

Metropolitan Borough of Sefton  
Advisory Leaflet

# Gloucester Road Conservation Area



## Architectural and Historical Significance

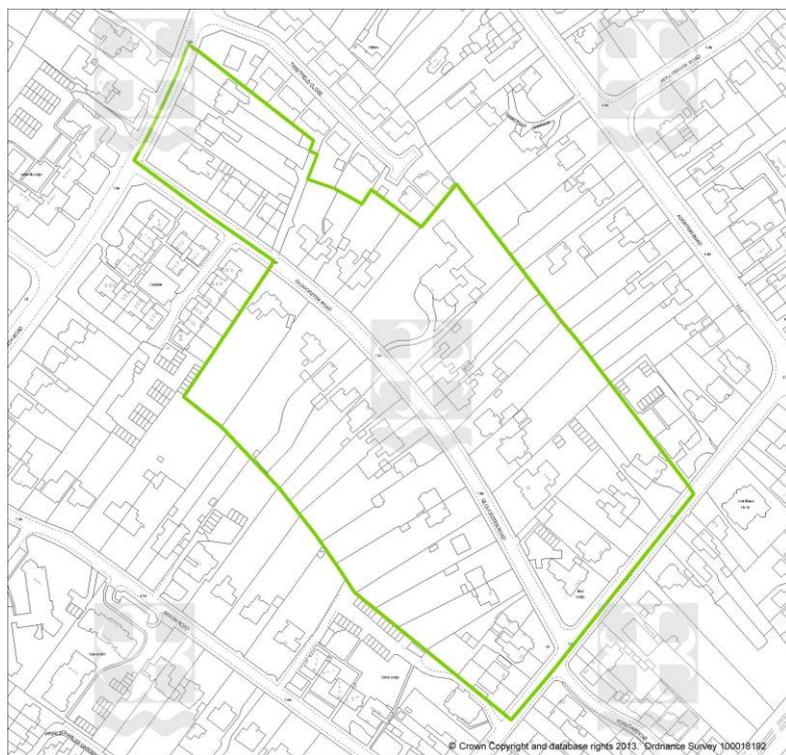
The history of Birkdale dates back to Viking times, and there is known to have been a settlement here around the time of the Domesday Book. The name Birkdale was first used around 1200 and is thought to be a corruption of the Old Norse words “birki” meaning birch-copse and “dalr” meaning dale. In 1600 Birkdale formed part of the large estates of Sir Cuthbert Halsall, however to support his extravagant lifestyle he was forced to sell his estates and in 1632 Birkdale came into the ownership of Robert Blundell of Ince Blundell. The shore of Birkdale was divided into “fishing stalls” which were leased to tenants by the Lord of the Manor.

Until the 19th century Birkdale was a settlement of scattered thatched cottages, built in the local vernacular style with external walls of ‘clamstaff and daub’. It was described in 1834 as “a cheerless, bleak, forlorn little region partly occupied by sandhills and meagre pasture grounds”

Birkdale did however provide various attractions for visitors from the neighbouring expanding Southport. People travelled by donkey to such places as the ‘Isle of Wight’, a high sand hill surmounted by a flagpole from where views of the Welsh hills and Liverpool could be enjoyed. Another attraction was the ‘Velvet Walk’ a ramble southward from Aughton Road, it passed through what is now Gloucester Road, where part of the walk survives as a passage between numbers 1 and 3 Gloucester Road, ending at Fiddler Harry Rimmer’s Farm in Bickerton Road where refreshments and music were provided.

At the beginning of the 19th century the two settlements of Southport and Birkdale were divided by a boundary waterway known as the Nile.

The Blundell family 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, thereby becoming Thomas Weld Blundell.



The area now designated as a conservation area is a residual part of planned Victorian residential development laid out ‘south of the Nile’ by Thomas Weld-Blundell after obtaining powers by Act of Parliament in August 1848. Previously the area had been known as Aindow’s Hills, largely comprising moss and waste lands, it was renamed Birkdale Park. This area was from its earliest beginnings an autonomous residential estate and 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 John Aughton. Most of the houses built by Aughton in Birkdale Park were of the classic Italianate villa 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. Characteristic features are prominent overhanging eaves forming pediments, Roman arches and shallow arched recesses. He set a style of domestic architecture which many of the houses built in Southport and Birkdale in the latter half of the 19th century share. Nos 2 and 4 Gloucester Road, grade II listed buildings, are attributed to John Aughton, they were built between 1850-54.

Later developments throughout the area were in a more romantic Arts and Crafts style composed of brick with steeper roofs and decorative timber elements. These are more evident in the southern part of Birkdale Park. However, number 23 Gloucester Road with its three prominent gables forms an attractive example of late Victorian/early Edwardian architecture of the Arts and Crafts period.

Mannex's Directory of Southport indicated that by 1865 Birkdale was an independent parish with the characteristics of a separate town. Its buildings were generally on a scale of "grandeur and magnificence superior to those of Southport" and many of them were occupied by merchants from Liverpool and Manchester, both now easily accessible by the new railways. The streets were asphalted and laid out with much taste and elegance. By 1868 eighteen streets had been developed.

### The Conservation Area

The Gloucester Road Conservation Area, Birkdale was designated by the Council in January 1990, under what is now Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Its boundaries were slightly altered following an appraisal of the area in 2008. The compact conservation area is considered to be one of the more intact residual elements of the early development of the mid-Victorian residential area of 'Birkdale Park'. The character of the area is derived from its development as a speculative, planned high quality residential area. Consequently the area is characterised by large properties set in spacious grounds laid out formally along consistent building lines while exhibiting a variety of elevational treatments. The relationship between built form and landscape features is also an important contributor to the appearance of the area which contains significant numbers of mature trees and hedgerows enclosed by attractive boundary walls.

It is considered important that the scale, form, layout and quality of the residential development is retained as well as the prevailing character of the street scene. The character and appearance of much of

the wider 'Birkdale Park' area has gradually been eroded as witnessed by the loss of original buildings, building features (such as chimney stacks and windows) boundary walls and trees. While the quality of redevelopment has not generally reflected the original character of the park development, designation of this 'remnant' as a conservation area lays greater stress on the retention of existing buildings, the preservation of trees and the maintenance of existing streetscape features. In addition it enables the Local Authority to insist upon a high quality of layout and design in any new development.

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 a loss of character and any harm is balanced against wider public benefits.



### 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 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.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) In determining applications for the development of land and alterations or extensions to buildings within the Gloucester Road Conservation Area the Council will pay special regard to:-

- The retention, replacement and restoration of historic details and features of the buildings and their gardens including layout, boundary walls, hedges 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, 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 most 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

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 carefully chosen materials that match/complement the building. 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 based 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 treatment can result in damage.

Brick and terracotta features such as keystones, corbels, finials and leaf designs should be retained. Cladding of brickwork in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles will not be 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 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings and any repair should be to a similar finish.

#### Roofs

Original roofing materials and existing rooflines and views should be retained. Any renewals or repairs should use reclaimed or new materials to match those on the existing roof. 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 combine to 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. Advice should be sought regarding the design of replacement doors. 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.

Wooden fences or railings should be not be installed above existing walls. The street scene can be 'softened' and enhanced by the planting of boundary hedges, which has the added benefit of improving privacy. Existing gates should be repaired or replaced to the original design.

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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