

Metropolitan Borough of Sefton

Advisory Leaflet

# Birkdale Park

## Conservation Area



### History

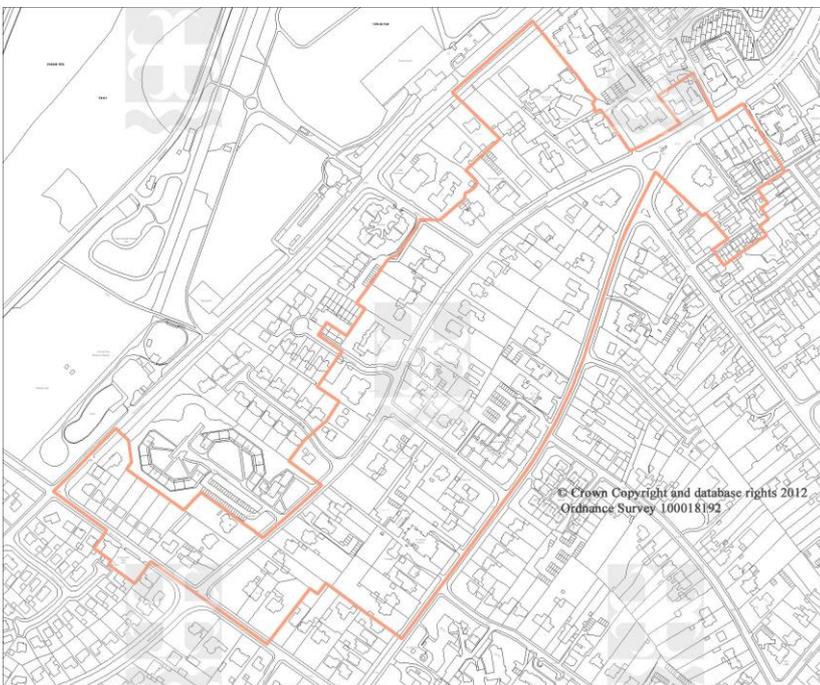
The early history of Birkdale is fairly obscure; it is thought to date back to Viking times. There is known to have been a settlement here around the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 and there seems little doubt that it is the surviving part of the district of Argarmeols, (spelt Erengermeles in the Domesday Book). There have been many variations of the name Birkdale, such as 'Bertil' and 'Birthile', the first recorded use of the name Birkdale is in the Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey. It is thought to be a corruption of the old Norse words "birki" meaning birch-copse and "dalr", meaning dale.

A thinly populated area consisting largely of moss and wasteland, by the 1660s Birkdale had a population of about 150, having remained unchanged for centuries as an area of scattered farmsteads and humble thatched dwellings. Positioned on an exposed coastline without even the nucleus of a church or manor house, it was described in 1834 as "a cheerless, bleak, forlorn little region partly occupied by sandhills and meagre pasture grounds." The area was in the possession of the Halsall family until about 1600 when Sir Cuthbert Halsall was forced to sell his estates to support his extravagant lifestyle. Birkdale was purchased in 1632 by Robert Blundell, of Ince Blundell Hall, the Blundells retained

possession of the lands until 1837, when lacking a male heir, the land passed to Thomas Weld, who under the terms of Robert Blundell's will assumed the name Blundell into his own, thereby becoming Thomas Weld-Blundell.

Thomas Weld-Blundell had commercial ambitions, encouraged by other marine developments, notably in Southport, and the opening of the railway to Liverpool in 1848, he saw the development potential of his Birkdale property. After obtaining powers by Act of Parliament in 1848 he offered leases of land for building. The area near Southport previously known as Aindow Hills was renamed Birkdale Park. Adverts in the press referred to a township being "laid out under the superintendence of eminent surveyors and landscape gardeners" and of being "covered with beautiful residences suitable for the habitation of the most respectable parties".

The landscape designer Edward Kemp was employed to draw up a plan for the development and his original drawing showed approximately 100 detached, or occasionally semi-detached houses, each set in a sizeable plot. Initial demand for the leases was slow and consequently only part of the scheme was built as initially intended.



One of the first builders to take up leases was builder John Aughton and most of the villas he built were in the classic Italianate style. He is likely to have been influenced by his employment with the architect Decimus Burton, who had worked with John Nash and was instrumental nationally in the design of the Victorian suburb. Several of the Italianate villas along Westcliffe Road and Lulworth Road are listed grade II. The largest and most imposing Victorian villas are situated along Westcliffe Road, where in 1850, no. 6 was the first house to be built. Many of them have been private schools, including 26 Westcliffe Road (Kingswood), this

impressive villa was built in 1866, becoming a school in 1938. There has been recent re-development on this site to create apartments, although the original building has been retained, and renovated.

By 1856 the total population of Birkdale had risen to 1,100 and an appeal began for funds to build a church in the area. The church of St James, Lulworth Road, was built and consecrated in 1857. Development in Birkdale was so rapid, that by 1865 it was described as "having the characteristics of a separate town...its buildings were on a scale of grandeur and magnificence superior to Southport, many of them occupied by opulent merchants and manufacturers". It had its fashionable parade of Rotten Row, which was comparable to Southport Promenade. In 1894 Birkdale Urban District Council was formed, and in 1912 Birkdale finally amalgamated with Southport.

### The Conservation Area

Birkdale Park conservation area was designated in July 2000 and extended in 2008 to include properties along Lord Street West and Southern Road. It is one of four conservation areas in Birkdale, the other three are West Birkdale, Gloucester Road and Birkdale Village.

The Birkdale Park conservation area represents the earliest urban development of Birkdale as a suburb. Modelled on earlier developments such as John Nash's Regents Park, London, it is a very early form of this type in the north-west.

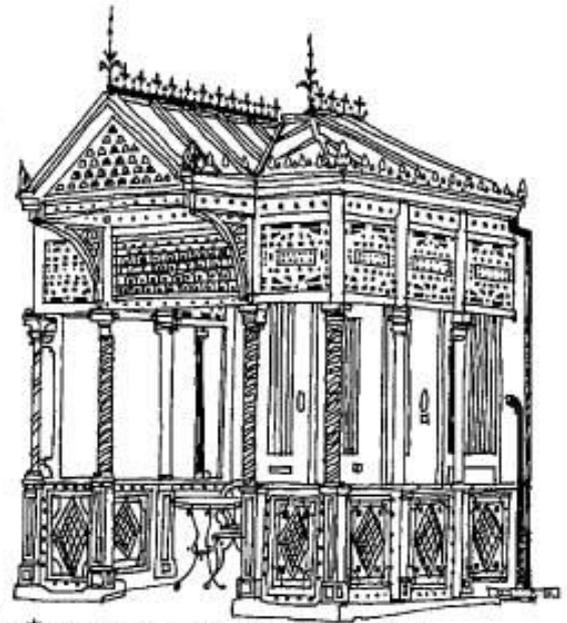
Ornate Italianate villas and large detached Victorian/Edwardian houses (several of which are listed) provide the architectural backdrop to the tree lined streets and mature gardens. The combined planting along public roads and in private gardens was intended to enhance the grandeur and individual character of the houses. Along with the curvature of the roads and the line of brick walls, the overall effect was to emulate the emparked estates of the gentry.

Over the years, some re-development has taken place, certain post-war purpose-built complexes have tended to compromise the area's special qualities, and regrettably some locally important historical buildings have been lost.

It is considered vital to conserve the character of the area, as it is a historically important piece of the borough's townscape, which had a major influence on how Sefton later developed. Conservation area status offers the opportunity to preserve what remains, and enhance the less sympathetic elements.

Whilst Sefton Council recognises that for Conservation Areas to remain "live" and responsive to a changing society, changes must and will occur. Through the planning system the Council undertakes to ensure that changes preserve or enhance the area,

and do not result in the loss of character, and any harm is balanced against wider public benefits.



*Ornate iron porch at 6 Westcliffe Road.*

### Additional Planning Powers

Within the Conservation Area the following additional planning powers apply:-

**If a building is a Listed Building additional special controls will also apply.**

- Any proposal involving the demolition of any building, wall or other structure within the Conservation Area (with minor exceptions) will require planning permission.
- Anyone wishing to cut down, top, lop or uproot a tree with a stem diameter of 75mm or greater measured at 1.5m above ground level, must give the Local Planning Authority six weeks written notice of their intention to do so (a "Section 211 notice" under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) subject to specific exemptions. Within this time the Authority may grant consent for the proposed work, or they may consider making a Tree Preservation Order. It is an offence to carry out tree works without permission.
- There are greater restrictions over 'permitted development' rights for the alteration and enlargement of dwellinghouses, and on the provision, alteration or improvement of outbuildings within their curtilage.
- Dormer windows will require planning permission, and in some cases, other changes to roofs and chimneys may require planning permission.

- The cladding of any part of external walls in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic would require planning permission.
- Planning permission is needed for satellite dishes where they are to be located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto a highway.
- Micro-generation (e.g. wind turbines/solar panels) installations will require planning permission in some cases.

For up to date advice on what needs planning permission go to [www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk) In determining applications for the development of land and alterations or extensions to buildings within the Birkdale Park Conservation Area the Council will pay special regard to:-

- The retention, replacement and restoration of historical details and features of the buildings and their gardens including layout, boundary walls and landscaping.
- The design and detail of extensions and alterations to existing buildings which will be expected to be in sympathy with the architectural and historic character of the building as a whole and to the setting of that building.
- The detailed design of any new building (including form, massing, scale and materials) and its integration with its immediate surroundings and the special architectural and visual qualities of the Conservation Area.
- The retention and preservation of existing trees and the provision of further appropriate landscaping.
- The retention and enhancement of views into and out of the area, vistas within the area and the general character and appearance of the street scene and roofscape.

## Guidance Notes for planning applications and use of materials:

### Pre-Application Advice

You can request advice from the planning department prior to submitting a formal application. In some cases we make a charge for this service. Forms are available on the Council's website.

### Planning Applications

A Heritage Statement will be needed to support your planning application, this should include an explanation of what the significance of the property is, and what impact the proposals have on that significance.

Outline applications will not usually be considered.

### Demolition

The demolition or redevelopment of any building of individual or group value will not be permitted unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the building cannot be used for any suitable purpose and it is not important enough to merit the costs involved in its preservation. Any consent to demolish would normally be conditional on the building not being demolished before a contract is made to carry out redevelopment. This redevelopment must be of a high standard of design.

### New development on vacant sites

Any new development should be conceived with the original layout, architectural character and scale of the area in mind. Early discussions with the Planning Department are advised prior to any design work being commenced. The services of a qualified architect are strongly recommended.

### Conversion of existing buildings

Where planning permission to convert buildings into new uses is sought, the new use and internal layout of the building should be carefully considered. Particular attention will be paid to the building's external appearance, use of materials, the layout of gardens and car parks and the position of bin stores.

Every effort should be made to minimise external alterations, such as fire escapes and new windows (including dormer windows). Where external changes are required it should be made to a non-prominent elevation. Alterations or extensions should use the carefully chosen materials that match/complement the building. Again, the services of a qualified architect are strongly recommended.



## External alterations to existing buildings including extensions

The following deals with some of the details of alterations and extensions to buildings.

### Windows

There are a number of types and styles of original windows to the area. They should be retained and renovated where possible. If all or part of any window needs to be replaced it should match the original design. Care should be taken to ensure that 'reveals' are retained. This is important for practical (weather protection) as well as aesthetic reasons. If additional windows are essential, they should be restricted to the non-prominent elevations. Their size and proportion should match the original windows.

When repairing/replacing windows care must be taken to retain and restore details. Imitation 'leaded' lights should always be avoided whilst aluminium and UPVC windows have a different surface finish, are likely to have different detailing and proportions to the existing and consequently are likely to detract from the character of the building.

### Dormer Windows

New dormer windows are not generally accepted unless they can be shown to complement the original design. Any new dormer windows must be well-proportioned and kept to non-prominent elevations. Any new cladding must match roofing materials.

### Wall Surfaces

Brickwork and stonework should not be painted or rendered. Areas of brickwork or stonework requiring renewal should be repaired or replaced in their original form or pattern. Brick pointing should be compatible with existing construction, which is generally flush finish. Repointing should be carried out with lime mortar rather than cement to prevent softer bricks from deteriorating. Where stonework is to be cleaned, professional advice should be sought as the incorrect choice of treatments can result in damage.

Brick and terracotta features such as keystones, corbels, finials and leaf designs should be retained wherever possible. Cladding of brickwork in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles is not permitted for practical as well as aesthetic reasons and the use of bright obtrusive colours for stucco render should be avoided. If missing or damaged, stucco or plaster mouldings and similar details should be replaced in their original form or pattern. Care should be taken to use correct mixes and finishing coats.

Stucco render or plaster mouldings and similar details should be replaced in their original form or pattern if missing or damaged. Care should be taken to use correct mixes and finishing coats. Dry dash or pebble

dash is typical of some late 19th or early 20th century buildings and any repair should be to a similar finish.

### Roofs

Original rooflines and profiles should be maintained. Any renewals or repairs should use reclaimed or new materials to match the original roof covering. Care should be taken to retain roof features such as decorated ridge tiles, eaves and gables details.

### Chimneys

In most cases, the original chimney stacks and pots form an integral part of the design of buildings and create an interesting 'roofscape'. It is important, therefore, to opt for repairing rather than dismantling stacks if no longer in use. If the stacks become unsafe, then they should be taken down and rebuilt to the original height and design taking care to replace chimney pots.

### Satellite Dishes and Aerials

Aerials and satellite dishes should be located as sensitively as possible and should avoid main street elevations.

### Front Doors

Original doors and door surrounds should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Replacements should be to a sympathetic design. Wooden moulded and panelled doors are likely to be the most suitable. "Georgian style" doors with imitation semi-circular fanlights and uPVC should be particularly avoided. Care should be taken to retain and repair details around openings, such as architraves, thresholds, transoms and fanlights.

### Porticoes and Porches

These features should be retained and repaired where necessary. Mineral felt or other similar roofing materials should not be used. Where new porches and porticoes are proposed they should be appropriately designed with materials that are sympathetic to the age and style of the building. Where porches are not part of the original design of the building, their addition should be avoided.

### Boundary Walls, Fences, Gates and Gate Posts

Original brick and stone boundary walls, including their stone or terracotta copings, should be repaired or rebuilt to the original design, using reclaimed or matching materials. Boundary walls and gateposts should not be painted, this has a poor visual appearance and can trap moisture which will cause deterioration.

Wooden fences or railings should not be installed above existing walls, particularly along frontages. The street scene can be 'softened' and enhanced by the planting of boundary hedges, which has the added benefit of improving privacy.

Openings in boundary walls should be kept to a minimum especially on principal street elevations so

that the streetscape is not adversely affected. Original gates should be repaired or replaced to the original design. New gates should utilise authentic designs, avoiding the use of gold or multi-coloured paints.

### Services

Wherever possible original rainwater gutters and downpipes should be replaced in cast iron to the same patterns. If replacements cannot be obtained then cast aluminium of similar colour and profile could be considered. Care should be taken in the siting of burglar alarms, central heating flues, meter boxes and bin store locations so as not to detract from the appearance of principal elevations.

### Maintenance

It is strongly advised that owners keep their property in good repair and condition. Regular and thorough maintenance can help avoid major structural repairs that can develop through neglect.

### Website & email:

[www.sefton.gov.uk/planning](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning)

[planning.department@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:planning.department@sefton.gov.uk)

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