE AGES OF BUILDINGS**

Donald Insall Associates Ltd., August 2007



## 4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISTAS

### 4.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING AREA

The area around Birkdale Park and its later extension partly covered by the West Birkdale Conservation Area, effectively acts as a suburb of Southport, sharing its facilities such as shops and state schools. The physical relationship of the conservation area to Southport town centre is fairly strong, with all the roads running parallel to the coast eventually meeting with Southport's principal thoroughfare, Lord Street, to the north-east. However, the traffic within the conservation area is limited as the streets do not act as direct connection to other areas. This is due to the abrupt termination of housing settlements built along the coastline at Selworthy Road as a result of the presence of the Royal Birkdale Golf Club.

The West Birkdale Conservation Area is surprisingly detached from the coast. Firstly, the houses along Westbourne Road act as a visual barrier, with no physical access across and few views due to the relative proximity of the houses and their landscaping. Secondly, the Coastal Road, which runs immediately to the rear of the Westbourne Road gardens, is a fast busy road, which is difficult for pedestrians to cross and therefore West Birkdale residents are less likely to use the sandhills and beach as a recreational facility.



Looking south along Coastal Road from the sandhills adjacent to the conservation area.

Despite its proximity to West Birkdale, the physical relationship with Birkdale Village is perhaps not particularly strong. The two areas are separated by the railway line and therefore are linked only via level crossings. Birkdale Village provides a good variety of shops, and is also popular for its cafes and restaurants.

To the south, separating the next community of Ainsdale from Birkdale is the Royal Birkdale Golf Club. Although Ainsdale has similar Norse roots to Birkdale, its character is distinctly more modern, with smaller, more densely spaced and architecturally repetitive houses prevalent. The sandhills around the golf course provide a further recreational facility.

**4.2 CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES**

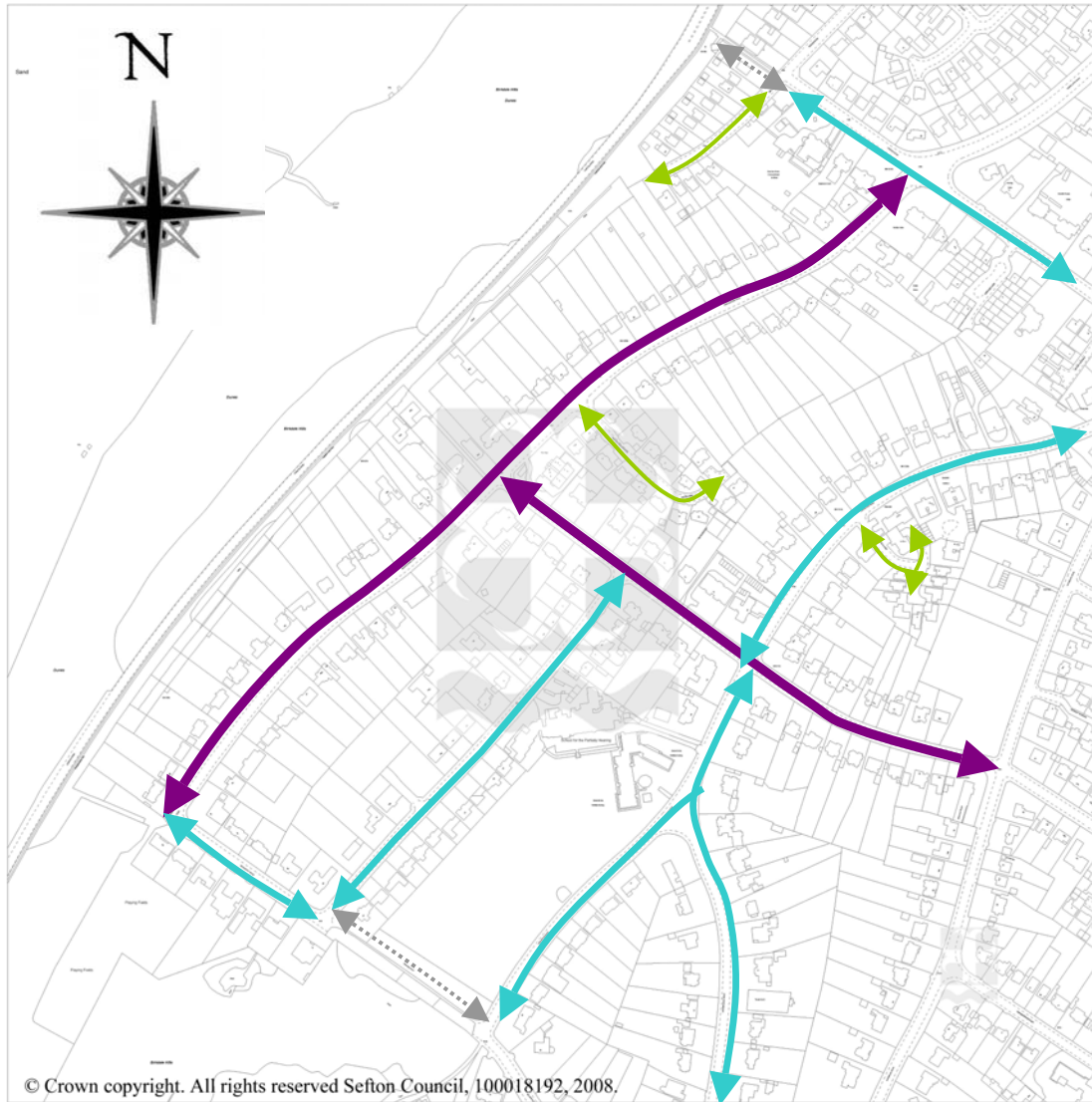
The perpendicular streets of Grosvenor Road and Westbourne Road largely set out the spatial character of West Birkdale Conservation Area. Grosvenor Road runs through the heart of the area and is the principal point of access. The conservation area is generally flat with no one natural focal point with buildings of a consistent density and size throughout.

**4.3 VIEWS AND VISTAS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA**

Views of specific buildings are not generally important to the West Birkdale Conservation Area as there is very little hierarchy between the older buildings. The only one 'feature' building and therefore the exception to this rule is Terra Nova, the former school for the partially hearing, due to its significantly larger size and open grounds. Views towards its prominent south facing elevation are a critical part of the character of the conservation area.

Although not focused on any one feature, the views along the streets within the conservation area are important. Many of the roads gradually curve, progressively revealing the buildings. In other instances, straighter sections of roads display a large number of houses together. In these views the continuity of the building form and style is particularly important.

Although they are outside the designated boundary, the undeveloped areas to the north and west have views towards the conservation area. The views are over the characteristic roofscape which is well ornamented with chimneys and features such as towers. These features, together with the consistency of height and materials, instantly display the architectural quality of the area from these views.



**Key**

- Primary route 
- Secondary route 
- Tertiary route 
- Footpath 

**PLAN 06 – SHOWING  
HIERARCHY OF ROUTES**

## 4.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING

### 4.4.1 Green Spaces

The West Birkdale Conservation Area does not have any designated public green space, with all land dedicated to private dwellings and buildings or public highways. However, the Conservation Area borders the Birkdale sandhills and beach, which are used by local residents for recreation and play an important role in the backdrop of the area.



**Birkdale sandhills looking outwards towards the beach**

### 4.4.2 Planting

Most gardens within West Birkdale Conservation Area that are visible from the road are much smaller than their counterparts in the older part of Birkdale Park. Although planting is inevitably more limited, it is nonetheless important to the character of the conservation area. Most gardens that contribute to this character of the conservation area have a hedge of large shrubs behind the brick front boundary wall with a lawn and some further planting. Trees are often positioned along the front or side boundaries. This planting is important in the visual ‘framing’ of buildings and contributes to the streetscene as a whole, giving it a soft, green edge. Holly trees and bushes are a common feature within the conservation area.

It is not currently known whether there were ever trees planted along the pavements in West Birkdale. There is almost no evidence today to suggest that this was the case, with only one tree present on the paved areas.

The regularity of the housing in West Birkdale opens up to a wide grassed area to the south and south-west of Terra Nova (the former school for the partially hearing). This open area of greenery adds considerably to the ‘green’ character and sense of spaciousness in West Birkdale.



## 5.0 TOWNSCAPE AND FOCAL BUILDINGS

### 5.1 TOWNSCAPE

#### 5.1.1 Grain

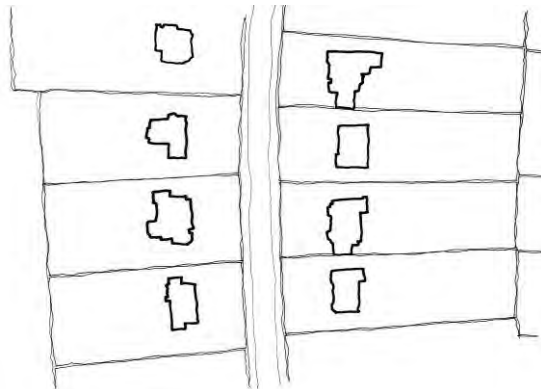
The grain and density of the West Birksdale Conservation Area is defined by regularly spaced generous plots containing large detached houses. Plots are generally of a consistent overall area, varying a little in shape, but most are typically long and narrow. Buildings generally fill a maximum of about 10% of their plots. A typical plot is around 15-20m wide by 90-110m in depth. The relationship between the large houses and their unusually long plots is critical to the character of the conservation area. There are relatively few instances within the conservation area where the grain breaks down: the first being the block containing Terra Nova (The School for Partially Hearing) and the second being the modern development of Westbourne Gardens. Almost consistently throughout the conservation area, the building line is set back from the road by around 8-10m.



Typical section through buildings on Westbourne Road. The size and relationship between the opposing buildings shown, are generally repeated throughout the conservation area.

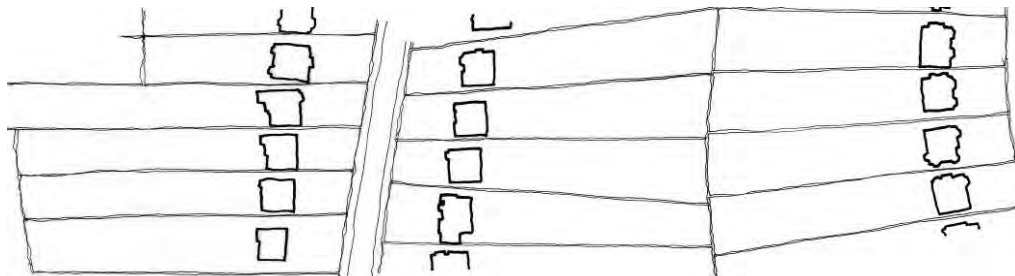
#### Westbourne Road (South-West) Grain

- Wider, but less deep plots
- Buildings spaced generously apart, by almost the width of the house.
- Slightly larger, detached houses



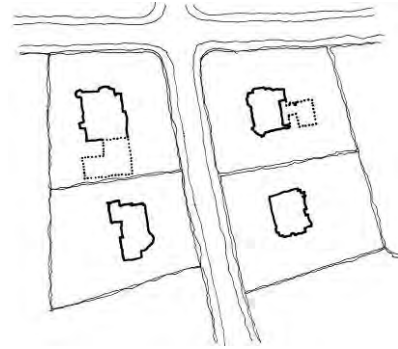
#### Westbourne Road (North-East) and Lancaster Road (North-East) Grain

- Exceptionally long, narrow plots
- Buildings closer together – spaced apart by about ¼ of the width of the houses
- Slightly smaller, detached houses



### Corner Plots

- Buildings within almost square shaped plots
- Buildings positioned centrally within plot
- Buildings designed with 3 prominent elevations.



### 5.1.2 Scale

Most buildings throughout the conservation area are of a consistent height. Buildings built before or around 1930 are almost all of two principal storeys, but often with a second 'half' storey partly within the volume of the roof. The houses in West Birkdale built at this time have high floor to ceiling heights which dwarf modern buildings. This scale of buildings is important to the character of the conservation area and where there is a sudden change of scale in a street it can have a detrimental effect.

There is little hierarchy between existing buildings as there is little change between their heights or position from the road. Equally all roads are of a similar width throughout the area.

### 5.1.3 Rhythm

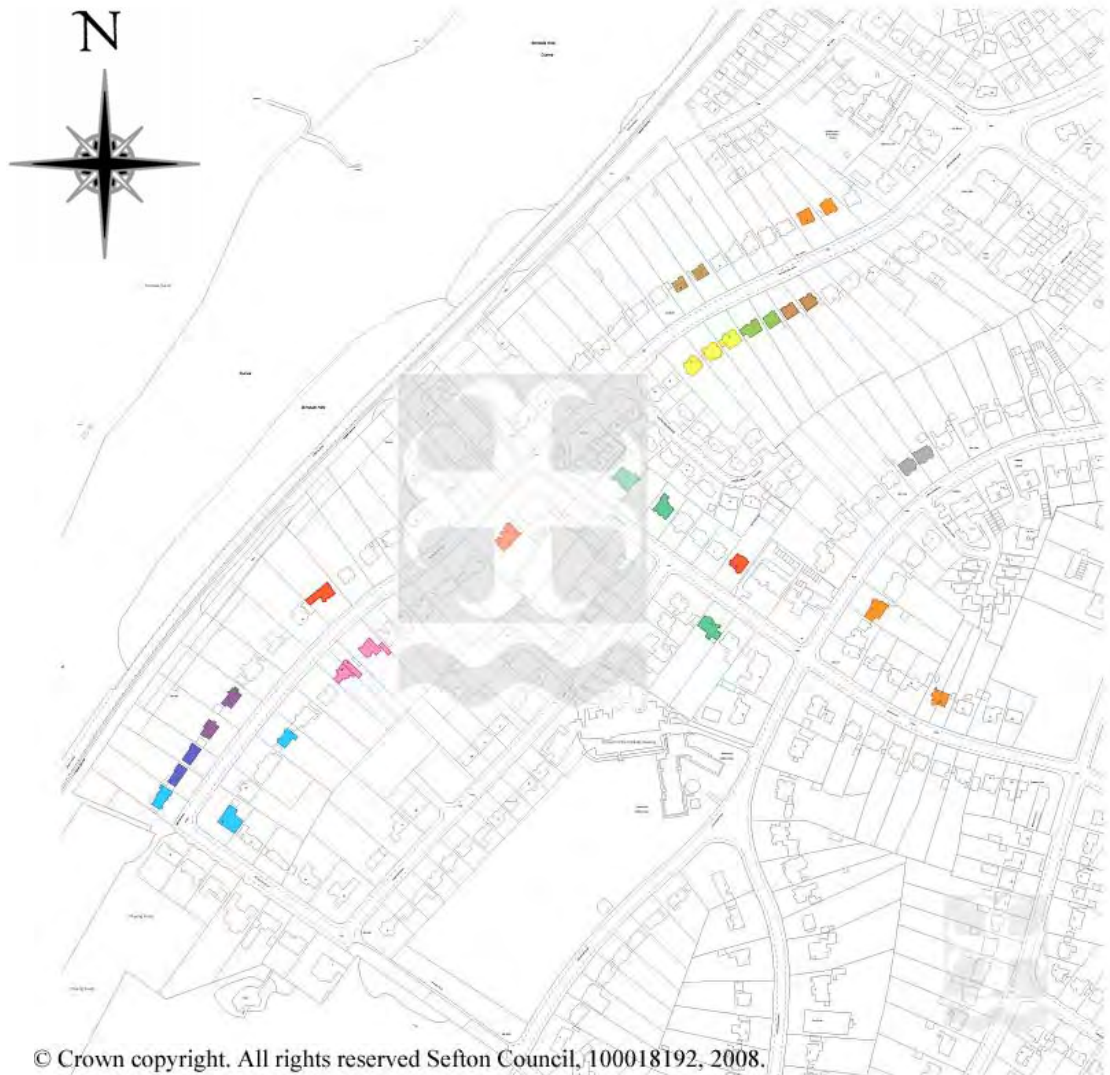
The rhythm of most areas of housing in West Birkdale is critical to its character. Westbourne Road has a particularly long, uninterrupted length of houses. Almost all housing built between the 1890s and the 1930s is of the same palette of materials, a comparable scale, a similar form (including roof pitch), an equivalent set back from the road and is at a repeated spacing. These factors make for a strong rhythm in the conservation area. Where there is a breakdown in the rhythm such as at Westbourne Gardens or 44B Westbourne Road, the building in question becomes more conspicuous and therefore more likely to be detrimental to the conservation area.



The rhythm of buildings on Westbourne Road

#### 5.1.4 Repetition and Diversity

There is quite a high degree of repetition in the conservation area, although no buildings built up to around 1930 are exactly replicated. The plan below shows some examples where small groups of buildings were probably built by the same developer and have a repeating form:



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**Plan 07 - showing repeated building types.**

These repeated building types, although not identifiable as being such in decoration and detail, often share a common layout and are recognised as being similar by, for instance, chimneys in the same place to the same design. Although materials are kept to a limited palette, individuality of the original buildings was clearly important, with each house having its own combination of features, many of which were unusual or even unique. An example is in the treatment of bay and towers. Although the buildings can clearly be linked together by their plan forms, the architectural treatment of these features gives them distinct characters.



Repeated building forms given their own character by the different architectural treatment of almost all key features.

In other instances, the plans are dissimilar yet specific features link buildings together:



The same decorative plaster frieze is seen on 3 otherwise different buildings on Grosvenor Road, indicating that they were probably by the same developer.

This same level of repetition is seen consistently through the conservation area. Interestingly, houses on Sandringham Road, which were built later, are more diverse, with very little or no repetition. This perhaps indicates a change in the way buildings were developed at this time, possibly with land sold off as individual as apposed to multiple plots.

### 5.1.5 Roofscape

Almost all buildings within the conservation area have pitched roofs, with the exception of a very small number of 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings. The roofs and chimneys of buildings within West Birkdale, together with their associated details, such as gables, are a particularly important feature to its special character. The roofscape of buildings along Westbourne Road is particularly important as the roofs of houses are highly visible from the sandhills and coastline. The array of towers and turrets that feature on the skyline add to its excitement and visual interest.

Roofs of the buildings express the individual character and style of the buildings beneath and many use elaborate detailing around the eaves, verges and chimneys as part of their character. There are key factors such as pitch, materials and form, that generally link together the roofs of neighbouring buildings, creating an overall coherency.





Houses on Westbourne Road, viewed from the sandhills along the coast.

### 5.1.6 Condition

The vast majority of the buildings within the Conservation Area appear to be occupied and therefore dereliction is not prevalent. The most prominent vacant buildings are the two schools (Terra Nova, the former school for the partially hearing and the former School for the Blind on Oxford Road). These buildings are both clearly empty and are in highly visible positions, with windows boarded up and their grounds neglected, therefore their current condition is detrimental to the character of the conservation area. In the case of Terra Nova, which is the only listed building in the conservation area, it is important that another appropriate use is found for the building as its condition will be deteriorating. Prolonged periods of buildings being boarded up can have a detrimental effect on the streetscape and the perceived quality of the area which could adversely affect investment.

The smaller properties within the conservation area are in single family occupancy and these are generally well-maintained. Slightly larger properties are sometimes in multiple occupancy often resulting in some alterations occurring and potentially leaving the condition of shared areas (such as gardens) less well maintained and/or decorated / planted to a more basic standard.

### 5.1.7 Building Groups

Due to the linear nature of the area and the consistent spacing of the detached houses, very few of the buildings within West Birkdale Conservation Area are read as groups.



A building group on the junction between Grosvenor and Lancaster Roads. The two plans compare the relationship between 1908 and the present day, indicating the adverse effect of the modern development.

Individual buildings do have a relationship with each other, however, as many buildings on opposite sides of the road are carefully positioned to face each other. The strongest relationship between buildings tends to come at road junctions. Sadly,

it is these buildings that have been most prone to redevelopment and the only surviving example is at the junction between Grosvenor and Lancaster Roads. The 3 out of the 4 original buildings here have a strong visual relationship.

## 5.2 FOCAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES

West Birkdale Conservation Area has very few focal buildings and structures due to homogeneous scale of buildings and their predominant residential usage.

However, the following buildings and structures act as landmarks and points of interest to visitors and residents:

### Primary landmarks:

The only primary landmark in the area is the former Terra Nova school (annotated as '1' on the plan on the following page), as it of a considerable larger scale and orientated unusually at an angle to the road, giving it additional presence. Its spacious grounds set amongst an area of regularly spaced housing plots make it more of an unusual feature within the conservation area.



Terra Nova

### Secondary Landmarks

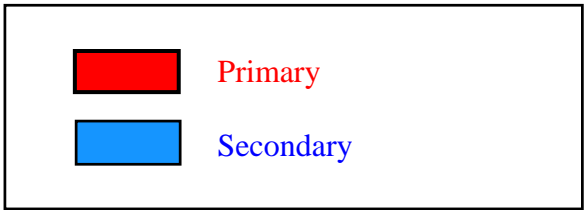
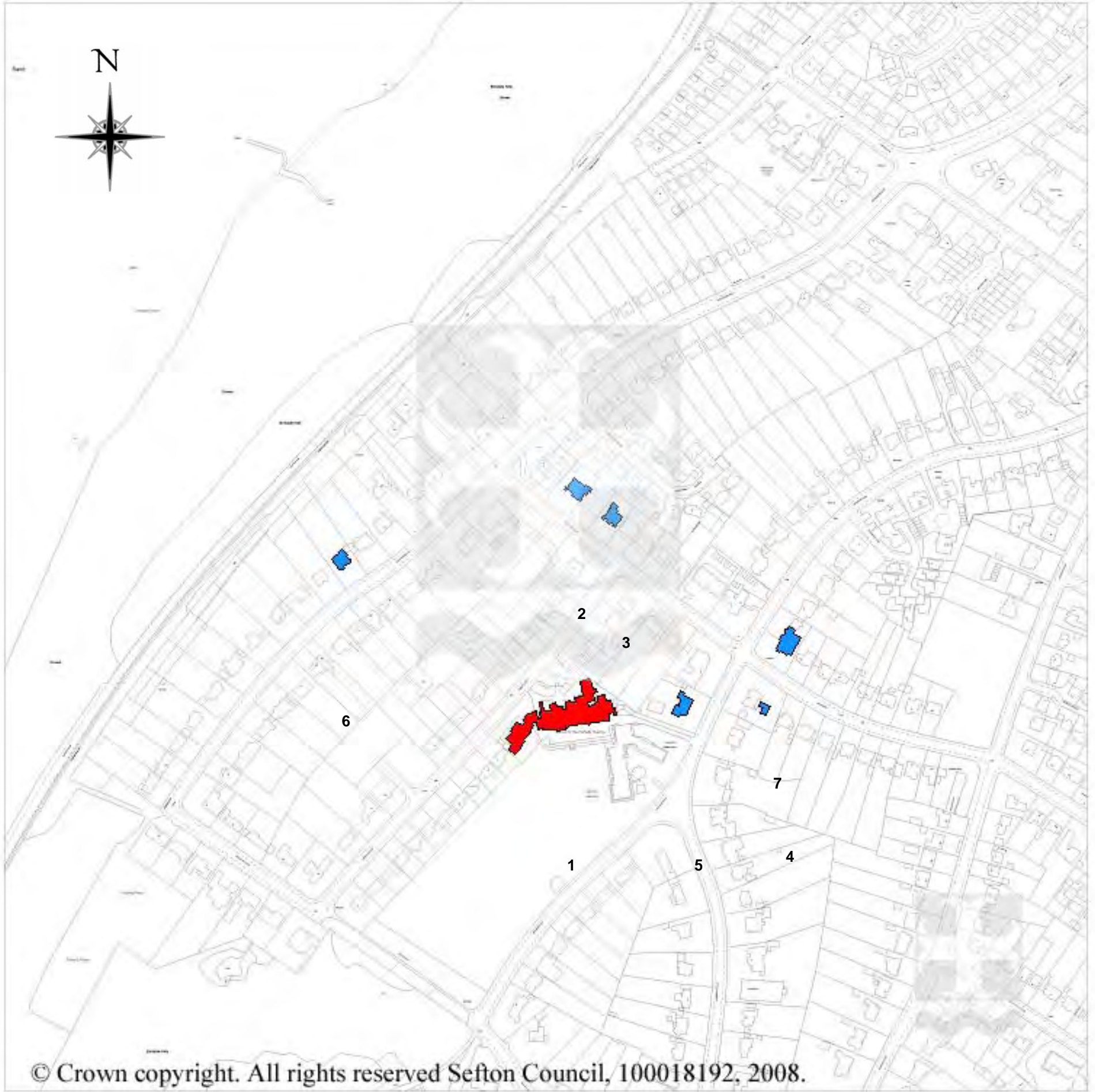
There are no further buildings of a significantly different scale or architectural character. Instead, buildings that are eye-catching tend to be those of particularly high quality architectural detailing, particularly where they feature towers and turrets. Corner buildings tend to have architectural detailing on two sides and are therefore also particularly noticeable. These secondary landmarks include:

- Numbers 3 and 5 Grosvenor Road (2 & 3 )
- Number 18 Grosvenor Road (interestingly because it is an oddity in terms of its scale) (4)
- Numbers 36 and 38 Lancaster Road (5)
- Number 50 Westbourne Road (6)
- Number 17 Grosvenor Road / 23a Lancaster Road (7)



Secondary landmark buildings in the conservation area: (top left) 18 Grosvenor Road; (top right) 36 and 38 Lancaster Road; (bottom left) 50 Westbourne Road; (bottom right) 17 Grosvenor Road / 23a Lancaster Road





## 6.0 ARCHITECTURE MATERIALS AND DETAILS

### 6.1 PROMINENT STYLES

The vast majority of buildings within the West Birkdale Conservation Area display strong 'gothic' or domestic revival style. With most buildings dating from the 1890s and early years of the 1900s, the area is a good example of the fashionable styles and features of the time.

Many of the earliest houses built within West Birkdale are of a Victorian gothic style. These houses were probably built within a relatively short period of between around 1880-1900, after Suburban Italianate had ceased to be popular and before the Arts and Crafts movement took hold. Typical features are ornate terracotta or stonework detailing (including hoodmoulds and door / window surrounds), steeply pitched roofs, pointed arch openings and dormer windows. Perhaps the most notably 'gothic' features seen regularly with West Birkdale are the towers and turrets. Bay windows are used extensively. This period and style saw a gradual move away from sash windows to casements often with leaded panes, although many houses unusually display leaded sash windows.



'Gothic' style houses within West Birkdale Conservation Area

Domestic revival / Arts and Crafts styles are also important to the character of the area and are used prolifically in buildings dating from around 1900-1935. At around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts and gothic influences are often seen within the same buildings. A large palette of materials, including timber framing, brickwork, plain render and vertically hung tiling, are used. Arts and Crafts style houses display a high degree of craftsmanship, for instance in carved timber elements, and use traditional forms of decorative timber construction. Windows are generally leaded casements.



Buildings built using Arts and Crafts or Domestic Revival influences

### 6.2 LEADING ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

Little information is readily available about the architects of the buildings in West Birkdale, however further research would help to enlighten the understanding of the area and should well-known architects be found to have designed any houses this may add to the architectural significance of the conservation area.

*Reade and Goodison*, who were responsible for the design of the original 1866 plan for West Birkdale, also laid out Blundellsands, near Crosby a year previously. Blundellsands displays a very similar character to that shown on their Birkdale perspective drawing, with large houses in spacious grounds positioned in an informal arrangement on sweeping curved roads. Little else is known about the Liverpool based architects.

### **6.3 MATERIALS**

Throughout the Conservation Area a varied palette of construction materials has been used.

It is probably safe to assume that most buildings built before 1890 would have had slate roofs and most between 1905 and 1930 plain clay tiled (or rosemary tiled) roofs. The years between these dates show a mixed use of roof coverings, often depending on the precise styling of the building. As a general rule, Welsh slate is more commonly used to the north-east of Grosvenor Road and plain clay tiles to the south-west. This almost 50/50 split is vital to the roofscape character of the area.

Red pressed brick is the dominant walling material and is seen in almost all buildings. However, the brick is often combined with render, timber framed or tile hung areas, particularly at first and second floor level. Occasionally buildings are fully rendered or rendered down to a low-level brick plinth. In some instances render may be used over the originally intended walling finish of brickwork.

Stonework is seldom used, unless in the form of painted window and door dressings or on boundary walls. Terracotta or decorative brickwork is used to ornament buildings particularly around openings, towers and bays and at the junction with the roof.

### **6.4 TYPICAL FEATURES AND DETAILS**

The following details characterise buildings in West Birkdale:-

*Towers and turrets:* These architectural devices are used extensively throughout the conservation area, but mainly on buildings between around 1890 and 1900. Turrets are generally positioned on the south or west facing corners of building, with just a few exceptions (e.g. where the turret faces onto a junction). Turrets project above the eaves line of the buildings, often providing an additional 'half' storey of accommodation. The floor-plan shape of the turrets varies considerably with circular, octagonal and square plans all used. Similarly the shape and covering of their roofs also differs according to the exact styling of the feature. Spired roofs faceted to follow the shape of the tower are used with either slate or plain clay tile coverings. Most of these roofs kick out at the bottom. Crenellated and lead-clad bell shaped roofs are also used. Most spires on top of turrets are topped with a lead-clad or metal finial.





Turrets and towers

*Decorative plasterwork:* Decorative plaster panels are seen on many houses in the conservation area. They are used as a feature above doors, in gables, dormers and as an eaves cornice.



Decorative plasterwork

*Sliding sash windows:* Vertically sliding sash windows are seen in the earlier buildings in the conservation area but rarely in buildings built after 1900. The most common configuration of glazing bars is the upper sash divided into 6 smaller panes, with the lower, larger sash glazed as one sheet. Horns are used regularly, but do not feature on all original windows. Sash windows are often grouped in twos or threes or used within bays. A particularly unusual and special feature of the conservation area is the use of lead comes and often stained glass within the upper sashes.



Sash windows within West Birkdale

*Decorative leaded windows:* Leaded windows are seen extensively throughout the conservation area and are one of its most special, yet endangered features. Leaded windows would have been found in most buildings built between around 1890 and the 1920s in West Birkdale. Rarely are simple rectilinear or diamond patterns adopted throughout a building in West Birkdale. Most houses with original leaded

windows have some degree of decoration. This can be in the form of a geometric pattern, an arts and crafts inspired design and / or areas of stained glass. Typically the more decorative windows are in upper casements or sashes or to windows to hallways or above doors. Unfortunately, many very attractive original stained and leaded glass windows have been replaced in recent years with double glazing. Occasionally in these instances leading has been stuck onto the outer face of the window, but the overall effect is always crude in comparison to the originals.



**Leaded windows**

*Window surrounds:* Ornate lintels are generally seen in the earlier houses that have plain sash windows. These lintels are of carved stone (painted) and are in a variety of forms. Often the style is varied between adjacent houses to express their individuality. Hood moulds are also seen regularly in the conservation area.



**Window surrounds in West Birkdale.**



*Bay windows:* Bay windows are seen in the vast majority of buildings built up to the 1930s in West Birkdale. They are used both in the earlier ‘gothic’ buildings and the later Arts and Crafts inspired houses. These projecting windows create a hierarchy of rooms, denoting the principle living and bedrooms and engage the building with the streetscape. A variety of building materials are used – some are heavy and structural with thick masonry posts dividing the windows; others are lightweight, with simple timber mullions and transoms. The level of decoration to the bay windows is a particular special characteristic of the area with elaborate plaster cornices seen regularly.



Bay windows

*Doors, porches and canopies:* A common door detail in West Birkdale is a simple timber and glass panelled door, set slightly back from the brickwork, which is sheltered by a timber canopy. The timber canopies express the architectural character of the building. Slated or plain clay tile roofs are supported on turned posts, which sit on low brick walls. Further timberwork is often used to decorative effect on the sides and ‘eaves’ of these canopies. Another common detail for entrances is where the door is set beneath a timber balcony to the first floor which spans between two bays or a tower. A detail seen in slightly later houses is a door behind a recessed archway. Porches are not seen commonly within West Birkdale, however, where they are seen they are an integral part of the visual character of the building, forming part of the front elevation ‘composition’.



Doors, porches and canopies within the conservation areas

*Coach Houses and Garages:* Houses built from around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century often have original or early garages or coach houses. These are often attractive buildings in their own right, with similar details and materials to their parent building. Most garages are built with a gable end facing the road. The gables have details such as timber framing. Where they still exist, the original or early doors are attractive, with large strap hinges and leaded glazed panes.





Garages

*Eaves detailing:* Most of the buildings within West Birkdale Conservation Area have simple eaves details, with either rafter ends left exposed or a simple timber fascias used. In each of these instances the timberwork is painted black. Occasionally the timber fascia has a simple carved timber detail. Some of the ‘showier’ buildings have deep plaster covered friezes with elaborate cast decoration. Also at eaves level, terracotta details are often seen.

*Gable detailing:* Gables feature some of the most distinctive detailing, with their treatment giving the buildings individuality, particularly where they are a variant of a repeated form. Timber framing and hung tiles are seen commonly, together with more occasional elaborately detailed timber exposed gable trusses.



Gable details

*Chimneys:* Chimneys are an important part of the architectural composition of buildings in West Birkdale. They are generally taller and more prominent than chimneys in neighbouring Birkdale Park. Earlier chimneys, from the 1880s and 1890s are generally rectilinear in plan with corbelling to the top courses and projecting bands often lower down. The later buildings, with a more Arts and Crafts influence, have squarer, more decorative chimneys. Almost all chimneys are of red brick. Most chimneys still have original or early pots. The tall height of the pots, together with the slender elegance of the chimneys adds to the interesting roofscape.



Chimneys within and adjacent to the conservation area

*Balconies:* The balconies on the fronts of buildings in West Birkdale are an unusual and particularly special feature in the areas character. Balconies generally span between bays and occasionally towers. All original balconies are painted timber. Balconies generally consist of a timber balustrade with vertical posts connecting it to an over-sailing section of the main roof. There are often timber brackets or further balustrading immediately under the roof line. Balconies are painted black, white or cream to match the colour of other timberwork. The level of decoration to the balcony depends on the design of the house. Timber scrolls, arched brackets and latticework often corresponds to detailing elsewhere on the building, such as to doorways or gable ends. Later buildings typically have simpler balconies.



Timber balconies in West Birkdale

*Gate Piers:* Sandstone or red brick gate piers are a typical feature throughout the Conservation Area. Their size and design vary to some extent with the grandeur and scale of the property to which they relate. Their contribution to the dynamic and character of the street scene is significant, even where the related property has been lost or replaced by new development. The majority of houses within the conservation areas have retained their original gate piers, although very few have original or appropriate gates between them.



Gate piers within the conservation areas

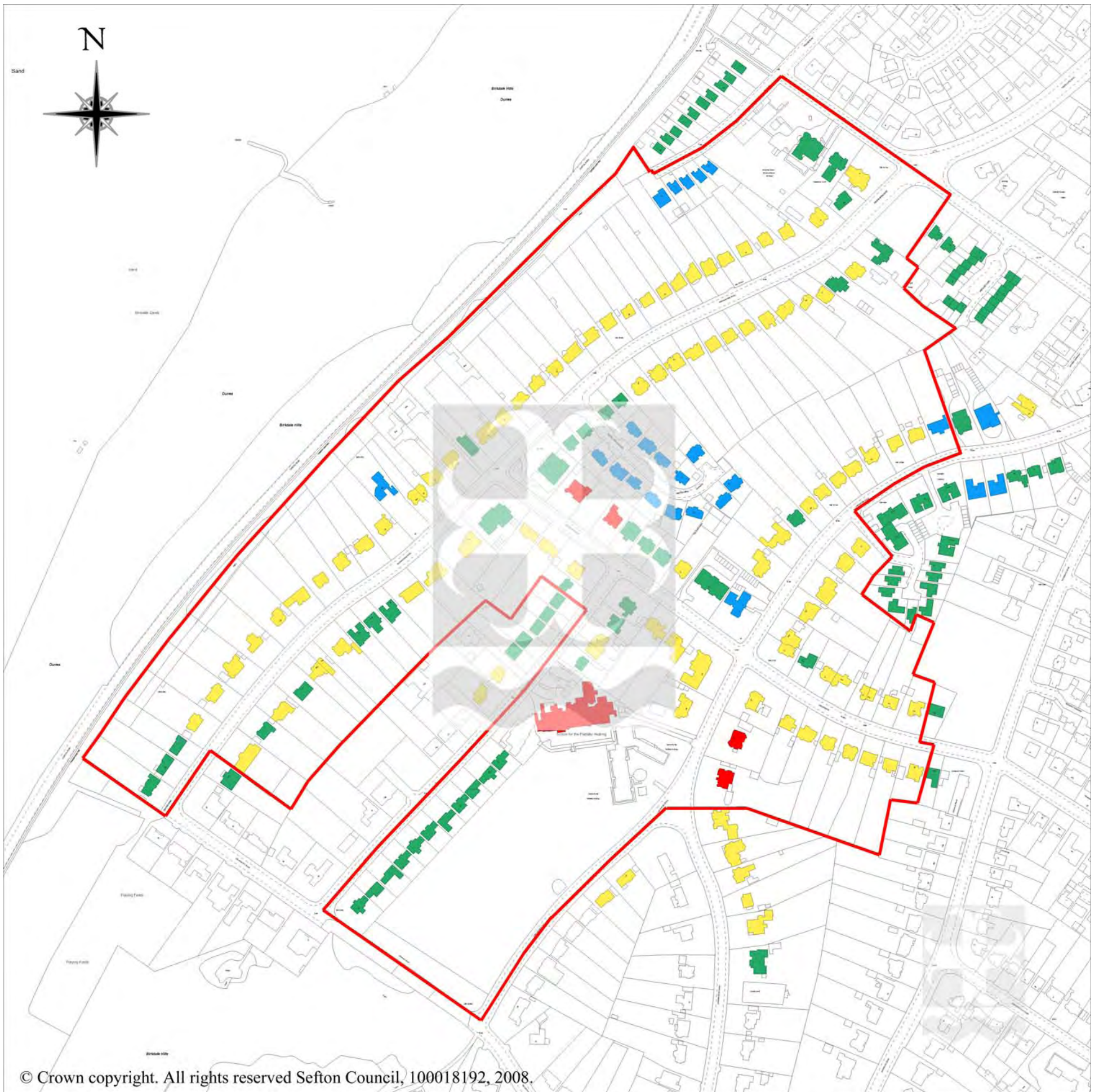
*Boundary walls:* Almost all original front boundary walls within the conservation area are of red brick with either a sandstone or a terracotta capping. Most walls have little or no ornamentation, except in their piers of cappings.

*Surfaces:* The streets and pavements within West Birkdale are fairly consistent in terms of their materials. Almost all of the pavements have a surface of 9” clay paviours, which vary in colour from blues, greys and purples. It is possible that these are original to the construction of the roads. At driveways these paviours have generally been replaced with modern tarmac. There is a mixture of old limestone and modern concrete kerbstones through the conservation area. Adjacent to the kerb is often a drainage channel lined with granite setts. It is not known whether these historic setts extend under the modern tarmac surface.



Typical surfaces within west Birkdale





**Key**

- Buildings critical to the character of the area
- Buildings that contribute to the character of the area
- Buildings of neutral interest
- Buildings that are detrimental to the character of the area

**WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**PLAN 09 - SHOWING CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUILDINGS**

Donald Insall Associates Ltd., August 2007



## 7.0 NEGATIVE FACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

### 7.1 OVERVIEW

The West Birkdale Conservation Area contains many fine buildings and much historic interest which, together, contribute to its special character and justify its designation.

However, there are a number of issues which impact on the character of an area and these fall broadly into the following categories:-

- Poor quality later 20th century development
- Unsympathetic extensions
- Alterations to historic detailing and materials
- Development pressures and loss

### 7.2 POOR QUALITY AND ILL-CONSIDERED LATER 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

Unlike neighbouring Birkdale Park, few developments took place in the 1960s and 70s when the fashion was for large brutalist buildings which were deliberately alien to the existing character of their area. At this time only a small number of apartment buildings and individual dwellings were built, which did not have a significantly adverse effect on the overall grain of the area as a whole.

However, developments within recent decades have had a greater adverse effect on West Birkdale Conservation Area. These fall into 3 categories – individual or small groups of buildings, culs-de-sac / larger groups and finally apartments.

Individual or small groups of houses built during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are generally large detached buildings of a fair standard of build quality and detailing, in comparison to other contemporary buildings elsewhere. Although these buildings have had some money put into the quality of their materials and a degree of effort into their design, they generally jar with the character of the conservation area in terms of their scale and spacing and their overall quality falls far short of their more historic counterparts. The storey heights of these buildings are without exception lower than their historical counterparts and they are spaced much closer together. Although some of their materials are appropriate and some effort is often made to use local detailing, the design quality of all details such as openings, windows, eaves and gable treatment is far inferior to that seen in the original buildings in West Birkdale. In addition to the above, many modern houses adopt a neo-classical style, with porticos and balustraded parapets. Although these particular buildings may share the same aspiration to quality and opulence that the original buildings may have had, their architectural style is entirely out of place in the area.



Small groups of detached houses built in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In a few instances, a number of small houses have been fitted within the gardens or large plots of existing houses, often in the form of a cul-de-sac. The introduction of a new road access onto an existing street involves the demolition of one or two existing houses and changes its character often dramatically, breaking the otherwise continuous line formed by boundary walls and heavily disrupting the rhythm of the existing villas. Despite the small scale of their buildings, modern developments of houses have a significant effect on the streetscapes and this is shown in the creation of the modern cul-de-sac of housing off Westbourne Road, which would otherwise until recently have had a continuous, unbroken run of original villas on its north-eastern end on both sides of the street. The houses placed onto Westbourne Road as part of this development completely fail in their attempt to masquerade as original villas, particularly as they are of a much smaller scale.



**Modern cul-de-sac just outside, but affecting the setting of the conservation area.**

Slightly earlier, modern housing in West Birkdale paid no reference to the detailing and materials of historic buildings, with standard building types apparently used. In very recent years, houses have been designed with some attempt at copying historic details, such as slate / plain clay tile roofs and brickwork detailing, although these far from understand the specific character of the area and are still probably modified standardised designs. The layout of these developments is purely modern with the needs of the car and the profitability of land key design factors. The inevitable lack of landscaping and space around houses leaves the development alien in character to the West Birkdale Conservation Area.

Taken individually, in principle, a well designed modern building, in isolation and within a large well planted garden, may not detract unduly from the conservation areas or from the setting of other buildings. However, any negative effect often comes from the accumulative effect of a number of houses grouped together or poor spacing, massing and landscaping. The overall attention to detail and use of quality materials is clearly key.

Recent developments of flats are generally of an inappropriate scale, often almost filling the widths and lengths of their plots. Often they are built over what was previously a number of individual housing plots. Although they were probably justified by being not particularly taller than many of the existing villas at their highest points (e.g. the tops of towers / chimneys), they are at this height for a much greater proportion of their area, often without any roofscape interest. Some of the apartment buildings are greatly larger in footprint than any of the individual villas. The massing of these buildings is completely alien to the character of the area and they are highly prominent within their local area and these buildings are often tightly



wedged into their site. Where these buildings take up a relatively large percentage of their site, the area allocated for landscaping, which is characteristic of the area, is further reduced by the desire for a large area of car parking. Other factors associated with buildings' use as flats, such as a large bin store, can also be detrimental to the character of the conservation area if they are not designed properly.

Corner sites appear to be particularly under threat from applications for demolition of the existing building(s) and replacement with larger apartment blocks. Sadly this phenomenon is currently happening on the corner of Oxford Road and Westbourne Road which has seen the loss of one of West Birkdale's earlier houses, which had acted as a gateway to the conservational area. It replacement with a significantly larger apartment building is imminent at the time of writing.



An example of a recent development of apartments. Although the building is sited just outside the conservation area, it greatly impacts on its setting. The scale of the building greatly dominates other surrounding buildings and it is built a long way in front of the existing building line, adding to its prominence. Whilst a building on this site should act as a gateway to the area beyond, this building bears almost no resemblance to the massing and quality of materials and detailing of West Birkdale Conservation Area.

### 7.3 UNSYMPATHETIC EXTENSIONS

Fortunately few buildings within the West Birkdale Conservation Area have significant extensions. However, where large extensions exist, they are generally to buildings that have been converted into apartments or that are used for purposes such as nursing homes or clinics. As the historic buildings were generally spacious houses, additional space has generally not been sought, where the houses have remained in single family occupancy.



Significant extensions to 3 Grosvenor Road and to the rear of Terra Nova

Number 3 Grosvenor Road has a significant recent extension. The extension largely fills what was the building's grounds. The original building is one of the most architecturally interesting out of all the houses in the conservation area and has some of the finest detailing. The extension is comparatively crude, with ill-proportioned windows with thick frames and no detailing at their heads, a modern roofing material unconvincingly attempting to emulate slate and poor quality, plain timber bargeboards and fascias. The basic nature of this extension devalues the architectural quality of the original building.

Terra Nova also has a number of comparatively small extensions. Although most of the extensions constructed to its rear are built with fairly appropriate materials, they clutter its appearance. Also, a few low level buildings have been built to the south-east of the main buildings which are entirely modern in character, with flat roofs and no reference to the historic buildings or the low level early 20<sup>th</sup> century building adjacent. These structures adversely affect the setting of the listed structure.

Number 36 Lancaster Road has had a large extension to its south-western side. The form of the extension emulates that of the older part of the building, but again simpler detailing and some modern materials are used. As the building is read as one overall form, the extension serves to effectively dilute the character and quality of the original building.

#### 7.4 ALTERATIONS TO HISTORIC DETAILING AND MATERIALS

Unfortunately many of the historic properties have suffered from alterations to their detailing and materials that are important to their contribution to the character of the conservation area:

*Roofs:* In around six or seven instances original Welsh slate or plain clay tiled roofs have been replaced in concrete tiles or pantiles. Roofs play a critical role in the character of the conservation areas, particularly in the longer 'streetscape' views, visually linking similar building types. Although both plain clay tiles and Welsh slate roofs are seen in the conservation area, building owners should be dissuaded from replacing their roofs in anything but a like-for-like replacement as the type of roof covering is directly linked to the buildings architectural character.



The negative effect that replacement pantile (left) and concrete tile (right) roof coverings have on the appearance of a building.

*Satellite dishes:* The installation of satellite dishes is not unachievable within conservation areas, as long as they are positioned sympathetically and are kept as small as possible. There are, however, some instances throughout the area of poorly positioned and very visible satellite dishes. Their visibility is often increased because they are seen against the sky. The least obtrusive dishes tend to be those positioned on the rear or sides of houses and those constructed from a dark grey semitransparent material.

*Windows and doors:* Around half of the original houses within the conservation areas have had at least some of their windows replaced either with uPVC or inferior quality timber windows. This is particularly damaging to the character of not only the individual properties but also to the streetscene. The introduction of thicker framing members (almost always necessary with uPVC), the removal of glazing bars, the reconfiguration of the window, etc. all have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the property and the overall visual quality of the area.



Replaced windows in the conservation area

Of particular importance to the character of the area are the leaded lights. These are generally examples of beautiful late Victorian or Edwardian craftsmanship and West Birkdale has an exceptional number of very good quality examples. However, these leaded panes are gradually being replaced double glazed units which cannot use the original panes. Where leading is simply adhered to a single pane of glass the effect is not the same, as the multi-faceted shimmering of light that the leaded panes give is lost.

Though less common than replacement windows, replacement front doors are also detrimental to the character of the area. Where uPVC is used, replacement doors are particularly obtrusive and lack the quality of design and detail found in the timber originals.





These photographs illustrate the negative impact of changes to windows, timberwork, chimneys and panelling within the past 20 years. In this time the front boundary wall and gateposts have also been removed. The trees and shrubs to the front garden have also been lost.



The above photographs illustrate the changes to no. 5 Grosvenor Road. The leaded windows have been double glazed, leaving one smooth plate of glass on the outside. Although the leaded comes have been retained, or replicated on the inside one of the essential characteristics of the glazing, namely the shimmering faceted nature of the windows in the sunlight, has been lost. The hung tiles to the square bays have also been replaced by comparatively crude render and the tops of the chimneys removed.

The addition of rooflights into the roofs of existing buildings can also adversely affect their character. When they are on street-facing slopes and when large numbers are used, particularly in a haphazard arrangement, they can detract from the streetscape. Rooflights are particularly obtrusive when they are not of the 'conservation' type and when they are not positioned flush with the roof covering.

*Changes to colours / finishes:* The choice of the colour / finish of timberwork, in particular windows, is also important and any radical change can detrimentally affect the character of the building. The use of exposed timber to windows is not an authentic historic method, and does not complement the building's materials or architectural style. The painting of stone or brickwork that was never intended to be coated causes damage beyond its immediate visual effect: it should be considered an irreversible change, as removing the paint would then damage the surface of the masonry. Modern paints will also cause moisture to be trapped within the brick or stonework, potentially causing internal dampness within the building but more likely resulting in the erosion or more dramatic failure of the fabric's exterior surface. Once the masonry is painted, it then also becomes an unnecessary maintenance liability and potentially a future eyesore if the coating is not regularly reapplied.

*Replaced / altered boundaries:* The removal of boundary walls and their replacement with inappropriate materials has a damaging effect on the streetscene, destroying the continuity and rhythm of the road. The walls and gate posts are an important part of the character of a building and are often lost simple because it is

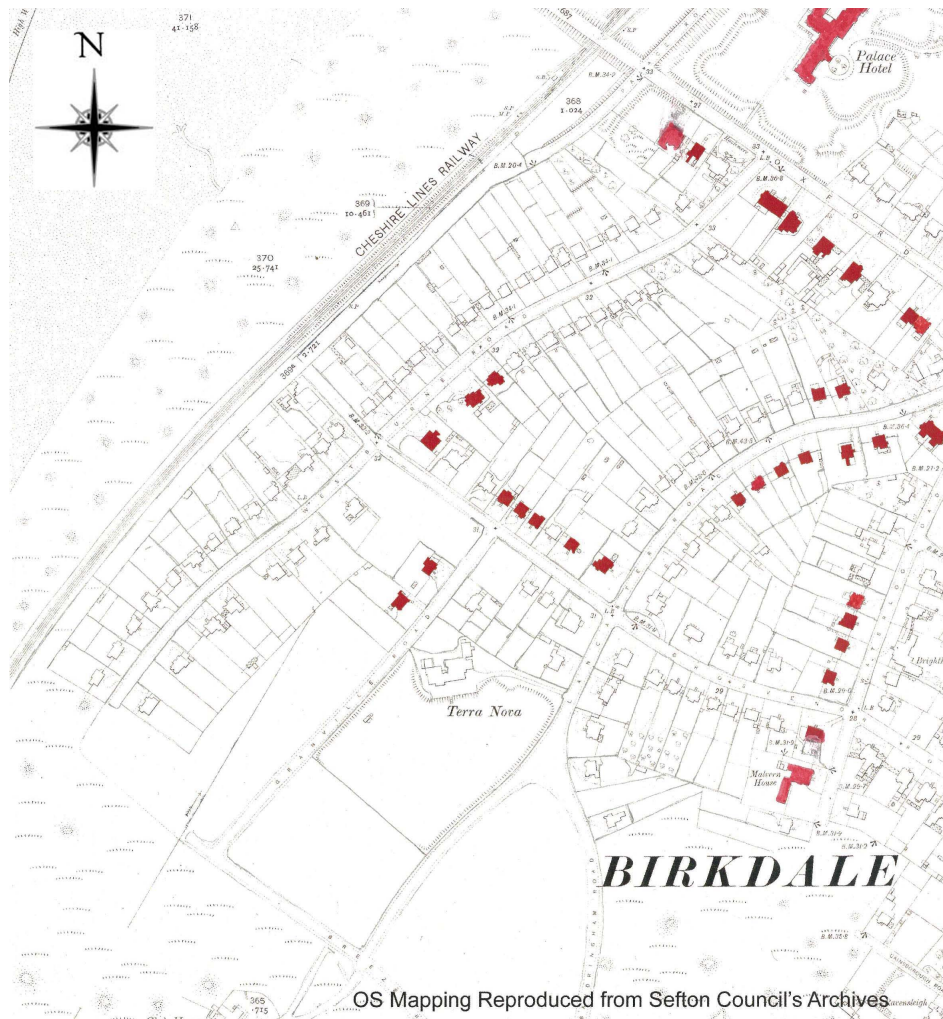
apparently easier to build an entirely new wall than repair the existing feature. Modern walls and gate posts are often of a different scale and architectural character to the original, potentially changing the perception of the building beyond. Raising existing boundary heights changes the relationship that buildings have with the overall streetscape (particularly when they are opaque, in the instance of timber board fencing) and would have an adverse effect on the rhythm of the streets, which has been identified as an important characteristic of the area.

*Loss of gardens and landscaping:* Where houses have been subdivided into or replaced with blocks of flats the need for car parking often overrides that of attractive landscaping. This is particularly detrimental where a strip of planting is not allowed for around the plot boundary.

*Poor quality, modern paving, street furniture and street signage:* Almost all areas of pavements within the conservation area have attractive clay paving, that is from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The replacement in tarmac, or other modern finishes, due to repairs or changes to access adversely affects the high quality of the area and is a poor example to residents. Most of the old street name signs have been replaced without thought as to the visual contribution they make to the area. Also, standard bus stops and road markings are used which can detract from the setting of the adjacent buildings and the overall character of the area. There are a few older lampposts in the area which contribute to its character. Many of these have been replaced by modern alternatives that are not of a similar quality or design character.

*Repairs using modern materials:* Repairs to historic building fabric using modern materials can have a detrimental effect not only on the appearance of a building but they can also speed up the process of deterioration. Most notable is the use of cementitious mortars and renders. When used on soft brick or stone, hard mortars or renders can adversely affect the natural paths of water movement. As pointing, they can force moisture out through the face of the masonry, eventually causing the failure of the surface of the material. As a render, the impermeable barrier can prevent the building from breathing and can lead to damp and condensation problems.

## 7.5 DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES AND LOSS



**Plan 10 - 1908 OS plan with buildings indicated in red that are no longer present**

Plan 10 shows the buildings lost within the conservation area since the period in which its existing character was largely completed at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The plan shows that although Westbourne Road has been left to a large extent unscathed, there has been a number of extremely detrimental pockets of redevelopment and unfortunate instances of loss along the north east side of Grosvenor Road, Oxford Road and the south side of Lancaster Road. Perhaps the reason for this pattern of redevelopment is the narrower width of plots on Westbourne Road, making it more unlikely that the necessary 3 or 4 house owners would sell their houses for demolition, compared to the opportunities presented to the developers for flats on the wider plots (particularly corner plots) elsewhere.

The length of the plots does, however, attract planning applications for cul-de-sac developments in the former gardens of houses. The provision of access to such areas has led to the demolition of buildings on Lancaster and Westbourne Roads which have had a detrimental and very regrettable effect on the conservation area.

The loss of the Palace Hotel in 1969 would have significantly changed the character of the part of what is now West Birkdale Conservation Area. It would have visually



dominated the area around Oxford Road may have been a terminus to the vista along the north-eastern end of Westbourne Road.

One further threat to the character of the conservation area is the conversion of existing buildings into flats. This not only involves the loss of landscaping (due to the additional car parking requirements), but also planning applications for conversion seem to be automatically accompanied with a requirement for a significant extension, often proposing to double the size of the existing footprint. If this phenomenon is allowed to continue unchecked, the effect on the character of the conservation area could be highly detrimental.

## **7.6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT**

To counteract the negative factors which are detracting from the character of West Birkdale Conservation Area, a number of measures might be considered and introduced:-

### *Guidance Leaflet*

As well as the development pressures that are clearly evident, the impact on the area of small alterations which individual householders have made to their houses and which, collectively, have compromised the area's character, is also of importance. It is likely that these alterations are due to a lack of awareness and appreciation of the value of the area and of those elements which contribute to its character.

An advisory leaflet already exists for the area which includes the background to the area and guidance notes. It is advised that residents are made fully aware of the leaflet and if possible the opportunity should be taken to update it to include any more specific recent threats.

### *Article 4 Directions*

It is generally the case that guidance available to residents within the advisory leaflet is not adequate to completely prevent all detrimental alterations. To prevent further negative change it is therefore recommended that article 4 directions be used. The priorities for article 4 directions should be for protection to windows and doors, roof coverings, chimneys and front boundary walls. It is suggested that as these matters are important to the majority of buildings within the conservation area therefore article 4 directions should be applied to all buildings to avoid confusion and uncertainty.

### *Streetscape Elements*

Many of the lampposts within the conservation area are of a very basic quality, with no design merit. A long-term programme should consider the replacement of modern, poor quality lampposts and other street furniture, such as street signs. Traditional designs should be used, based on the evidence of early photographs where they are available. Although the quality of the paving is generally good, in some instances it has been crudely repaired with tarmac. A programme should be undertaken to repair these defects and reintroduce historic materials where missing.



(Left) An example of a poor quality, modern lamppost; (middle) an example of an older cast-iron lampposts, with a modern alteration – the original part of this lamppost could be used as a model for any replicas in the conservation area; (right) a crude repair to the attractive clay pavings.

#### *s215 Notices*

Where the poor condition and appearance of a building or piece of land are detrimental to the surrounding areas or neighbourhood, a s215 notice should be issued by the Council.




## **7.7 FURTHER PROTECTION OF UNLISTED BUILDINGS**

Where buildings are highlighted within this report as being critical to or contributing to the character of the conservation area, it is suggested that their special interest is considered in any planning application affecting them, particularly with regards to the preservation or their setting (e.g. preserving trees and hedges) and important architectural features (for instance. retention of boundary walls, gateposts, windows, doors and decorative terracotta, stone and timberwork). Applications for any proposed works to all buildings within the conservation area should be considered by an individual with a knowledge and understanding of historic environments to ensure that further loss is absolutely minimised and any additions do not detract from the historic features





**Key:**

-  Existing Conservation Area boundary
-  Proposed additional area to Conservation Area boundary
-  Proposed area to be removed from Conservation area boundary

**WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**PLAN 11 - SHOWING ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

Donald Insall Associates Ltd., August 2007



## 8.0 RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

### 8.1 DESIGNATED BOUNDARY

(see Plan 11 at the beginning of the section - designated boundary is shown in red)

The boundary as drawn for designation has generally been drawn tightly and reflects the extent of the area within which the special character of the West Birkdale Conservation Area predominates. There are, however, a number of amendments which are recommended for consideration.

### 8.2 AMENDMENTS

#### **Suggest additional areas for inclusion:**

##### *1 – 9 (odd) Sandringham Road*

It is recommended that the conservation area boundary is extended to include the above houses as they have most of the characteristics that are special to the conservation area. They are of a similar scale and relate to each other and their boundaries in a similar way as buildings, for instance, on Westbourne Road. Materials seen within the existing conservation area boundary, such as red brick, timber framing and plain clay tiled roofs are seen within this group of buildings. The quality of detailing is very high with some ornate details such as leaded glass and timber balconies. Many of these buildings have attractive, tall chimneys. The overall architectural composition of many of the buildings is particularly good; most notable are numbers 5 and 9 which are of particularly good Arts and Crafts designs.

The proposed additional area stops at a point that coincides with the extent of the Southport pavements and stone kerbs, potentially indicating the start of a later phase of development beyond, but more importantly that this road was included within an early vision and layout for the area.



Some of the buildings on Sandringham Road, which are proposed for inclusion within the conservation area boundary.

#### **Suggested areas for removal from existing boundary:**

##### *2 Granville Road*

This house was built in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century as an infill within the building plot of 8 Grosvenor Road. Although it uses some of the materials seen within the houses that are characteristic of the area (e.g. a plain clay tiled roof), its design is considerably simpler and its ground floor walls are of a distinctly later buff brick. It is therefore recommended that this house is removed from the conservation area to ensure to help the clarity of its character.

*37 – 43 (odd) Palace Road*

The buildings on Palace Road are entirely late 20<sup>th</sup> century and do not reflect the scale, character or materials of the buildings in the conservation area.

*12 Lancaster Road*

It is recommended that this building be removed from the conservation area as it is a modern bungalow with very few of the characteristics that are special to the conservation area.

## **APPENDIX A**

**Bibliography ▪ Illustration Sources**  
**References ▪ Acknowledgements**



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GREENWOOD, C: Thatch, Towers and Colonnades

## **Illustration Sources**

All OS base maps have been provided by Sefton M.B.C under licence. All marking up of plans is by Donald Insall Associates Ltd, with the exception of the boundaries marked on plan 02.

Page 6 – 1850 historical map – Sefton Council's Archives

Page 7 – Reade and Goodison's original 1866 plan – photocopy held at Southport library

Page 8– Birkdale Palace Hotel– extracted from [www.virtualsouthport.co.uk](http://www.virtualsouthport.co.uk)

Page 37 – Black and white photographs from Thatch, Towers and Colonnades by Cedric Greenwood

Appendix B – Historical maps – Sefton Council Archives

All other photographs, illustrations and plans supplied by Donald Insall Associates

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Historic Maps**

This appendix contains the following maps:

Ordnance Survey Map	1893
Ordnance Survey Map	1908
Ordnance Survey Map	1927 (unavailable)

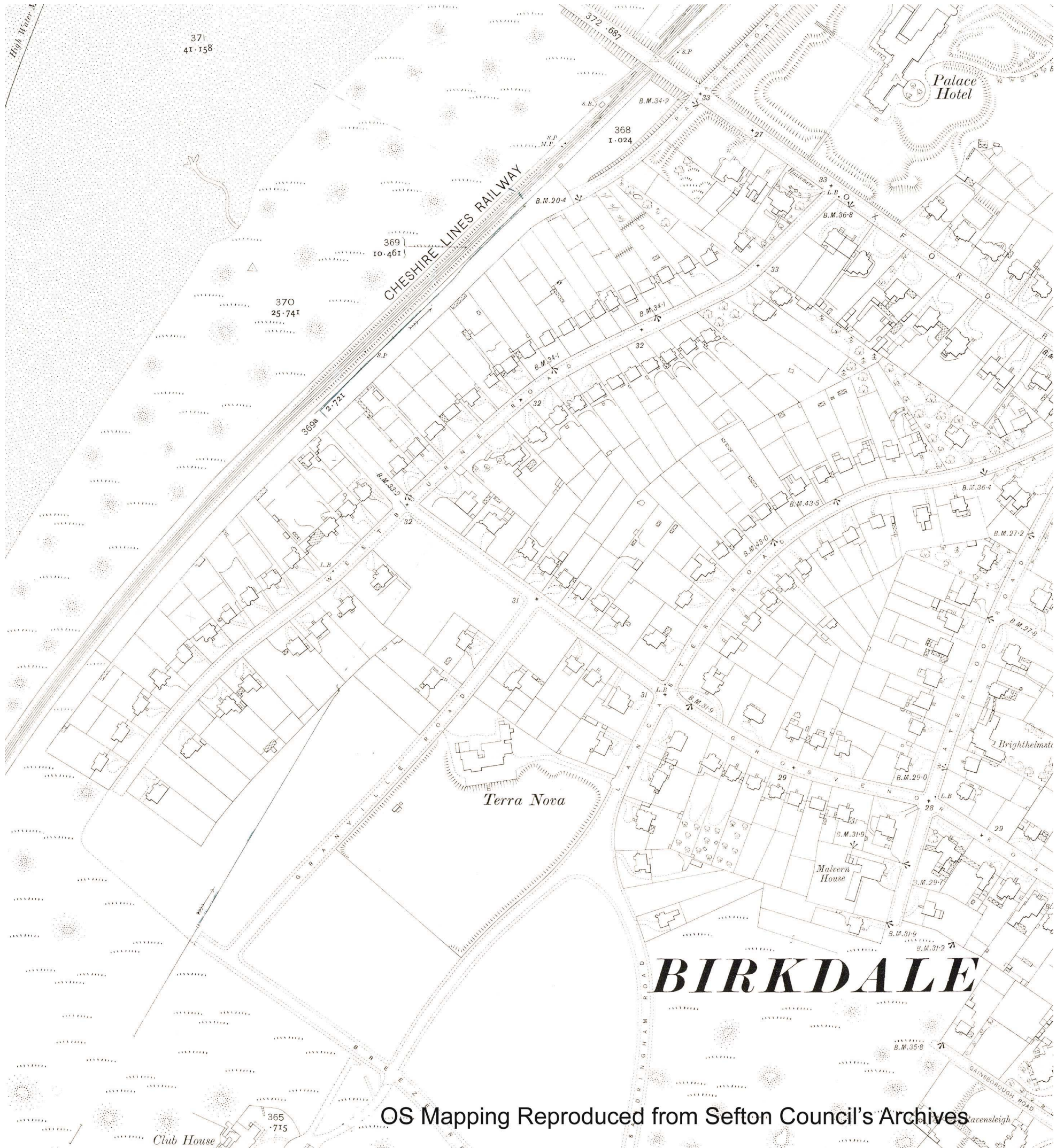




1893 OS Mapping Reproduced from Sefton Council's Archives

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OS Mapping Reproduced from Sefton Council's Archives

WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1908 PLAN OF THE AREA  
Donald Insall Associates Ltd. August 2007

## WEST BIRKDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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1927 PLAN OF THE AREA  
Donald Insall Associates Ltd. August 2007