



**Donald Insall Associates**  
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

## **Birkenhead Park Conservation Area**

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

For Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council





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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 with their districts which are considered “special”. The following 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.

Wirral Council has declared 26 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 supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Historic England ‘Advice Note 1’. The principles within

the NPPF, the NPPG and ‘Advice Note 1’ are further supported by Wirral Council’s Heritage policies contained within its Local 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, which may be cumulatively detrimental, can be more closely controlled.

Historic England have also produced a suite of documents that expand on the NPPF and provide further advice on all different aspects of the historic environment, particularly “Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas”, “Conservation Area Appraisals”, “Streets for All” and “Valuing Places”. Local Authorities have a duty to review, from time to time, their areas 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 by increasing its control over developments, in addition to normal permitted developments. It does this in the following ways:

- Buildings and structures may not be demolished without Planning Permission.
- Trees of a minimum 75mm diameter trunk at 1.5 metres above ground 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 deciding 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. This should then underpin local policies for the area’s 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 area’s overall character. Whilst this appraisal aims to identify the



essential elements which give this Conservation 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.

Conservation Area designation may result in implications for property owners through increased statutory controls which carefully manage development. However, designation can also enhance economic and social wellbeing and provide a sense of continuity. The most effective conservation work can act as a catalyst for further regeneration and improvements to the public realm. Conservation Area Appraisals allow the public to offer comment on the observations and recommendations made within and the justification of designation as a whole.

## Executive Summary

Defined by the green open space that forms the core of the conservation area, Birkenhead Park was one of the first municipal parks in the world, with its opening in 1847 contributing to the development of the wider Victorian Parks movement. The park was first conceived in the 1840s as a means of providing green space to the growing urban suburb of Birkenhead and was designed by the prominent landscape and garden-designer Joseph Paxton. The wider conservation area brings together the park with a rich Victorian townscape, with the spacious mature plots connecting visually with the park landscape and featuring in panoramic views from within it.

During some periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the park and its surroundings were not always fully appreciated for their international significance, however since the conservation area's designation in 1977 it has been the subject of renewed interest and enthusiasm. As the park and the conservation area more widely look to the future, it is important to ensure that its management and future proposals for change are underpinned by an understanding of its significance.

The objective of this document is to identify those elements of the conservation area that contribute to its significance, and which still reflect the original design principles, and to highlight the opportunities for this special character to be reinforced and reinstated. It will provide the guidance necessary to ensure the conservation of its special attributes in the long-term and promote heritage-led development.

To achieve this the document comprises two elements:

- **The Appraisal**, which provides an understanding of the significance of the conservation area, its character and appearance, and the threats and opportunities that it faces;
- **The Management Plan**, which provides principles and recommendations; introduces basic design guidance that seeks to manage change in a sensitive manner and raise the quality of the urban environment.

Associated with this document is a Gazetteer that provides further detail on individual buildings, including a description of key features areas of loss or alteration, and the contribution of the building to the significance of the conservation area. This document is fundamental to the conservation area's management and must be consulted along with this Appraisal and Management Plan.



# 1 Introduction

2 Significance

3 Historic Development

4 Character and Townscape Assessment

5 Setting, Gateways and Views

6 Opportunities for Enhancement

7 Management Plan



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Location

The **Birkenhead Park Conservation Area** is situated in the town of Birkenhead on the east side of the Wirral peninsular. Located around 1 mile to the west of the town centre and port, the conservation area abuts the historic settlements of both Oxton and Claughton, rural villages that were substantially expanded and developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve as commuter suburbs to both Birkenhead and Liverpool. North Birkenhead is located immediately to the north of the conservation area, but contrasts with the rest of the area's surroundings, primarily composed of 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development **[Plate 1.1]**.

The landscaped parkland that comprises Birkenhead Park itself forms the core of the conservation area, with the associated residential development framing its boundary and limiting views into and out of the parkland. The park occupies 56 hectares (44 of the originally intended park and 12 of the unsold plots converted into parkland) and is bound by Park Road North, East, South and West, with Ashville Road bisecting the parkland to form the Upper Park (northwest) and the larger Lower Park (southeast). The Boothby ground, which was originally intended to be sold off for residential development, is now home to tennis courts and leisure provision, dominating the north side of Cavendish Road. It is wholly owned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) and managed by their Parks and Countryside Service **[Plate 1.2]**.

Forming a significant green space within an otherwise urban setting, the park is a key local amenity serving the community of Birkenhead, whilst the international significance of the area ensures a steady stream of visitors from across the Wirral, northwest and further afield.



1.1 Modern housing north of CA



1.2 Boothby Ground boundary with housing on Park Road North visible



### 1.1.2 Topography and Geology

The Birkenhead Park Conservation Area's topography varies, but generally does so subtly, with a gentle sloping from the higher topography land to the southwest down towards the docks in the north-east. The topography of the park itself is highly variable, utilising artificial banks, mounds, valleys and lakes to create visual interest. This is key to Paxton's original design for the park, and was artificially created during the 1840s, replacing a historically much flatter area of pasture. The highest point of the conservation area stands at 25m above sea level, where Park Road West meets Edgerton Road; the lowest point of the conservation area is near the Grand Entrance and stands at only 5-10 metres above sea level **[Plates 1.3 and 1.4].**

The area covering the historical township of Birkenhead is thought to be built on bunter pebble beds overlain with boulder clay, although keuper sandstone is the predominant geologically within the township of Claughton, which is to the south-west of the conservation area.



**1.3** *Topographic variation within park from Upper Meadow hillock*



**1.4** *Sloping towards Park Road South from north of the CA boundary*

### 1.1.3 Use and Condition

Two key uses dominate the conservation area, though a variety of others can be found within it. The park, which covers most of the land within the area (around 2/3<sup>rd</sup>), forms a key leisure space; additional sports grounds and facilities include the rugby club, bowls club and scout hut. However, most of the buildings within the area are residential. A mixture between large single-family dwellings, flats and provision for the elderly, the housing is concentrated along the park's perimeter. A limited number of buildings within the park itself support the provision of leisure within the space, but the lodge buildings are privately owned; most of these remain in their intended residential use, but the Italian Lodge is now office space.

Other uses within the area include public services, most significantly two secondary schools, and other services such as a medical practice and dentist's practice. 2 Park Road South is also in commercial use, as an office space.

The condition of the buildings within the park and the landscape itself is broadly good. However, the residential townscape that surrounds it is more variable, with many buildings having been subject to a lack of regular repair and maintenance. The condition of their gardens and boundary treatments is of particular concern and is echoed in the mixed condition of the public realm outside of the park **[Plates 1.5-1.7]**.



**1.5** Residential villa front garden in poor condition



**1.6** 'Roman Bathhouse' in state of good repair



**1.7** Cloughton Road Medical practice is one of a several services within the CA



### 1.1.4 Conservation Area Context

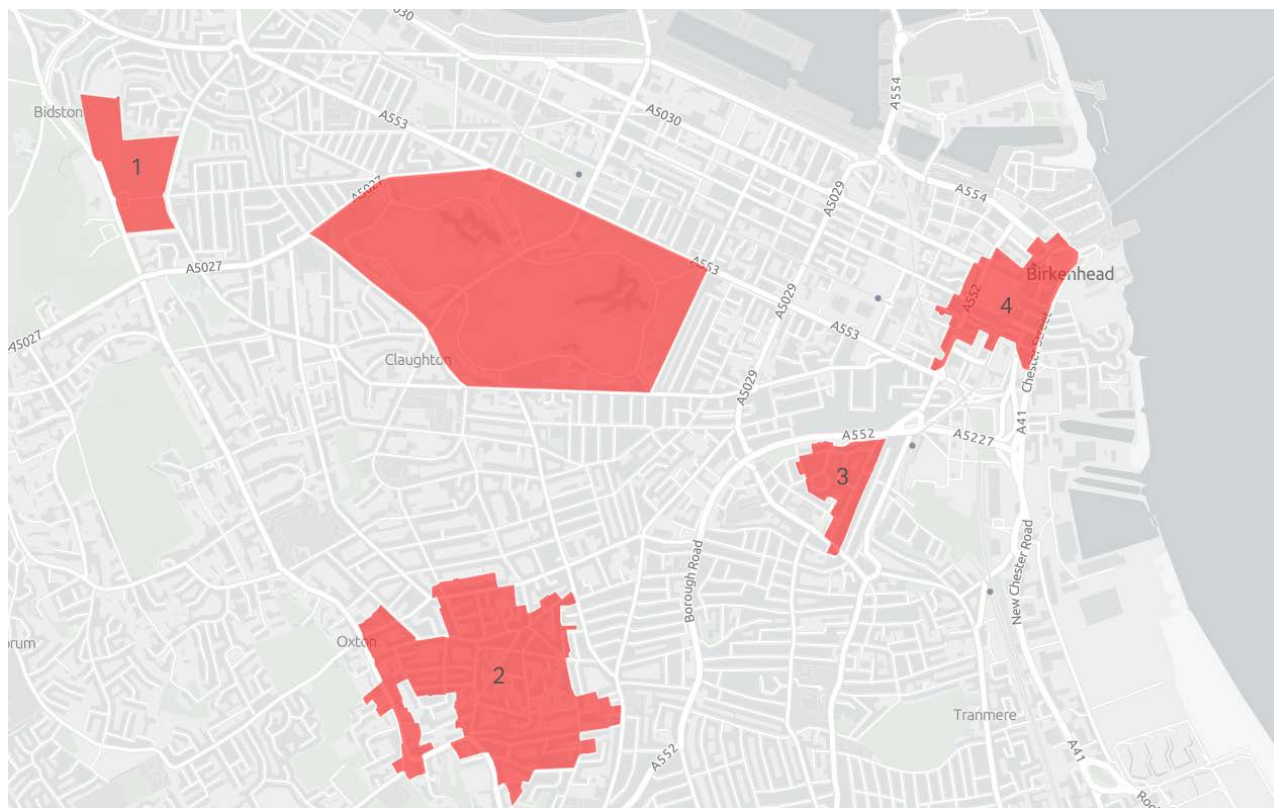
Four conservation areas are located within proximity to the park, with the majority relating to 19<sup>th</sup> century development of Birkenhead, from a relatively rural area punctuated by dispersed villages into a sprawling planned town of multiple phases; Birkenhead Park represents one of the early flurry of conservation area designations in the Wirral, reflecting a movement in the local area to protect spaces that retained the early character of the town.

The following conservation areas are located in the wider surroundings of Birkenhead Park:

- Flaybrick Hill Conservation Area (designated 1990)
- Oxton Village Conservation Area (designated 1979)
- Clifton Park Conservation Area (designated 2004)
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area (designated 1977)

Birkenhead Park Conservation Area was designated on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1977, under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, with the Friends of Birkenhead Park having been founded the previous year. The Hamilton Square Conservation Area was designated in the following month.

#### [Plate 1.8]



1.8 Conservation Areas surrounding Birkenhead Park

#### Key

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1: Flaybrick Cemetery conservation area | 2: Oxton Village conservation area   |
| 3: Clifton Park conservation area       | 4: Hamilton Square conservation area |

### 1.1.5 Study Area Boundary

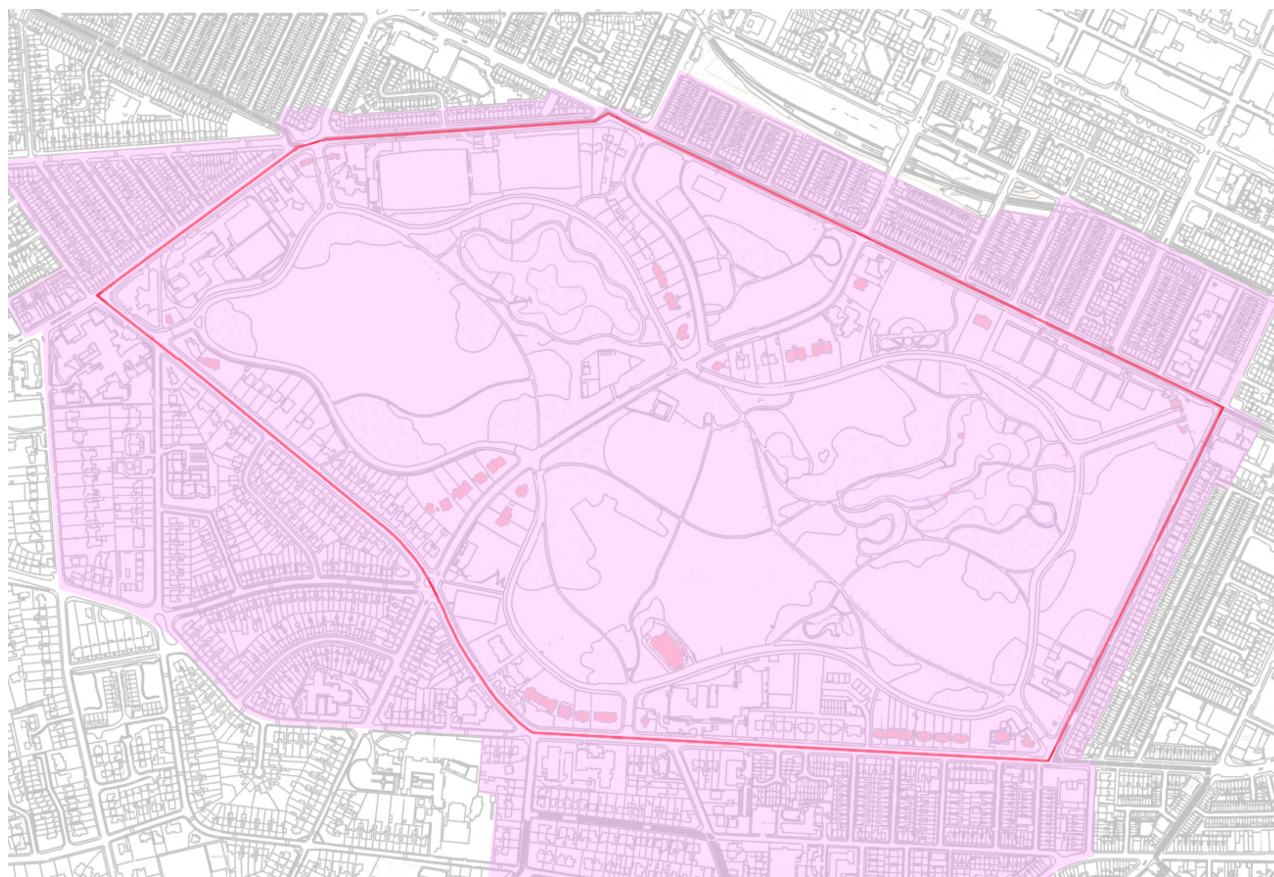
The Birkenhead Park Conservation Area is approximately 0.9 miles in length and 0.5 miles in width. The boundary almost exactly follows the original extent of the park scheme, running along the inner edge of Park Road North, East, South and West around its perimeter. As part of the single phase planned scheme (though the housing itself was developed in stages over the following 100 years) associated with the park, the area's original boundaries have been retained, though the possibility of adding in the large villas along Forest Road (located off Park Road West) was considered.

[Plate 1.9]

## 1.2 Policy Context

Designated a conservation area in 1977, the conservation area is reasonably well protected by national heritage designations. The park itself is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden, whilst all of the lodge buildings and majority of the historic structures within the park are listed at Grade II (the exception being the Grand Entrance, listed at Grade II\*). Outside of the park itself the earliest buildings are listed at Grade II. In total 42 buildings are listed within the conservation area.

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', recognised for their distinctive townscape including their buildings, streets, and public realm. They are



1.9 Study Area Boundary

#### Key

- Birkenhead Park Conservation Area Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- Listed buildings



designated heritage assets and any proposals for change or development must assess the effect that development might have on the '*character and appearance*' of the area. The **Birkenhead Park Conservation Area** was first designated in 1977, a Conservation Area and Appraisal and Management Plan was prepared by Donald Insall Associates in 2007.

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review the character and boundaries of its conservation areas periodically. In this context, the present document has been commissioned by WMBC, to provide an updated appraisal of the area and a robust plan for its constructive longer-term management. This document will also form part of the evidence base for the park's bid for inscription on the World Heritage Site list.

Paragraph 204 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that '*when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest*'. The Appraisal has carefully considered potential extensions to the boundary of the conservation area since its designation. It also highlights buildings and spaces that are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area and those which detract.

This conservation area appraisal and management plan supplements the Wirral Local Plan (adopted 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025), which forms the statutory development plan. One of the key priorities for Suburban Birkenhead noted within the plan includes the desire to 'Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens' including Birkenhead Park. As such it is specifically protected by Policy WP 3.1, which provides individual protections for the landscape and townscape's unique characteristics. In addition, policies WD 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 more broadly support the conservation of heritage assets, in line with national policy. The management plan specifically aims to address these policies, supporting their delivery.

### 1.3 Aims

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides WMBC with up-to-date evidence for the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area, and will:

- Help people understand the significance of the conservation area;
- Suggest opportunities to enhance the area's character and appearance;
- Stimulate local interest in the protection and considered development of the area for present and future generations, as well as the preservation of the park's landscape and setting;
- Help address the challenges facing both the park and associated residential properties;

- Encourage the conservation, repair, reuse and management of the area's historic features;
- Aid residents and developers in their planning of both small alterations and larger scale developments;
- Provide officers with area specific guidance to help in their appraisal and determination of planning applications;
- Promote high-quality design in development proposals;
- Provide WMBC with an up to date, evidence-based Appraisal and Management Plan which can inform further work to regenerate the area.

### 1.4 Interactive Format

This document has been designed to serve as a practical guide for the present and future care of the conservation area. The digital version features interactive navigable elements that enhance its range and ease of uses. These include:

- A contents page with headings that directly link to the different sections within the Appraisal and Management Plan;

## 2 Significance

1 Introduction

3 Historic Development

4 Character and Townscape Assessment

5 Setting, Gateways and Views

6 Opportunities for Enhancement

7 Management Plan



## 2 Significance

### 2.1 Special Interest, Character, and Appearance

The Birkenhead Park Conservation Area derives its principal interest from its status as Britain's (and possibly the world's) first municipally funded public park, built as part of an extensive programme of improvement works to support Birkenhead's growing urban population in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A pioneer of the municipal park model that came to define Victorian urban and town planning, it helped to establish the great value of access to green space within otherwise urban areas. Forming the core of the conservation area, the park is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden, with many of the built structures within it and villas on its boundary listed at Grade II.

Its further special interest is manifested in its aesthetic qualities and communal values.

#### 2.1.1 Exposition of Victorian Ideals and Innovation of Purpose

Egalitarian and philanthropic in its desire to improve the lives and health of the working classes whilst educating them in traditionally middle-class subjects like architecture, the park serves as an enduring physical expression of radical Victorian ideas on self-improvement, public health, leisure and social class. This is eloquently expressed through the visual integration of the landscape and variety of structures and features within the park itself and the residential villas that encircle it. Though the park has experienced numerous periods of change, its heyday contrasted with a later 20<sup>th</sup> century time of neglect, its Victorian

identity remains clearly legible in the distinctive revivalist architectural styles and landscaping comprising passive and active leisure spaces.

#### 2.1.2 Radical Landscape Design Genius and Influence Abroad

The design of the park represented the first realisation of Joseph Paxton's landscaping ideas on a large-scale, which had already been fleshed out in earlier designs for a 'National Garden' but had never been constructed before. Subsequently responsible for design the 1851 Great Exhibition pavilion and park at Crystal Palace, Paxton went on to become one of the Victorian period's most prominent landscape designers. Described as 'perfection' by Frederick Olmsted, the park's rich and complex web of buildings, planting, lakes and earthworks echo the design principles of the picturesque, carefully considering views whilst balancing the constraints of designing a public space to be accessed by both pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages for a variety of purposes. Influencing other parks of major international significance including New York's Central Park, it served as a vehicle for the export of the English Landscape School's ideas both within Britain and abroad.

Paxton created an innovative design template for future public parks to build on, working with other prominent designers including Lewis Hornblower, John Robertson, Edward Kemp and Walter Scott, to fulfil his design ambition. These innovations most notably included a carefully modelled circulation system for different traffic types, winding roads through the parkland and architectural variety in the

built structures. A mixture of open landscape for sport and animal grazing was contrasted with the enclosed pedestrianised spaces around lakes, which carefully wind and undulate around the water, central islands and over bridges to create ever-changing views through the space. Varied densities of planting, earthworks and bridges enhance the sense of enclosure created within the park.

#### 2.1.3 Establishment of New Town Planning

The original residential townscape, located within generous mature plots and echoing the boundary treatments of the park, are as architecturally varied as the buildings within it. Comprising tall chimneys, polychromatic brickwork, elaborate metalwork, doors, porches, windows and other details, many are listed for their architectural merit. Built as middle-class housing, with the cost of their plots offsetting the park's construction costs, they create a rich townscape of high-quality buildings which are visible from the park.

In some cases, the value of the townscape has been eroded by piecemeal boundary and landscape changes, a loss of architectural detail, surface car parking, poor maintenance and demolition. This is also true of the park, which suffered from neglect during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century before a major restoration scheme in the 2000s.



### 2.1.4 Enduring Public Value

Local people, as well as national and international tourists, appreciate the park as a space for leisure, exercise and a sense of connection to nature and the history of Birkenhead's development; there is a distinct sense of pride in living close to a space of such architectural, historic and natural value. There is a desire amongst those living within and around the conservation area to better celebrate the park, improve understanding of its international significance amongst visitors and ensure that it remains a safe and accessible space for residents and tourists alike.

## 2.2 Setting

Setting contributes significantly to the conservation area by contextualising the historic need for a public green space, highlighting the area's historic development around the park and reinforcing how economic drivers impacted its growth and development.

These elements are manifested in:

- **The development pattern:** specifically, the visual relationship between the park, the houses constructed on land originally purchased as part of the park's construction and the additional, smaller scale surrounding housing that was built up in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but which lies outside of the conservation area. This includes housing that directly overlooks the park and is visible from within its boundaries, especially on Park Road East and Park Road North. The stylistic and material variety reinforces the historic failure of the park to sell the plots on this road that were originally intended to be purchased, whilst underlining the higher architectural quality and plot size of those that were constructed as part of the purchased plots.
- **The urban landscape backdrop:** Limited views of key historic dockside and landmark buildings in Liverpool from higher ground locations within the park underline the area's proximity to one of Britain's largest industrial centres, whose sprawling and poor housing conditions prompted the development of both the wider area of Birkenhead and Birkenhead Park itself (see Plate 4.10.16 for image).



### 3 Historic Development: A Timeline



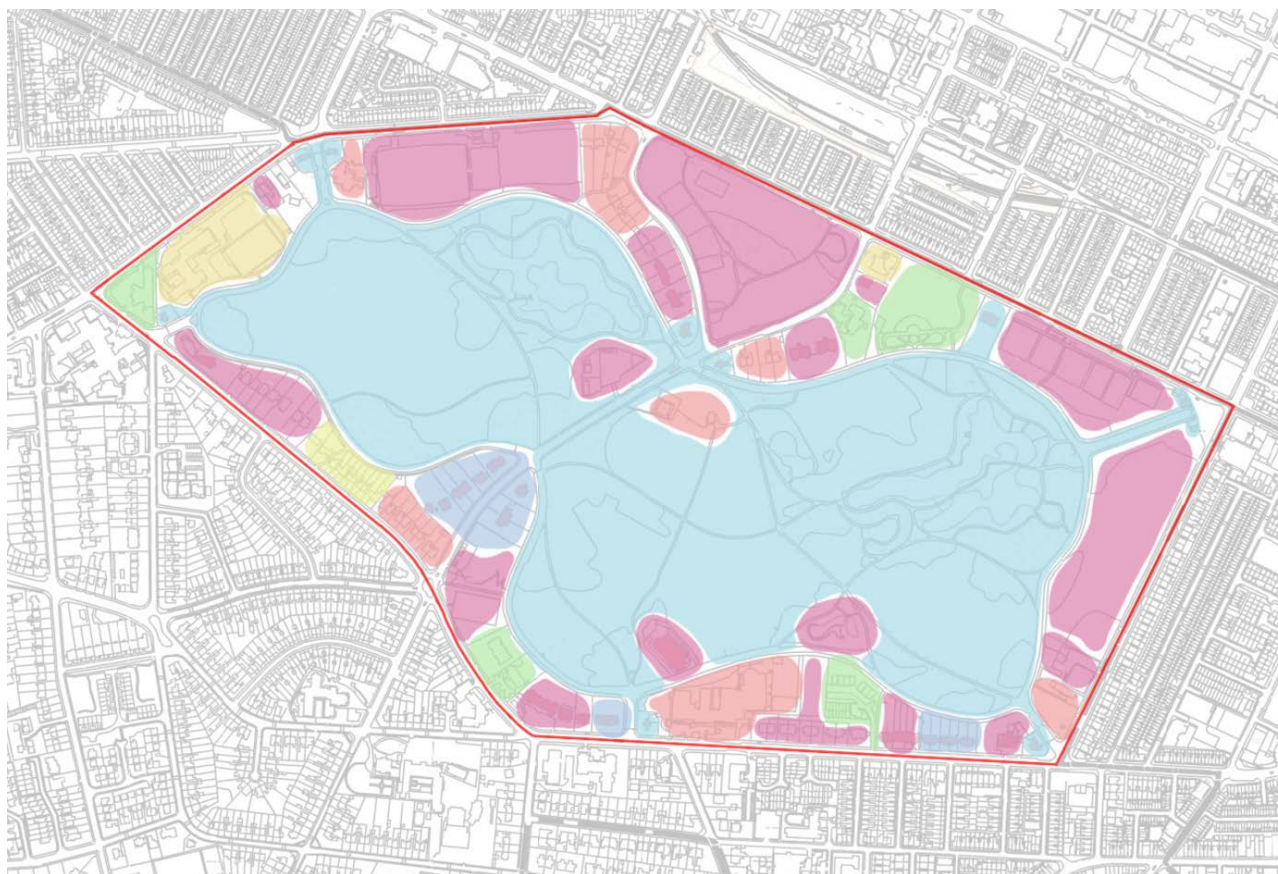
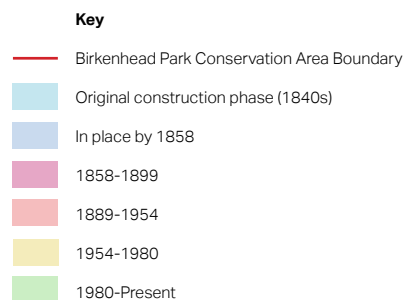
### 3 Historic Development: A Timeline

#### Historic Summary

Birkenhead Park was laid out in the picturesque manner in the 1840s, in response to, and anticipation of, a rapidly growing urban population during the Industrial Revolution. The Park formed a key component in a much wider, and comprehensive, town planning scheme for the new town of Birkenhead. Its formation and design were intended to serve as an antidote to the poor living conditions commonly experienced in industrial cities at the time. It was wholly and freely accessible to all people regardless of their position in society.

As a political and social innovation of the first order, it created a new funding model for urban parks and demonstrated that a municipal authority could provide green infrastructure to serve all classes of its citizens.

#### [Plate 3.1]



3.1 Birkenhead Park Conservation Area Phasing Map



## Development of the Park 1840s

Before the early-1840s almost all landscapes of any size had been laid out for the benefit of a specific estate or a private park, which were to be viewed from a single point, usually the owner's grand house. Access was largely restricted to the monarchy, the aristocracy and the owners of private estates. Where 'public walks' had been created, whether in London, Liverpool or other urban centres in Continental Europe, they were to be used exclusively as promenades. Within this context, the creation of Birkenhead Park represented the democratization of the aristocratic landscape and a major change in how parks were conceptualized in relation to landscape design, town-planning and public access.

At the time of the first British census, Birkenhead only had a population of 110, but in 1824 the industrialist William Laird instructed James Gillespie Graham to design Hamilton Square as the focal point of a gridiron framework for the town. The leading merchants and industrialists in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were intent on creating a 'new town' that was well-planned with housing built in line with proper sanitary standards. The decision in 1842 to seek Parliamentary approval for the creation of a publicly funded park (see below) was an integral element in the plan.

The Park was first advocated in 1841 by Isaac Holmes, a member of the Birkenhead Improvement Commission. A Bill was promoted in 1842 to enable the commissioners to buy land to form a park, and for subsequent conveyances to individuals who purchased plots around the park for the development

of villas. The Commissioners purchased 91 hectares of land, of which 51 hectares was to be retained for public use. Some was low-lying and prone to flooding, and Paxton, who no doubt saw an opportunity to enhance his reputation, wrote to his wife in 1843: 'It is not a very good situation for a park as the land is generally poor, but of course will rebound more to my credit and honour to make something handsome and good out of bad material' **[Plate 3.2]**.

A key figure in the park's inception was Sir William Jackson, Chairman of the Improvement Committee. He brought in Joseph Paxton as designer of the park and persuaded him to overcome his initial scepticism. Subsequently Paxton engaged Edward Kemp as construction supervisor, and following completion, Kemp became the park's long-term Superintendent **[Plate 3.3]**.

Paxton's involvement with the project ran from 1842 to 1846. He already had significant experience of park design and construction, applying the skills he had developed at Chatsworth to an urban context. In 1842 he had been commissioned by Richard Vaughan Yates to design Princes Park on land in Liverpool bought from Lord Sefton in 1843. This was Paxton's first independent commission, covering 90 acres with residential development in and around it, and the precursor to the much larger Birkenhead project.

With Birkenhead, the imperative was quite different, using private commerce as the means to provide a communal park, free for all citizens. Paxton was aware that he was designing a park for a different type of client who demanded a new kind of use. As a result,

different environments, whether wide-open spaces or more intimate areas of enclosure, were given equal emphasis and laid out with a complex web of visual inter-relationships **[Plate 3.4]**.

Land was first offered for sale in June 1845, then again in September 1846, the intention being to erect both long terraces and individual villas. The plan was redrawn in 1850 with the terraces divided into smaller units and an increase in the number of individual plots.

In laying out the park in this fashion there was an assumption from Paxton that the surrounding housing and also their associated gardens were of such quality that they would be an asset rather than a detraction to the park's overall character.

At its opening in 1847, the park was 'planted with every variety of shrubs and flowers', and the display mounds around the lakes were shaped and positioned to best exhibit new plants that were still being found and cultivated by plant collectors and their sponsors **[Plate 3.6]**.



**3.2** Joseph Paxton, c.19<sup>th</sup> century (Wirral Globe)



**3.3** Sir William Jackson, c.1869 (Art UK)



**3.4** Paxton's plan of Birkenhead Park, c.1840s (Birkenhead Park).



**3.6** Opening Day of Birkenhead Park, c.1847 (Birkenhead Park)



## 1850-60

Edward Kemp, Superintendent of Birkenhead Park from 1843-91, was not the principal designer, but had worked under Paxton at Chatsworth. In the mid-1850s, he supervised the construction of the Figure of Eight Lake and authorised the cutting down of some trees on unsold land adjacent to Park Road East for use by the Wirral Archers (founded in 1858).

Even before its official opening in 1847, Birkenhead Park Cricket Club had applied to use a smooth portion of land to use as a cricket ground and the park quickly became a focal point for local sports. Most of the sports which were established in the park, including cricket (1846), curling (1853), archery (1858) and rugby football (1861), catered for the middle class and necessitated membership of an established club **[Plate 3.7]**.



**3.7** Birkenhead Park Cricket Club Pavillion, c.1905 (Birkenhead Park)

## 1880

From the 1880s onward there was an increasing demand for recreational activities that resulted in the development of new facilities in the park, open to the public for a charge. These also responded to a growing concern for the physical condition of the working class, particularly after the Boer War. In 1882 the Public Bowling Green and Quoiting Ground (or Recreation Ground) was opened on unbuilt land in Park Road North and in 1914 four lawn tennis courts in the Boothby Ground were created.

## 1900-1910

In 1903 Boothby Ground, which on Paxton's original plans was an area of three terrace blocks set around a central wooded area, was included in the park. It remains today, just as in 1903, separated visually and physically from both the Upper and Lower Parks by the housing and road corridors of Ashville Road and Cavendish Road. Having originally been

designed to form part of the townscape, the area's later addition accounts for its design appearing somewhat unresolved.

## 1914-1917

Most public parks were affected directly by the First World War. Superintendents had to cope with a range of problems, including the need for strictest economy, the impact of the loss of skilled members of the park's workforce and the use of land for allotments **[Plate 3.8]**.



**3.8** Birkenhead Park under war conditions, c.1914-1917 (Friends of Birkenhead Park)

## Interwar Years

There were some notable developments in the Park between 1918 and the outbreak of the Second World War. 1921 witnessed the opening of the Palm House with its statues and exotic plants in the Upper Park, donated by Mrs Laird, the wife of the local ship builder. In June 1925 golf putting greens were created adjacent to the bowling grounds and a new Bowlers' Pavilion was opened in August 1926 **[Plate 3.9]**.

In 1928 a new path was laid out in the Lower Park between the Cricket Pavilion and the Refreshment Rooms, and in 1932 the small third lake in the Lower Park (designed by Edward Kemp), which had suffered from water leakage, was transformed into a rockery garden. These years were marked by cyclical instability and economic depression, which had a significant impact on the park. By 1922-23 net expenditure on the park had fallen by almost one-third in comparison with 1920-21. But the Great Depression (1929-34), which had such a devastating impact on local industries and working-class employment, resulted in a savage reduction in funding by almost 50 percent. However, unemployment work was introduced in the 1920s including the reinstatement of the Boothby Ground after its use for allotments during the First World War, improvements to the existing shrubberies and resurfacing of the park drives **[Plate 3.10]**.



**3.9** *Palm-House, c.1921 (Birkenhead Park)*



**3.10** *The Rockery, early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Historic England Image Archive)*

## Second World War

The 1939-1945 conflict had a significant impact on the park. Preparations prior to the outbreak of hostilities and emergency measures immediately following the declaration of war included digging trenches, introduction of a searchlight position on Balaclava field, and an extensive series of air-raid shelters was constructed in the Lower Park. In 1940 much of the Upper Park was converted into allotments to boost the food supply. By December 1940 Merseyside had endured 300 air raids and during the 'Blitz' in May 1941 both the Bandstand and the Palm House suffered substantial damage. The war-time focus on using municipal parks to boost food production was accompanied by a decline in general maintenance and a rise in crime, as their security was undermined by a reduction in staffing levels and the removal of iron railings as part of the war effort **[Plates 3.11 and 3.12]**.



**3.11** *Air Raid Trenches in the Park, c.1938 (Birkenhead Park)*





**3.12** Men digging trenches, c.1938 (*Liverpool Echo*)

### The Post-War Years

The immediate post-war years were difficult. It took a considerable time to negotiate with the War Damage Commission over the reinstatement of damaged park structures and landscape and to remove the wartime infrastructure. It was not until October 1950 that the Parks Superintendent was requested to draw up a Birkenhead Park Improvement Scheme to address the damage. The scheme was envisaged as an important element in the Borough's contribution to the Festival of Britain and included resurfacing of all paths, cleaning of the lakes and repair of the banks, and the clearing and seeding of the area that had been used for wartime allotments. Yet, as a consequence of post-war austerity, it was recognised that the financial allocation would be insufficient to re-establish its international standing **[Plate 3.12]**.



**3.13** Birkenhead Park, c.1950 (*Britain from Above*)

### The Rejection of the Victorian Legacy and the Onset of Decline

The reorganisation of local government in 1974 and the introduction by central government of compulsory competitive tendering had significant consequences for the management of public parks across the country. These coincided with a period when Victorian architecture was undervalued. In 1967 plans were put forward to replace all the Victorian and Edwardian housing surrounding the park by blocks of multi-storey flats, and by the 1970s there was mounting political pressure to utilise the park for sports activities. These schemes, which were fortunately not adopted, included a plan for a swimming pool in the park, and a proposal to construct a Super Soccer complex in the Boothby Ground.

## ○ The Crisis of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

This was a difficult time for public parks in general and Birkenhead Park was affected by the impact of reduced council funding, increasing neglect and vandalism. The glasshouses were demolished in 1971 and Dutch elm disease resulted in the removal of all the elm trees in the park.

A decision in 1973 to isolate the Swiss Bridge by building a 36-foot wide trench and removing the iron bridge, primarily as a measure to reduce vandalism, was itself an unprecedented act of municipal vandalism. In response to these issues, the Friends of Birkenhead Park was formed in 1976. With positive encouragement from the Friends, a lake improvement scheme was undertaken in the same year and the park was designated a conservation area in 1977. But by 1987 the Boat House had fallen into very poor condition, reflective of the threats facing the park more widely. Indeed, by the start of the 1990s urban parks were increasingly seen as a liability rather than an asset and continued funding cuts for local authority parks exacerbated the situation **[Plate 3.14]**.

From the 1970s through to the early 1990s, Birkenhead Park fell into a spiral of decline caused by under-funding and neglect. Anti-social behaviour, vandalism and crime gave it a reputation as an unsafe place, and deterred people from visiting the park.

# Friends of Birkenhead Park



**3.14** Friends of Birkenhead Park logo (Friends of Birkenhead Park)



## More Recent Years

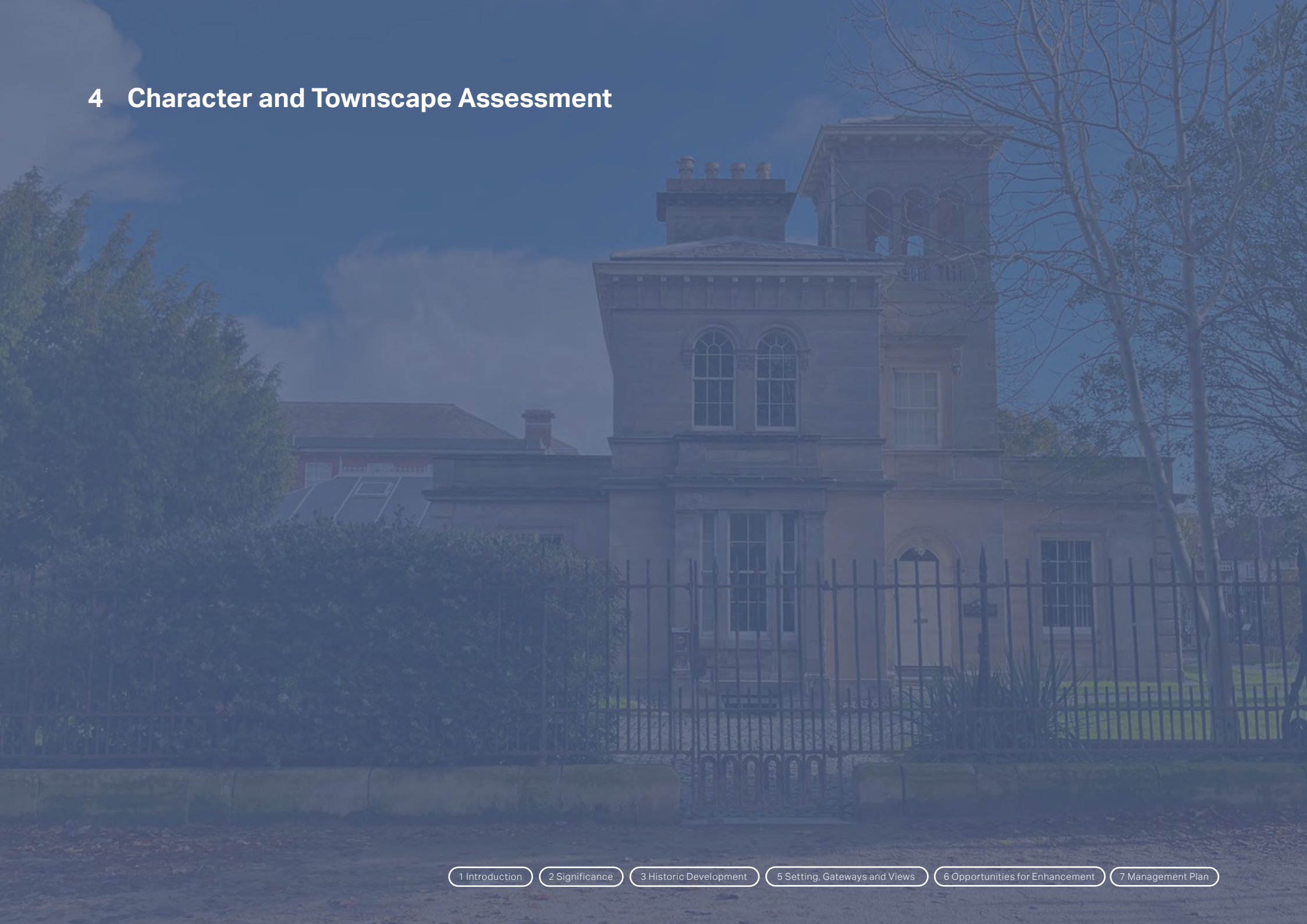
1997 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Birkenhead Park, which was celebrated by a series of successful events. At the same time plans were developed for a project that would comprehensively restore the park. In 2002 a grant of £11.3m was awarded by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), European Regional Development Fund, the Merseyside Objective One Programme, English Heritage and WMBC to undertake a major restoration. This included repairs to the Grand Entrance, restoration of the Boat House and the Swiss Bridge, and refurbishment and improvement of the original drainage system. Park railings, gates and stone pillars were restored and replaced; improvements were carried out to various sports facilities; new benches modelled on the original design were installed; all the lakes were de-silted and the Figure-of-Eight Lake was reshaped in accordance with Kemp's design. In addition, a separate grant of almost £500,000 was made by HLF, with additional support from the University of Liverpool and WMBC, to the Friends of Birkenhead Park to implement a five-year community involvement and heritage education project. In 2006 a new Visitor Centre, with a design that reflected Paxton's use of glass and an earlier planned crescent on the site, was opened by the Duke of Gloucester **[Plate 3.15]**.

In 1984, a national register of historic parks and gardens was established. Birkenhead Park was first registered on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1986 and it remained the only Grade I listed park until recently.



**3.15** Birkenhead Park, Visitor Centre, c.2024 (Friends of Birkenhead Park)

## 4 Character and Townscape Assessment





## 4 Character and Townscape Assessment

### 4.1 Summary

The Birkenhead Park Conservation Area centres on the Grade I listed park and the structures within it, with the surrounding residential streets enclosing the parkland. Running on a north-west to south-east axis, the conservation area is irregular in shape and bisected by Ashville Road running from north to south. The park itself is divided into the Upper Park and Lower Park, with the Boothby Ground separated from the main park by Cavendish Road. Both the Upper Park and Lower Park are accessible via several substantial gated entrances, with lodges flanking one or both sides. A curving carriage drive runs along the perimeter of the park, with smaller pedestrian paths winding through the landscape.

Each side of the park comprises one or more open meadow-like green spaces, which are juxtaposed against the more densely planted areas that surround

the lakes, with carefully designed clusters of mature trees feathering into one another to create a rich sylvian treescape. No active leisure facilities exist within the Upper Park, but the Lower Park houses two cricket grounds and a variety of exercise equipment. The Boothby Ground and other green spaces that line the north and east of the park, having originally been designed to be filled with housing but which were incorporated within the park when plots failed to sell, now primarily house active leisure facilities. These include Birkenhead Rugby Club, a basketball court, tennis court, bowling green and football pitches.

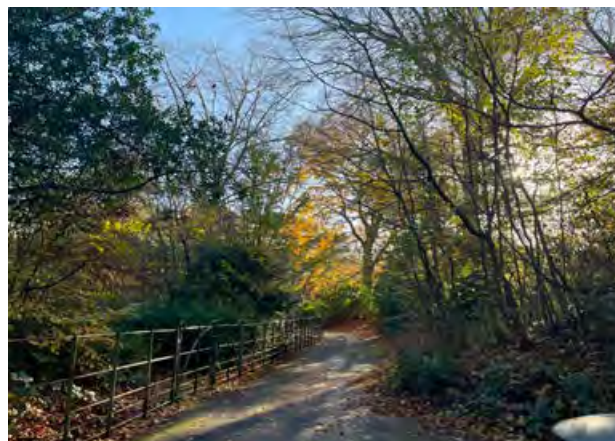
Within the park, lodges, boathouse and bridges pepper the landscape, exhibiting a high level of architectural variety, with the built form designed to express the vision of the green space as a 'Grand Tour' for the working and middling classes. The diversity in material, style, plan form and ornament visible within the park is reflected in the large villas that line its edge.

Sit within substantial plots and well set back from the road, their variation creates a vibrant and rich Victorian townscape united by a shared sense of scale and broadly revivalist and Italianate designs which in turn hints at and encloses the landscape to their rear.

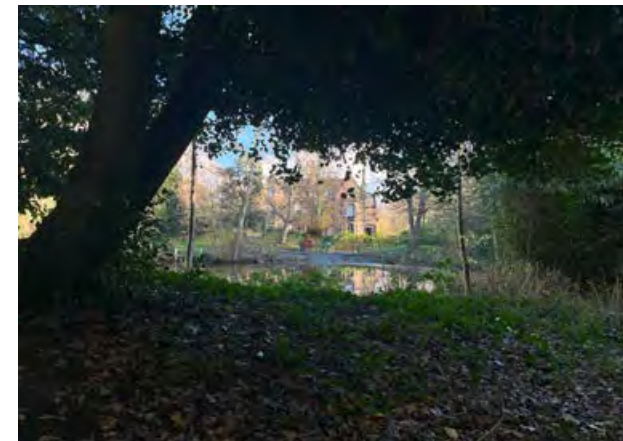
The shared original boundary treatment and entrance piers to both the park and the villas - though now eroded in many areas - unify the residential townscape and landscape, highlighting their shared design intent and historic development. This sense of unity is enhanced by the mature landscaping within the front and rear gardens of the villas and the small townscape gaps between them that create subtle funnelled views into the parkland, drawing out the verdant character Paxton's landscape into the conservation area's residential surroundings **[Plates 4.1.1- 4.1.3]**.



4.1.1 Castellated Lodge



4.1.2 Rich curving pathway around the Upper Lake



4.1.3 Cavendish Road rear elevations from Upper Lake

## 4.2 Key Landscape Features and Characteristics

### 4.2.1 Planting

Core to the experience of the park, the original planting aimed to create a rich, colourful and varied landscape and upon opening was praised for having 'the richest foliage of every hue' with 'every variety of shrubs and flowers' represented. Whilst many key elements of the landscape survive, little of the original planting itself remains intact, with documentation providing relatively little clarity on the mix of species used and native vs non-native ratios of planting. As a result, elements of Paxton and Kemp's original intentions have been lost. However, the following features remain clear within the park:

#### [Plates 4.2.1-4.2.3]

- Playing with light and visual impact:** Trees are carefully arranged to maximise the impact of light and shadow on pedestrian pathways, whilst also creating filtered and open views at crucial points within the landscape. Where the opportunity for long ranging views is offered, for example on Cannon Hill, spaces have been left strategically open, with their impact enhanced by the contrast created by large blocks of trees obscuring areas around the view. This also serves to channel the eye towards open space, mimicking the effect of early 18<sup>th</sup> century garden design.

- Unity in size of planting blocks:** Though varied in their shape, Paxton and Kemp' carefully balanced sizing of planting blocks ensures that a sense of balance is maintained within the landscape.
- Careful and selective choice of species for visual effect:** Paxton's planting scheme carefully considered the visual effects of the planting schemes within the park. The presence of perennials around the lakes ensures they support a sense of enclosure year-round whilst willows and other trees placed around the water to drape into it enhance its sense of naturalistic beauty.



4.2.1 Play with light and shadow



4.2.2 Unity in planting blocks



4.2.3 Mixed use of species to enhance richness of rockery



#### 4.2.2 Water

##### [Plates 4.2.4 and 4.2.5]

- **Use of Serpentine forms and islands:** The serpentine forms used by Paxton, and the substantial islands located within the centre of the water create a sense of intrigue and visual interest within a much smaller space than had historically been possible following Brownian and Reptonian gardening principles. This increased the length of dwell time around the lake and the creation of playful views in and out of the enclosed areas in which the water exists.
- **Construction of Bridges:** Bringing visitors to the park closer to the water, Paxton's original design saw multiple bridges providing access to the central islands, creating a sense of being surrounded by the lake.



4.2.5 Rustic bridge over Lower Lake



4.2.4 Curving forms and islands within Lower Lake



### 4.2.3 Views

Views into and out of the park were carefully designed by Paxton and Kemp when landscaping the park, with the surrounding townscape's contribution also carefully considered. The loss of original planting and changes to the original planting has probably modified the original views intended as part of Paxton and Kemp's scheme, as has the degradation of the internal boundary. However, the following elements of views remain clear within the park:

#### [Plates 4.2.6-4.2.8]

- **Use of undulating earthworks to create views:** Earthworks throughout the development are used to create panoramic and long-ranging views across the parkland from their apex, as well as filtered views of the rear of the residential development, of the meadows and carriage drive through curated gaps in earth banks. A sense of enclosure is created to pedestrians around the Upper and Lower lake by the earth banks and Rockery, encouraging them to visually engage with the comparatively more open expanses of water offered by the lakes.
- **Interplay between built environment and landscape:** The placement of a residential belt of villas, most of which stand at around three storeys tall, with a mixture of styles, materials and roofscapes create additional visual interest from the flatter meadow-like

areas of the park, with their sense of height contrasting starkly with the open parkland and visually marking out the park boundary. The large and verdant gardens associated with the residential townscape softens the sense of contrast within the park. However, close board and high chain-link fencing disrupts this relationship in the case of many residential villas and terraces.

- **Contrasting linear and curvilinear streets, mixing long-range and truncated views:**

A visual contrast is created within the conservation areas between the snaking roads that cut through the park and the linear streets that enclose it. The snaking Ashville and Cavendish Roads, as well as the carriage drive, utilise short and truncated views to create a sense of visual intrigue, whilst the linear roads on the outside of the area create long-range views that assertively establish the presence of the park and accompanying townscape from the immediate and wider setting as they look into the area.

- **Varied topography:** The site's placement within an area of varied topography is maximally exploited to create a mixture of long-ranging but focused views and panoramic views. Paxton's original design, drawing carefully on the naturalistic principles of the English Landscape Garden movement, utilised planting within existing high points in the landscape to focus views onto longer-range subjects, such as Liverpool's docks.

- **Terraced views into the area:** The prominence of terraced groups within the surrounding setting ensures that longer roads running parallel to Park Road North, South and East can claim funnelled and focused views into the conservation area, in addition to the longer-ranging views into the area along the roads themselves.



4.2.6 Undulating earthworks to create views





**4.2.7** Varied topography and interplay between built environment and landscape



**4.2.8** Long range views across conservation area



#### 4.2.4 Landscape Designers

##### [Plate 4.2.9]

Several important designers are associated with the landscaping of Birkenhead Park. Their local, national and international prominence lends particular significance to the conservation area. Those most closely associated with the park's landscaping are:

- **Sir Joseph Paxton:** The most prominent designer associated with the park, Sir Joseph Paxton was responsible for the ultimate vision and layout of the park. However, he is also closely associated with the gardens at Chatsworth House, where he served as a gardener for more than 30 years, and for his eventual design of the Crystal Palace of 1851. Later going on to serve as M.P. for Coventry, he was a towering figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century garden design and landscape architecture. Having already designed Princes Park in Liverpool when he was initially approached, he managed the construction of the park, whilst training up many of the other designers who worked on both the landscape and buildings set within it.

- **Edward Kemp:** Born in Surrey, Edward Kemp's early career involved working as a gardener at Chatsworth under Joseph Paxton. However, when Paxton was awarded the contract for the planning and construction of Birkenhead Park, Kemp was appointed Superintendent. As part of this role he designed much of the landscaping and planting schemes, under the direction of Paxton, and remained living in the area and working as superintendent for the rest of his life. Kemp went on to write 'How to Lay out a Small Garden', which was first published in 1850 and remained in print through the Edwardian period, having been republished for the first time in 1858. He designed a number of other important gardens and cemeteries in the North West, including the Flaybrick Memorial Gardens, Castle Park gardens and Stanley Park, Liverpool.



4.2.9 Joseph Paxton (Art UK)



## 4.3 Key Built Features and Characteristics

### 4.3.1 Scale and Form

#### [Plates 4.3.1 and 4.3.2]

- **Shared sense of scale and height for buildings:** Though later buildings of a larger scale- specifically the blocks of flats on Park Road West- break from the scale and massing of much of the area, most of the buildings are either large detached or large semi-detached villas; in the case of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century development in the conservation area these are often smaller than their earlier counterparts. Most buildings are two to three and a half storeys tall, but their generous floor to ceiling heights render them tall, with their substantial height competing with much of the mature planting within the landscape. Punctuating the landscape at carefully defined points within it, the lodge buildings, boathouse and bridges are of a distinctly smaller scale than the townscape. Broadly only one or two storeys tall and generally small and square in footprint, their difference in size contrasts with the larger housing in the conservation area. However, when set within the landscape, their sense of scale is heightened by the lack of other buildings.
- **Mature and generous plots:** Broadly set back from the road by 10-20 meters, the residential townscape surrounding the park is set within large plots, with a close relationship

to the park. The plots claim generous front and rear gardens, which are much larger than those seen in much of the rest of Birkenhead. The mature planting within them reflects that of the park and is key in creating a recognisable street pattern. Though irregular in shape, with boundaries usually subordinate to the curving design of the carriage drive, the plots remain generous across the area. The Commissioner's requested that the grounds of each house be laid out so that 'the general outline may correspond with the Ground Plan of the Park'. This has defined this character, with the boundaries of the residential plots curving around the park.

The rich landscaping of the gardens were designed to add to the character of the park landscape, with the original covenants specifying that the land 'should for ever afterwards be kept in good order and condition' and be designed as an 'ornamental pleasure ground'. Whilst in many cases this character has been lost, the sense of connection to the park is key.

- **Restrictive Covenants:** As part of the original sale of the residential plots surrounding the park, several restrictive covenants were placed on the houses to create a sense of continuity in their character and appearance. Whilst many of these were only minimally obeyed, and the loss of gardens in favour of car parking has undermined their legibility, others have been observed.

One such covenant, specifying that additional structures within the garden required permission from commissioners, has been better observed and relatively few additional ancillary structures can be seen attached to the villas and homes within the area's residential townscape. Equally, the consistent building line desired by the original commissioners is maintained across the townscape. Whilst the covenants still stand, and are noted within some planning decisions, their observance has dropped off.



4.3.2 Generous mature plots



4.3.1 Shared sense of scale

### 4.3.2 Materiality

Though the materiality of the residential townscape surrounding the park is somewhat variable, the overarching material palette of the park's buildings was set by Robertson and Hornblower when designing the lodge buildings and boathouse. Therefore, within the park the dominant material is Storeton sandstone. However, outside of the earlier buildings within the townscape, the materiality is more variable, with the following materials common:

#### [Plates 4.3.3 and 4.3.4]

- **Early use of stone:** Most of buildings constructed in the first phase of building in the area are constructed in a buff Storeton sandstone, with Welsh slates used for the roofing. This can be seen in the case of the park lodges and of most of the villas on the southern half of Ashville Road.
- **Brick:** Red and buff brick is used across the villas, mostly delineating those constructed in the 1860s-1910. The cricket pavilions are the only buildings within the park itself that use brick. In some cases, the material is used for decorative effect, with diapering and other polychromatic brickwork utilised across many villas.

- **Tiled roofing:** Though broadly constructed in slate and ceramic tiles, there has been substantial replacement with concrete tiles. More decorative ridge tiles have often been lost, though notable survivals can be seen on Cavendish Road.
- **Timber:** Treated timber is a common material used within the bargeboards and other architectural features within the townscape, but is much more characteristic within the park itself; the bridges on the lower lake all utilise timber, either painted- as is the case with the Swiss Bridge- or unpainted.



4.3.3 Early use of stone on Ashville Road



4.3.4 Later use of brick on Park Road South



### 4.3.3 Prominent Styles

Whilst no single style dominates the conservation area- perhaps a result of the 'grand tour' principles of variation on which the park was built- a mix of revivalist influences characterise the park. Whilst the diversity of the lodge buildings mostly clearly illustrates these principles, with each inspired by a different architectural period, the later residential development in the townscape also exhibits similar variety.

Indeed, revivalism was growing in popularity in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the level of variety within the park reflects the revival of a huge number of styles as their value was rediscovered. The following are the most commonly found within the area:

#### [Plates 4.3.5-4.3.7]

- **Classical/Italianate:** Most fashionable during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, buildings exhibiting this style within the townscape broadly date to the earlier phases of development within and around the park. These buildings are proportioned loosely according to classical rules and adopt features such as cornices, quoins, heavy channelled rustication, friezes and columned porches. Many of the buildings have an Italianate character created through particularly projecting cornices at eaves level and in their detail are their openings, as well as a broadly square planform. Most roof pitches are relatively low and are often hidden behind a parapet. All windows are sash windows and openings are positioned in a

regular rhythm across the façade, creating a sense of symmetry commonly seen within other classical buildings.

- **Gothic Revival:** Buildings with details derived from the gothic styles of the medieval period are more commonly dated to the post 1850 period, with their roofs more steeply pitched, plan forms more complex and buildings less likely symmetrical. They exhibit a range of different window types and sizes and a mixture of doors and traceried forms. Gables and dormers are used regularly as features in the design of buildings, and like openings, are shaped to reflect the style of the building. Chimneys are typically more prominent on buildings of these styles. Trefoil and quatrefoils are common across these buildings, as well as diapered brickwork and decorative ironwork. Ornament is generally constructed in stone, with arched window-heads and diapering sometimes in brick.

**Vernacular Revival:** Buildings with their details more closely associated with the Elizabethan and Jacobean styles, the influence of the vernacular revival within the townscape spans a longer period than the classical and gothic revival. Though one of the earliest residential buildings on Ashville Road exhibits rich Jacobean strapwork and dutch gables, the influence of half timbering and the more generous planforms of this revivalist period are also visible across the smaller semi-detached dwellings dating to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



4.3.5 Classical style Royden House



4.3.6 Gothic revival style



4.3.7 Jacobean revivalist style



#### 4.3.4 Leading Architects and Designers

Several important designers are associated with the townscape and buildings within the park, including Walter Scott, Lewis Hornblower and John Robertson. Their local and national prominence lends particular significance to the conservation area. The following architects are those most closely associated with the buildings within the conservation area:

- **Lewis Hornblower:** A local Liverpool architect, Hornblower was first involved with Birkenhead Park during a competition in 1843 to design the terraces of houses as featured on the Paxton plan. As a result of Paxton being resident in Chatsworth, Hornblower was later employed to oversee many of the building works, designing many of the principal features such as the Swiss Bridge, Boathouse and Grand Entrance. Like many of the park's other designers, Hornblower also worked on landscaping over the course of his career and designed Liverpool's Sefton Park alongside Édouard André, also going on to patent a new fireproof flooring system towards the end of his career.
- **John Robertson:** Probably born in Scotland, Robertson was trained as an architectural draughtsman to provide designs to J.C. Loudon before joining the Joseph Paxton's office in 1840. Though primarily associated with the construction of the village of Edensor on the Chatsworth estate, Robertson is thought to have designed the lodge buildings that punctuate the key entrances

to the carriage drive within the park. His experience designing the castellated gate lodge at Edensor and drawing up designs for the lodges at Prince's Park in Liverpool likely equipped him well to design the lodges at Birkenhead.

- **Walter Scott:** Though many private houses with the Wirral have been suggested as having been designed by Walter Scott, little is definitively attributable to him. Designing much of the nearby Clifton Park in a variety of styles, Scott is not thought to have designed any of the buildings within the park itself, but probably designed a significant portion of the villas located on the plots outside of the park; indeed a number of the buildings within the conservation area closely resemble his works at Clifton Park, with 13 Ashville Road and 42 Clifton closely resembling one another.
- **Charles Reed:** Charles Reed was a Birkenhead-based architect, primarily practising in the 1840s and 1850s. Reed was employed by Sir William Jackson to design large areas of housing around Claughton Village, within the wider setting of the park. These buildings are primarily designed in the Italianate style common in a small number of the earlier classical buildings around the park, and it has been suggested that he may have designed a small number of classical villas in the area.

#### 4.3.5 Typical Features and Details

##### [Plates 4.3.8-4.3.20]

- **Windows:** Though a number of windows have been replaced with modern UPVC examples, historically the majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings within the conservation area would have vertical sliding sash windows. However, their fenestration pattern, glazing bar arrangement and shape was highly variable. Indeed, the original windows used semi-circular arched, straight sided pointed arched, four-centred arched and segmental arched heads, whilst surrounds we sometimes highlight by the presence of a contrasting material (i.e. stone / polychromatic where buildings are of brick) or of richer carved stonework for decoration. In the case of some of the gothic and vernacular revivalist windows sliding sashes were less common and windows were further recessed behind carved mullions or lancet arched forms; in these examples the tracery within the windows is typically the dominant feature.

Buildings constructed in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century generally seem to have originally had timber casement windows, often with leaded opening upper panes.

- **Doors and principal entrances:** Frequently elaborate and echoing the styles in which the buildings are constructed, the highest status entrances are covered; in some cases this

manifests as a vestibule, columned loggia or ironwork canopy, with porches commonly used across the gothic and vernacular revivalist building. Access to the door is typically stepped, enhancing the sense of elevation and grandeur of the properties within the area, but often necessitating the addition of modern ramps to support accessibility of the building.

The door openings are often richly ornamented, with hoodmoulds in arched, square or four-centred arched forms; some particularly rich examples utilise carved corbels and spandrel panels. The doors themselves also vary in style, but are broadly timber and panelled. The majority of the doors are solid and lack glazing, but fanlights sometimes offer an opportunity for light to permeate into the entranceway.

- **Chimneys:** Adding a sense of interest, variety and height to the existing residential roofscape, the tall chimneys that characterise the area are highly visible from the street and park. Many have been raised in height and exhibit a substantial number of flues, their cluttered tall chimney pots highlighting the substantial size of the housing from locations where it might not otherwise be obvious. Some of the chimneys on the more decorative houses are more elaborate, with individual shaped flues sitting on a combined base. However, later houses within

the area are often much simpler, exhibiting smaller chimney stacks with a reduced number of flues.

- **Eaves, gables and verge details:** The stylistic variety within the townscape is well highlighted by the eaves, gables and verge details. In some cases, these elements include generous cornices and parapet walls, but more gothic and vernacular revivalist buildings also exhibit finials, bargeboards and carved bracketing in brick and stone; balustrading and carved stone details are common within the earlier buildings in the area, but 20<sup>th</sup> century housing exhibits less of these details and is much simpler.
- **Roofing:** The pitch and visibility of the roofing within the area is variable, but roughly aligns with the architectural styles within the area; gothic and vernacular revival buildings generally exhibit steeply pitched gabled roofing, often with small, pitched dormers and unusually shaped gables, whilst classical buildings generally utilise shallow hipped or flat roof forms, which are obscured by parapets or balustrading.



4.3.8 Retained timber sash windows





**4.3.9** Slimline sash windows



**4.3.10** 20<sup>th</sup> century casement windows



**4.3.11** Stepped access up to unusual windowed door



**4.3.12** Windowed top light above gothic entrance



**4.3.13** Classical porch with stepped access



**4.3.14** Grand gothic-influenced revivalist porch



**4.3.15** Tall chimneys and gables visible from park



**4.3.16** Imposing chimneys creating sense of verticality within park





**4.3.17** Unusual waved bargeboards and slate roofing.



**4.3.19** Classical eaves and roof apex obscured by parapet



**4.3.18** Small gabled attic storeys on Park Road West



**4.3.20** Classical balustrading and parapet

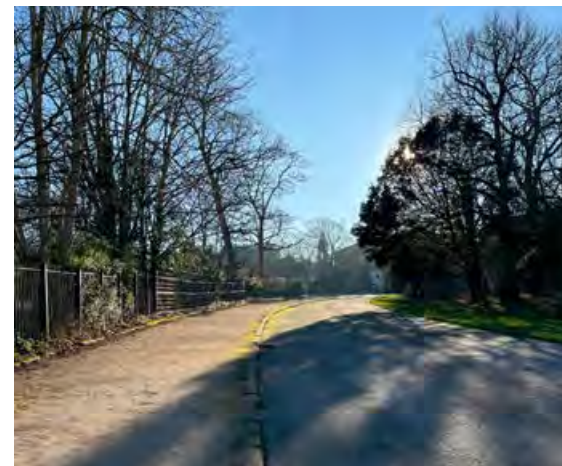


#### 4.3.6 Boundaries and Surfaces

##### [Plates 4.3.21-4.3.34]

- **Paving:** Paving within the park is a mixture of tarmacking and gravel. However, outside of the park it is hugely inconsistent. Granite setts define the entrance to houses on Park Road West, with sandstone slab paving seen on this road. However, it is broadly a mix of concrete paving slabs and tarmacking.
- **Piers:** The original gate piers designed for the park and surrounding plots were carved buff sandstone, with carved Greek style scrolling located within the central recesses and surmounted by a substantial dentilled slab. Whilst many of these original examples have survived, large numbers are damaged or have been reconstructed in stone or concrete. Others have been totally lost and/or have been reconstructed in brick or rendered.
- **Railings and gates:** Railings exist around the lakes, inner boundary and outer boundary, with three railing types existing across the park; the lakeside, inner and outer railings.
- Though not original the lakeside railings are estate railings, thought to replicate the original arrangement, with gates utilising curved brackets, but otherwise linear and set directly into the earth. To the outer perimeter of Park Drive the railings appear not to have utilised a wall and were instead fixed directly into the ground.

- The railings to the exterior of the park itself on Park Roads North, South, East and West are of a coved sandstone plinth surmounted by scrolling railings, influenced by Greek and Roman acanthus plants. However, these have frequently been replaced, partially retained or poorly repaired, and the condition of the railings across the park is highly variable.



4.3.21 Carriage drive around edge of park



4.3.22 Concrete paving around park

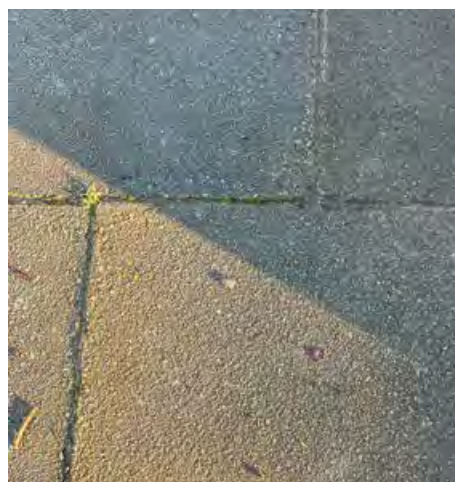


4.3.23 Hardstanding on Coronation Walk

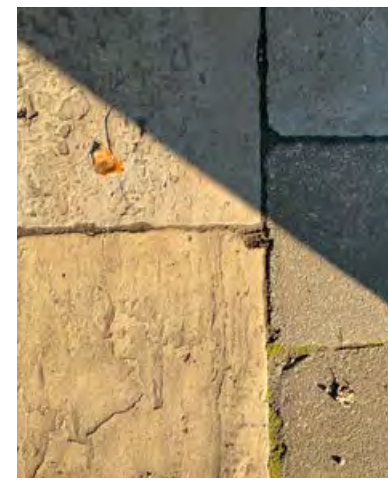




**4.3.24** Paving disrupted by concrete blocking



**4.3.25** Concrete paving typical of surrounding roads



**4.3.26** Stone paving meeting concrete slabs



**4.3.27** Retained stone edge to paving



**4.3.28** Original stone piers



**4.3.28** Stone setts and brick piers to 20<sup>th</sup> century housing



**4.3.29** Modern replica stone pier



**4.3.30** Poor quality rendered pier





**4.3.31** Damaged pier



**4.3.32** Historic stone boundary treatment and railing



**4.3.33** Modern replica railings



**4.3.34** Concrete on stone plinth



#### 4.3.7 Lodges and Park Buildings

##### [Plates 4.3.35-4.3.38]

Designed by Lewis Hornblower and John Robertson (with Robertson leading on the design of the lodges aside from the Grand Entrance), the 8 lodge buildings were each designed in a different style to create a sense of architectural diversity across the area and imbue the park with a sense of the 'Grade Tour'. Each is broadly square or rectangular in footprint and constructed of the same Storeton stone, creating a sense of material continuity within the stylistically varied collection of buildings. Located at each of the key pedestrian and carriage entrances into the park, the lodges serve as important landmarks and way-finding elements within the conservation area. All are Grade II listed, aside from the Grand Entrance, which is listed at Grade II\*, its scale and design exceptional when compared with the architecturally more modest lodge buildings.

The buildings within the park echoed the materiality and scale of the lodges. The Roman Boathouse pavilion (Grade II) is designed from the same Storeton Stone, with stepped access to the primarily floor space providing panoramic views across much of the Lower Lake. Arched openings infilled with fencing and Roman clay tiles to the pyramidal roof ensure that it too stylistically differs from the lodge buildings, its simple classical style contrasted with the more ornate Central Lodge.

The Swiss Bridge is the most significant of the three stretching over the Lower Lake, its distinct Chinoiserie-influenced Swiss-Chalet style adding to the sense of architectural intrigue within the park. Richly painted it is contrasted with the other two wooden bridges over the lake, each of which are constructed of unpainted timber.



**4.3.35** *Grand Entrance*



**4.3.36** *Swiss Bridge*



**4.3.37** *Norman Lodge*



**4.3.38** *Roman Boathouse*

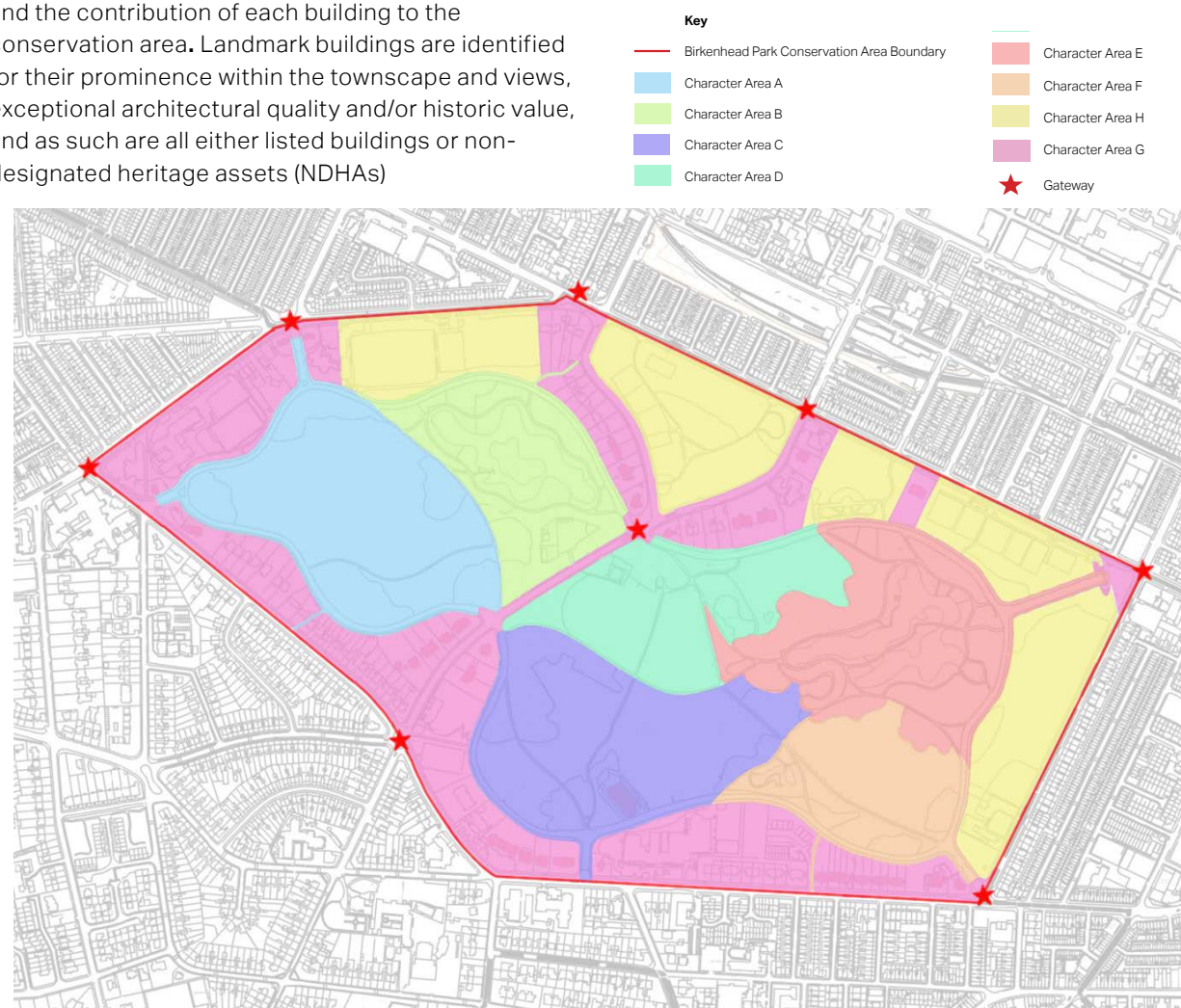


## 4.4 Character Areas

Birkenhead Park is split into character areas, defined by their varied landscape and architectural qualities and their historic relationship to the park. The landscaped character areas broadly follow those characterised by Dr Hilary Taylor in their earlier study of the park (Hilary Taylor (ed.), Birkenhead People's Park Restoration and Management Plan, Vol.1 Survey and Analysis (Parklands Consortium, 1999)). The appraisal follows this structure, in order to better articulate the significance of the conservation area on a smaller scale than within the Significance Assessment in Section 2.

The Upper Park is divided into the more open **Upper Park Meadow (A)** and **Upper Lake (B)** character areas, which are broadly more naturalistic in character than their Lower Park counterparts. The larger Lower Park is divided into the more open **Cannon Hill Meadows (C)** and **Balaclava Fields (D)** character areas, whilst the more enclosed **Lower Lake and Rockery (E)** and **Night Pasture (F)** both exhibit denser planting around the small bodies of water that define their character. The **Boothby Ground and ancillary leisure spaces (G)** character area runs along the northern and eastern perimeter of the park, interrupted in places by pockets of housing. Snaking around the edges of the park is the **residential townscape character area (H)**, comprising several belts of domestic villas and semi-detached properties with views onto the landscape. Each character area is discussed in further detail below [Plate 4.4.1].

The analysis maps which correspond to each character area highlight the position of historic street furniture, areas of public realm, key views, panoramas and the contribution of each building to the conservation area. Landmark buildings are identified for their prominence within the townscape and views, exceptional architectural quality and/or historic value, and as such are all either listed buildings or non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)



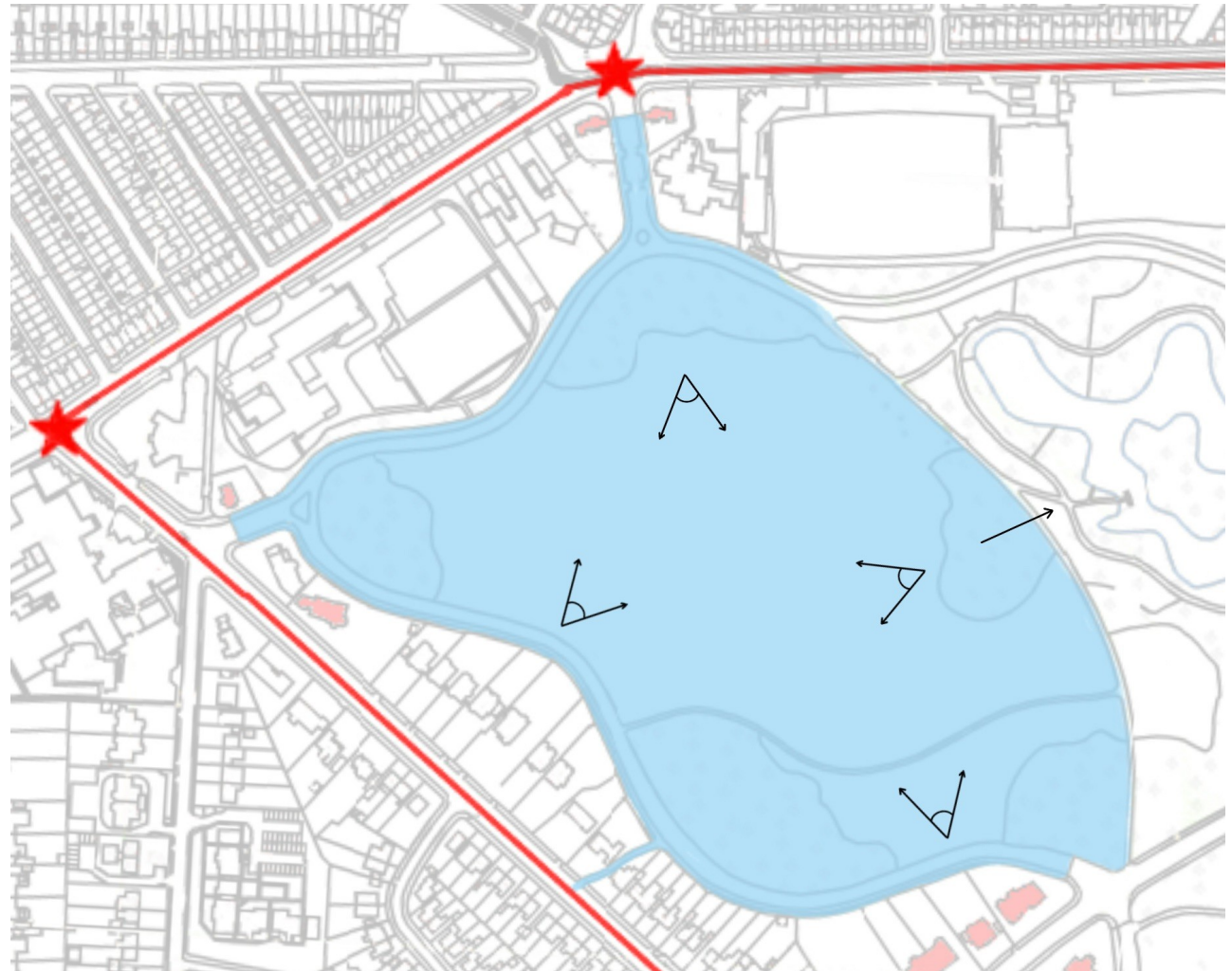
4.4.1 Birkenhead Park Character Areas Map

## 4.5 Character Area A: Upper Park Meadow

### 4.5.1 Design Intent and Evolution

Forming part of the more rustic Upper Park, the Upper Park Meadow was designed to reflect the picturesque English landscaped gardens common within country estates of the period. Originally filled with an artificial population of grazing sheep until 1901, the landscape aimed to emulate much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century ideals of naturalistic parkland in both scale and visual character. As a result, there was a distinct resistance to the Upper Park Meadow being used for active leisure activities **[Plate 4.5.1].<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Lee (2024), p. 53.



4.5.1 Character Area A



### 4.5.2 Landscape Character

The Upper Park Meadow is a broadly open area of grassland, enclosed by the snaking carriage drive and with several smaller pedestrian routes cutting through the landscape to create 'perambulations' both around and through the landscape **[Plate 4.5.2]**. Two principal entrances provide access to the space from Park Road West and Park Road North, the former flanked by the Castellated Lodge (Grade II) and the latter flanked by the two Norman Lodges (both Grade II) **[Plates 4.5.3-5]**. An additional, smaller, pedestrian entrance snakes from Park Road West into the western side of the Upper Meadow. The boundaries of two 20<sup>th</sup> century houses enclose this entrance, which is broadly flanked by close board fencing **[Plates 4.5.6]**. On Ashville Road, a further small pedestrian access point joins the eastern path around the meadow; an additional entrance to the carriage drive is located to the east of Highgate House but is not flanked by a lodge building **[Plates 4.5.7 and 4.5.8]**.

The meadow mimics the naturalistic planting styles common in English picturesque gardens of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with groves of trees around the edge of the green space obscuring the curves of the carriage drive to reveal and obscure views into the central meadow. Though larger groups of trees generally populate the edges of the area to fill the concave spaces created by the curving of the carriage drive, smaller individual trees are dispersed at seemingly random intervals within the more open, parallelogram shaped meadow **[Plates 4.5.9-4.5.12]**.



4.5.2 Carriage Drive entrance from Park Road West



4.5.3 Park Road West entrance gates



4.5.4 Norman Lodge West at entrance to carriage drive



4.5.5 Norman Lodge East at entrance to carriage drive



4.5.6 Pedestrian access from Park Road West





**4.5.7** Ashville Road pedestrian entrance to Upper Meadow



**4.5.8** Ashville Road entrance to Upper Meadow carriage drive



**4.5.9** Denser planting around carriage drive



**4.5.10** Individual trees planted through Upper Meadow, with open space beyond



**4.5.11** Groups of planting with path through them



**4.5.12** Groups of trees infilling concave spaces on edge of Upper Meadow



Though open, the landscape topography is variable, gently undulating down from the raised carriage drive to the lower central meadow; it has been noted by earlier studies that the carefully raised carriage drive is engineered as such to ensure that it is minimally visible from the centre of the grassland space **[Plate 4.5.13]**.

Several of the larger groups of trees closest to the Upper Lake are located on raised earthworks or hillocks, which are accessible to pedestrians and create high points in the landscape for enhanced views of the townscape belt visible from the park. The earthworks are covered with clumps of shrubbery and mature planting, enhancing the sense of height visible from the meadow and creating a transition point between the open meadow and the more densely planted and undulating Upper Lake **[Plate 4.5.15 and 4.5.16]**.

Street furniture within the character area is limited to benches located to the edge of pedestrian paths, which generally overlook the meadow space from raised points. No other built form exists within the park **[Plate 4.5.17]**.



**4.5.13** *Subtly raised topography of carriage drive*



**4.5.15** *Pedestrian paths along hillocks*



**4.5.16** *Hillocks and undulation around the edge of the meadow*



**4.5.17** *Benches around carriage drive*

### 4.5.3 Views

Primarily comprised of a flat and open plain, the visual experience of the Upper Meadow's is defined by the almost complete and panoramic visibility of the character area and edges of the park; small groups of trees and individual plants within the central meadow disrupt these views from certain areas, whilst areas of higher ground at the level of the carriage drive and apex of earthworks enhance the existing views. The key views and visual features are as follows:

- Panoramic view of rear elevations to residential belt on Ashville Road, Park Road West and public buildings on Park Road North.
- Panoramic views of wider landscape, with views to the north disrupted by presence of earthwork banks surrounding the Upper Lake.
- Sparse, filtered views of Upper Lake and pedestrian walk around it.

**[Plates 4.5.18-4.5.20]**



**4.5.18** *Panoramic view of meadow landscape and Park Road West villas*



## 4.6 Character Area B: Upper Lake

### 4.6.1 Design Intent and Evolution

Key to the visual experience of the park, the intricate serpentine lakes featured within Paxton's earliest designs. Dug out from the existing ground level, the spoil excavated as part of the construction of the lakes was used to create the hillocks and banks that surround it. Mostly planted with conifers, the perennial nature of the planting was intended to ensure that the water retained a sense of enclosure.

Originally two bridges were constructed over the water, probably both wooden and rustic in style, but were probably demolished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century **[Plate 4.6.1].**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 57-8.



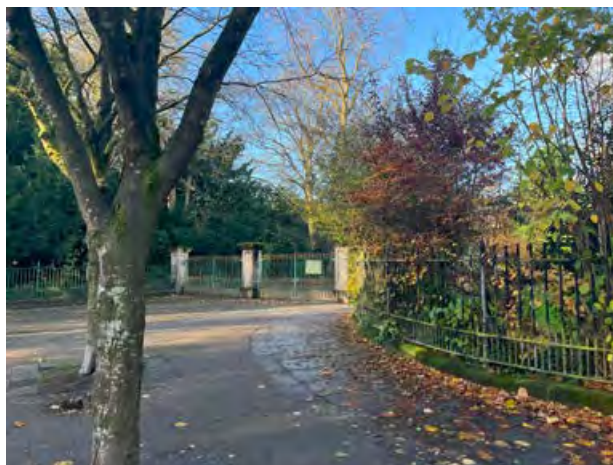
4.6.1 Character Area B

#### 4.6.2 Landscape Character

The landscape of the Upper Lake character area is defined primarily by the water feature at its centre. Obscured by several high banks and hillocks that separate it from the carriage drive, the key arrival point into the area is via Ashville Road, with two further pedestrian entrances accessible via the centre of Ashville Road and Cavendish Road **[Plates 4.6.2 and 4.6.3]**.

A pedestrian path encircles the perimeter of water, following its intricate curving form and overlooking the long central island that runs from east to west **[Plates 4.6.4-4.6.6]**. The large banks and mounds are raised around the pathways into the lake area, emphasising the sense of enclosure within the space **[Plates 4.6.7 and 4.6.8]**. Sandstone supports areas cut into the mounds, with benches placed within the nooks to overlook the water; these are broadly consistent in style, though several different forms and ages of bin are in use around the lake **[Plates 4.6.9-4.6.11]**.

The park depot is located within tree cover to the southeast of the lake area and comprises an open clearing covered in surface car parking. Though it includes several small buildings, stores and containers, it is heavily screened from view by mature planting and thus is minimally visible from within the parkland itself **[Plate 4.6.12]**.



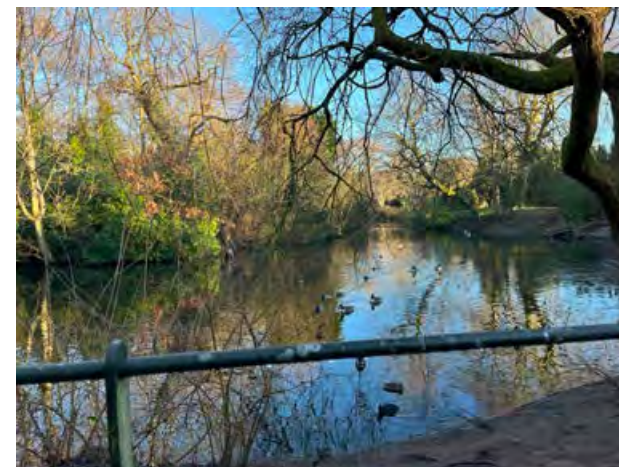
4.6.2 Ashville Road entrance to carriage drive



4.6.3 Ashville Road pedestrian entrance



4.6.4 Pedestrian walk around Upper Lake



4.6.5 Upper Lake looking towards island





**4.6.10** Red litter bin around Upper Lake



**4.6.11** Green litter bin around Upper Lake



**4.6.12** Park depot entrance



**4.6.6** Upper Lake and former fishing platforms



**4.6.7** Tall banks to side of path



**4.6.8** Hillock and bank around Upper Lake



**4.6.9** Benches within sandstone niche



### 4.6.3 Views

The sense of enclosure created by the high banks surrounding the pedestrian spaces ensure that relatively few views exist out of the Upper Lake into the rest of the Upper Park. However, a select number of carefully constructed, focused views are created through gaps within the tree cover and earthwork banks. The key views and visual features are as follows:

- Filtered and focused views of 1-5 Cavendish Avenue through partial tree cover.
- Filtered and focused views across the Upper Lake and towards the central island.
- Focused and enclosed views along the pedestrian routes, created by high mounds.
- Focused and panoramic views over the Upper Meadow from viewpoints at the apex of hillocks and earthworks surrounding the lake.

#### [Plates 4.6.13-4.6.]



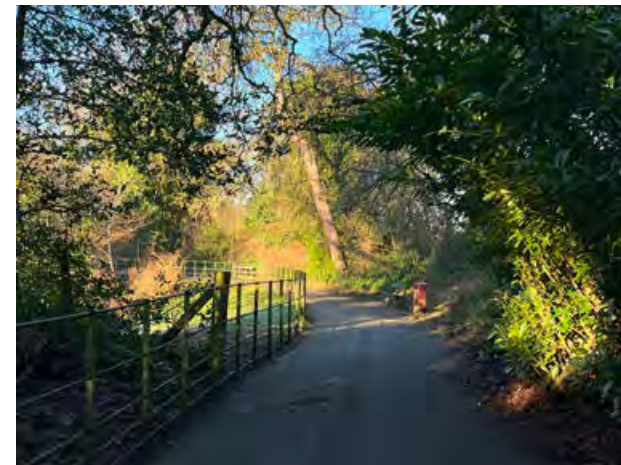
**4.6.13** *Filtered view over Upper Lake towards Cavendish Road*



**4.6.14** *View over Upper Meadow from hillock*



**4.6.15** *Views of Cavendish Road from Upper Lake*



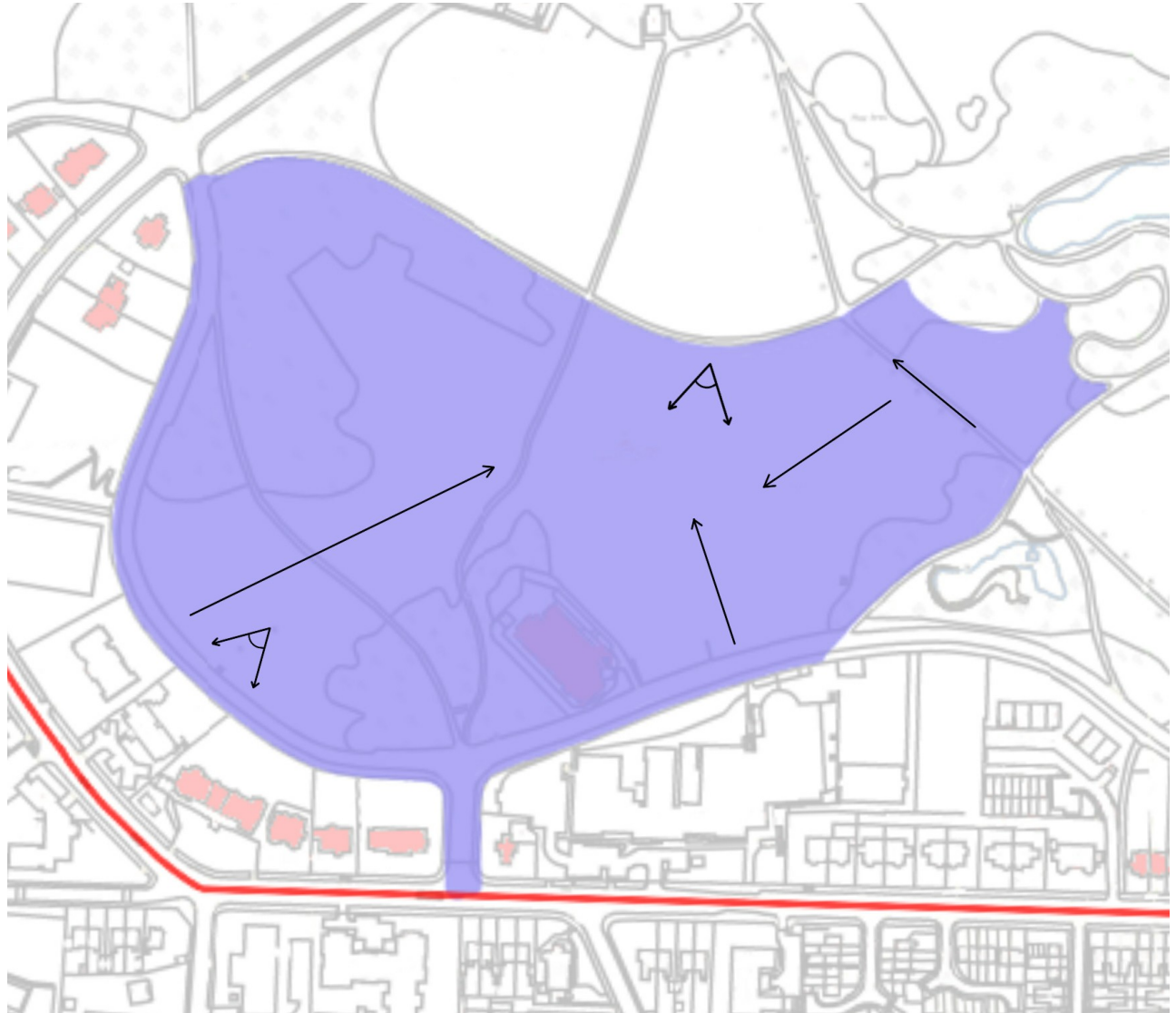
**4.6.16** *Focused and enclosed views along pedestrian route*



## 4.7 Character Area C: Cannon Hill Meadows

### 4.7.1 Design Intent and Evolution

The area's name derives from the siting of two cannons on the hill in 1858, having retired from use following the siege of Sevastopol. It is unclear when the cannons were removed, but it has been suggested that they may have been scrapped during the Second World War **[Plate 4.7.1]**.



4.7.1 Character Area C

#### 4.7.2 Landscape and Built Character

Accessible primarily through the gate onto Park Road South, which is flanked by the Italian Lodge, the carriage drive snakes around the area to another entry and access point on Ashville Road. An additional pedestrian entrance can be accessed at the junction of Ashville Road and Park Road West, though the gate piers here are mostly obscured by foliage **[Plates 4.7.2-4.7.4]**.

The sweeping topographic change seen within the southwestern setting of the conservation area is reflected in the Cannon Hill character area, which is the most dramatically sloping area of the park. As carriage drive passes from east to west it rises until it reaches the hill itself, which is located high above the more open green cricket space below, with the Eisteddfod stone located at the top. This area is also unusual in the rear boundary treatments to the gardens of the houses on Park Road West and the rear elevations of Birkenhead Park School, which comprise only railings. Consequently, the properties here are much more visible than in other character areas and there is a greater sense of connection to the belt of residential townscape that bounds the park **[Plates 4.7.5-4.7.10]**.

The open space is however dominated by the presence of the cricket grounds and their associated built structures, which define it as an active space. Though groups of trees, areas as across the park, are clustered close to the carriage drive in some areas, serving to obscure the cricket club from Cannon Hill itself, they funnel the views towards the open

cricket spaces and to the north, reinforcing the visual dominance of the cricket facilities. Perhaps one of the least altered areas of Paxton's design, the snaking pedestrian paths, and arrangement of tree groups are entirely faithful to the original design intent **[Plates 4.7.11 and 4.7.12]**.

The cricket pavilion itself (Grade II) dates from 1860 and is one of the earliest examples in the country, often attributed to Lewis Hornblower. Brick with a Welsh slate roof, with projecting canopied gables supported by rich Corinthian cast-iron columns to form a porch and verandah, the building highlights the historic association of cricket with the parkland space. However, the modern tented forms that obscure the rear of the pavilion detract from its presence, with the levels of dirt, surface car parking and railings exacerbating this effect **[Plate 4.7.13 and 4.7.14]**.



**4.7.2** Italian lodge located on carriage drive entrance from Park Road South



**4.7.3** Ashville Road and Park Road West pedestrian entrance





4.7.4 Ashville Road carriage drive entrance



4.7.5 View down Cannon Hill over open fields



4.7.6 Open fields viewed from apex of Cannon Hill



4.7.7 Copses and trees from Cannon Hill



4.7.8 Eisteddfod Stone on Cannon Hill



4.7.9 View of properties from carriage drive





**4.7.10** View of villas and gardens from carriage drive



**4.7.11** Funelling of views from bench



**4.7.12** View over cricket pitch towards club



**4.7.13** Cricket pavilion (Grade II)



**4.7.14** Car parking and tented extension



### 4.7.3 Views

The raised topography of Cannon Hill - unique within the otherwise relatively flat site - provides unusually long-ranging views across the park and further north. However, a large number also exist within the flat open plain of the cricket grounds. The key views and visual features are as follows:

- Long-ranging views from the hill towards Liverpool, with visible landmarks including Liverpool Anglican and Metropolitan Cathedrals, the Liver Building and Hamilton Square Station.
- Views into and across the open cricket ground and Balaclava Fields, slightly funnelled into the park.
- Views across the open meadows, towards the cricket club pavilion.
- Panoramic views of the residential belt of housing, Italian Lodge and Birkenhead Park School from the carriage drive and lower-lying meadow area, especially on the hill itself.
- Funnelled views along Coronation Walk, with filtered views of the meadow.

#### [Plates 4.7.15-4.7.19]



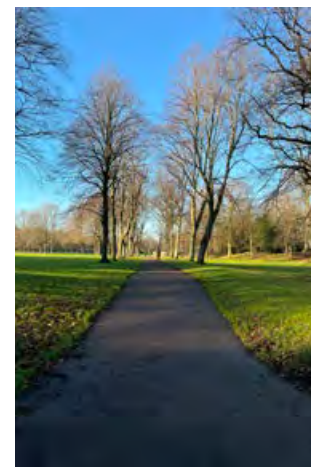
**4.7.15** Long ranging views towards Liverpool and Birkenhead Docks



**4.7.16** Funnelled view towards Balaclava fields



**4.7.17** Views across open meadow to Cricket Pavilion



**4.7.18** Views along Coronation Walk



**4.7.19** Views of residential belt from Cannon Hill

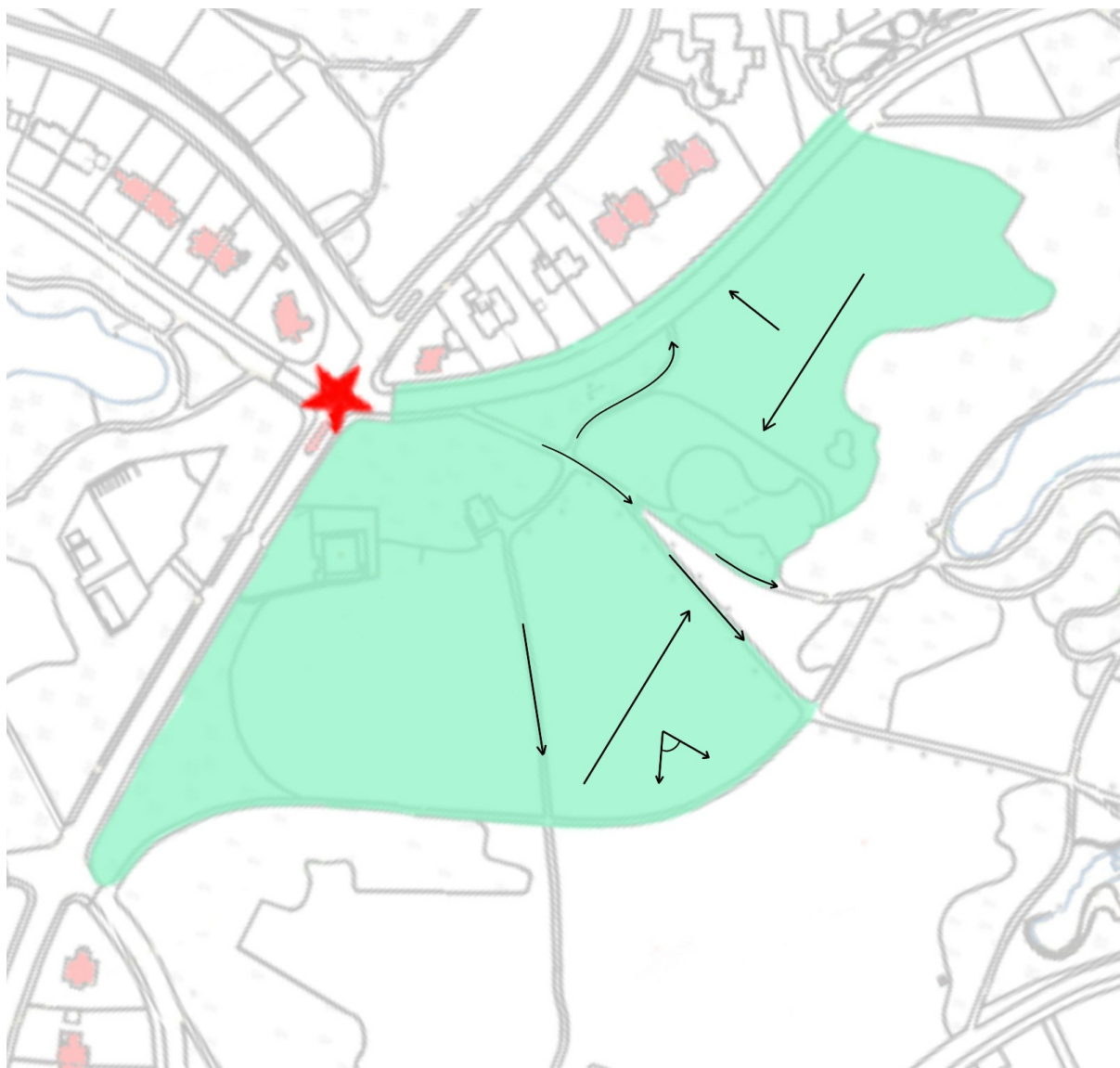
## 4.8 Character Area D: Balaclava Field

### 4.8.1 Design Intent and Evolution

Designed by Paxton as a further area of open meadowland, like the Night Pasture and Upper Meadow, the Balaclava Fields were one of the areas originally designed for active leisure activities. Named after the Crimean War battle and possibly influenced by the presence of the cannons from the same war within the park.

Historically occupied by St. Mary's CC cricket club, a pavilion and refreshment room, the latter of these two amenities have since been lost and from the 2000s the character area has grown to accommodate several other amenities, including a children's playground and additional rock climbing area, changing room and visitor centre. As a result, it forms the primary amenity space within the park.

#### [Plate 4.8.1]



4.8.1 Character Area D



#### 4.8.2 Landscape and Built Character

Accessible primarily via the entrance on Ashville Road, which the Central Lodge (Grade II) overlooks, the Balaclava Field and other leisure spaces serve as a key point at which the more open landscape of the Cannon Hill and the Night Pasture is drawn together with the amenities of the Visitor Centre and children's playground **[Plates 4.8.2 and 4.8.3]**.

The character of the Balaclava Fields is closely related to that of Cannon Hill. However, the construction of additional amenity structures, sculpture and a children's playground has resulted in the landscape being less complete. Whilst the partially tarmacked children's playground does diverge substantially from Paxton's original design intent, it fulfils the vision of the park as a leisure space for all people which meets contemporary expectations. The sports pitches, in retaining the open grassed character envisioned for the fields, does not undermine the overall character of the area **[Plates 4.8.4-4.8.7]**.

The houses along the northern stretch of Ashville Road are partially visible from the fields, but the high hedges that generally line their boundary obscure most of the buildings, with the topography much flatter than that of Cannon Hill **[Plates 4.8.8-4.8.10]**.



**4.8.2** Central Lodge entrance to carriage drive from Ashville Road



**4.8.3** Visitor Centre



**4.8.4** Low-lying topography of football fields



**4.8.5** Path through sports fields





**4.8.10** Houses visible from carriage drive



**4.8.6** Wooded area to the north of the football and cricket fields



**4.8.7** Wooded area around changing rooms



**4.8.8** Path from playground to carriage drive towards houses



**4.8.9** Carriage drive towards Visitor Centre



### 4.8.3 Views

Defined by its amenity provision rather than its views either across or into the landscape, the relatively open landscape of the Balaclava Fields nonetheless hosts several views. The key views and visual features are as follows:

- Panoramic views from the flat and open landscape into other character areas, such as Cannon Hill, and the amenity spaces.
- Views of the rear of the residential belt on the northern half of Ashville Road, where it backs onto the carriage drive (see above).
- Views across and of amenity provision, contrasted with the banks of the Rockery and Lower Lake, with subtle focused views into this area.
- Focused views along walks and wooded areas, with filtered views out into the landscape.

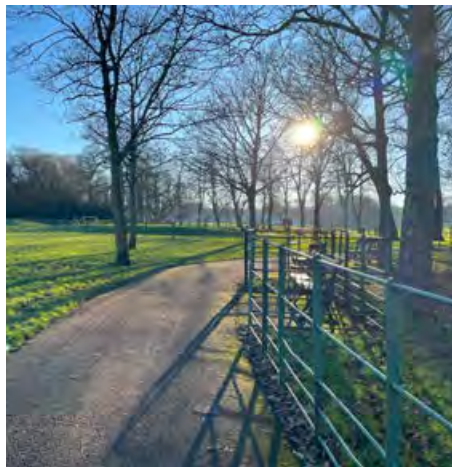


**4.8.11** Panoramic views over flat landscape



**4.8.12** Views of St Mary's Cricket Club

### [Plates 4.8.11-4.8.15]



**4.8.13** View towards playground



**4.8.14** Views towards Rockery and Upper Lake



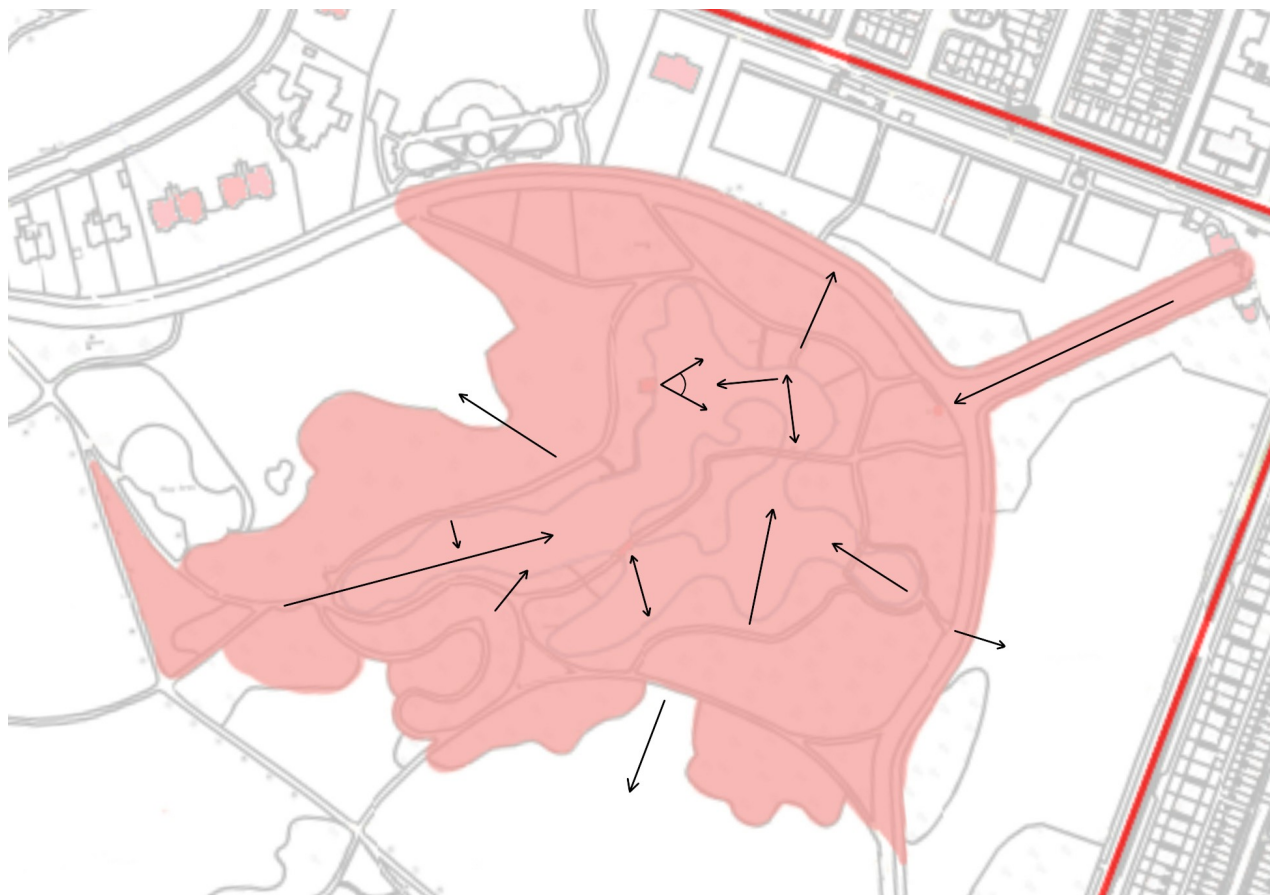
**4.8.15** Focused views within wooded areas

## 4.9 Character Area E: Lower Lake and Rockery

### 4.9.1 Design Intent and Evolution

Though this character forms the pinnacle of Paxton's original concept, it is also one of the least altered elements of it. Drawing on his earlier designs for a 'National Park', the designs asserted the importance of water within public parks as both a passive and active recreation space - an idea that was revolutionary.

The area was the centre of the major park restoration project undertaken on the park in the 2000s, when the Roman Boat House and Swiss Bridge were restored **[Plate 4.9.1]**.



4.9.1 Character Area E



#### 4.9.2 Landscape and Built Character

Defined by the contrast between the curving serpentine fingers of the Lower Lake and the static, sharp forms created within the rockery and by the bridges, this area is characterised by a unique level of variety and visual richness. In many ways the principal space of visual interest, its spatial arrangement and position with the park's wider composition reflects this status. Accessible to pedestrians via several paths, it forms the visual focus for visitors accessing the park through its Grade II\* listed Grand Entrance, with the key linear walk terminating in the Jackson Memorial (Grade II) **[Plate 4.9.2 and 4.9.3]**.

Substantially larger than its Upper Park counterpart, the Lower Lake replicated many of the design motifs seen within it, including the original Swiss bridge (Grade II), snaking serpentine form and path which runs around; the sense of enclosure created via the planting of perennials and construction of earth banks, with a funnelled view terminating in water tempts visitors through the landscape, with the inclusion of a Rockery and additional buildings creating further visual interest.

With many of the other historic structures designed for the park now lost (such as the former band stand, refreshment room and pavilions), the Lower Lake and Rockery distil Paxton's idea of 'The Grand Tour' existing within the park. Ending at the Roman Boat House (Grade II), which forms the visual centrepiece within the landscape composition, the area encourages visitors to snake over the Swiss

bridge; the sense of variation within the area designed to create a sense of otherworldliness **[Plates 4.9.4-4.9.13]**.

Around the flatter areas of grass, several exercise machines are located, creating an exercise trail through the space. Whilst these are broadly positive and reinforce Paxton's broad ethos of the park as a space for healthy recreation, they might be better sited within the more open areas of space **[Plates 4.9.14]**. Another challenge within the area is the relatively poor condition of the Jackson Memorial, whose original basins have been lost.



4.9.2 Grand entrance



4.9.3 Jackson Memorial obelisk





4.9.4 Pedestrian path around Lower Lake



4.9.5 Paths around Rockery.



4.9.6 Swiss Bridge (Grade II) over Lower Lake



4.9.7 Swiss Bridge from the south



4.9.8 Earth banks around the lake



4.9.9 Rockery





**4.9.10** *Lower Lake*



**4.9.12** *Lily Lobe Bridge*



**4.9.13** *Rustic Bridge*



**4.9.14** *Exercise machines*



**4.9.11** *Roman Boathouse over the Lower Lake*



### 4.9.3 Views

The carefully arranged planting, undulating hillocks and flat surround areas, bridges and position of the Roman Boat House are all designed to create a variety of views into, across and out of the space. Whilst the number of views across and within the area is huge, a number of key views and elements are as follows:

- Filtered views across the lake towards built structures, designed to create a sense of intrigue.
- Clear, focused funnelled views towards built structures and landscape features, presenting the buildings within their optimum picturesque settings.
- A mixture of short and long ranging views into more open spaces within the park.

From the raised position that can be accessed via the man-made hillocks and mounds that enclose the lake, there are further structured vistas of the open areas of the park and its setting.

#### [Plates 4.9.15-4.9.18]



**4.9.15** *Filtered view towards Swiss Bridge*



**4.9.17** *Long view into parkland*



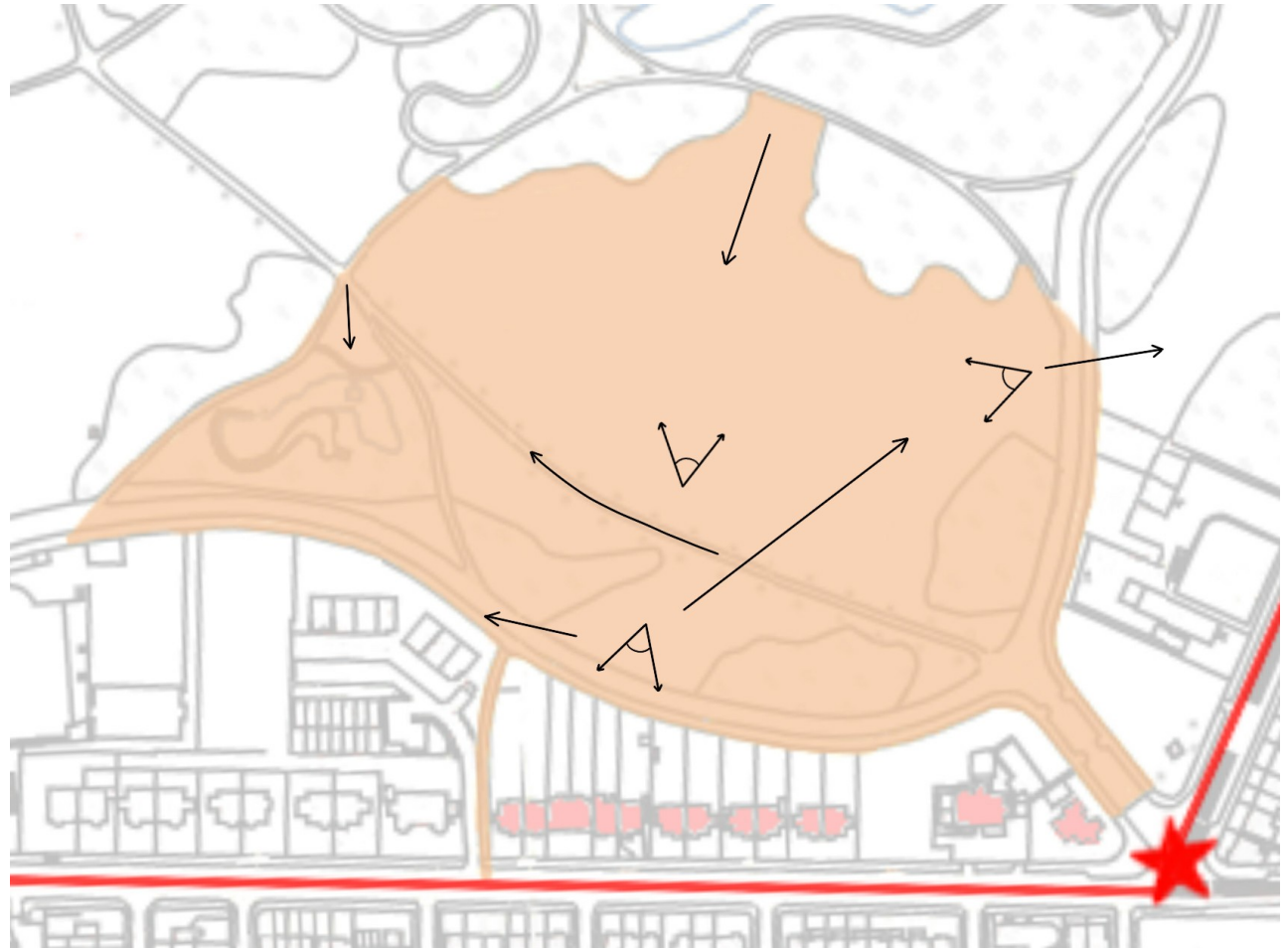
**4.9.16** *Focused view of Roman Bathhouse*



## 4.10 Character Area F: Night Pasture

### 4.10.1 Design Intent and Evolution

Like the development of the Upper Meadow area, the Night Pasture was designed by Paxton to be the only part of the Lower Park that retained its rustic, meadow-like open character. Actively described as 'pasturage' the land retained some of the historic character of the land on which the park was constructed; this had historically been pastureland of no exceptional quality. As a result, like its counterpart in the Upper Park, sheep and horses grazed here until the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with it being rented out to tenants 'per animal' **[Plate 4.10.1]**.



4.10.1 Character Area F

#### 4.10.2 Landscape and Built Character

The Night Pasture is a broadly open area of grassland, much like the Upper Park Meadow, its boundary to the east and south marked by the carriage drive. Though accessible from all other areas of the Lower Park, the Gothic Lodge (Grade II) entrance is the principal means of access, with a small pedestrian access alley stretching from Park Road South in a gap within the residential townscape **[Plates 4.10.2 and 4.10.3]**.

Most of the landscape comprises an open field which is dominated by grassland, with small groups of trees located around its edges, to create the same conceal and reveal effect as found across the park. Contrasting with the broadly serpentine and naturalistic design of the park, a pedestrian pathway known as the Coronation Walk is flanked by Lime trees on either side and cuts through the meadow. Whilst it represents a departure from Paxton's original scheme, its origin as a desire line underscores the park's continued use as a community leisure space; the planting of this walk with trees to celebrate the coronation of Elizabeth II only serves to further underpin its historic importance within the landscape. A small wooded copse dominates some of the character area to the north of the British Legion building, a former villa on the edge of the park that remains in a state of poor repair **[Plates 4.10.4-4.10.8]**.

The open meadow-like landscape that dominates much of the Night Pasture is however contrasted with the sunken garden and pond, known as the Figure-of-Eight Lake. This smaller body of water is landscaped

much like the lakes to the Upper and Lower Parks but on a smaller scale; shrubbery and mature trees are planted on sloping banks, enclosing a small serpentine pond. A wooden jetty projects into the water but is set behind gates and is not accessible to the public. The lake is also not original to Paxton's design, but is of historic interest, having been added into the scheme by Edward Kemp during his time as superintendent. As such, its planting scheme echoes Paxton's designs for the other lakes, but is not of the same generous proportions and is closer in scale to a pond than a lake **[Plates 4.10.9-4.10.11]**.

No buildings are located within the character area, though its low-lying topography ensures that the houses on Park Road South are highly visible from much of the meadowland **[Plates 4.10.12 and 4.10.13]**.



**4.10.2** Entrance to carriage drive from Park Road East



**4.10.3** Pedestrian entrance from Park Road South





**4.10.4** *Open fields of Night Pasture*



**4.10.5** *Small wooded group of trees on Night Pasture*



**4.10.6** *Path between rockery and Night Pasture*



**4.10.7** *Coronation Walk through the Night Pasture*



**4.10.8** *Coronation walk viewed from carriage drive*



**4.10.9** *View of Figure-of-Eight Lake*





**4.10.10** *View over Lake*



**4.10.11** *Fishing platform on Figure-of-Eight Lake*



**4.10.12** *Irvine Way modern development overlooking Night Pasture*



**4.10.13** *View of villas on Park Road South from Night Pasture carriage drive*



### 4.10.3 Views

The open setting of the Night Pasture echoes that of the Upper Meadow; a wide and low-lying grassland, it's visual experience also reflects that of the Upper Meadow. The key views and visual features are as follows:

- Panoramic view of rear elevations to residential belt on Park Road South.
- Mix of filtered and open views of the terraces within the conservation area's setting on Park Road East.
- Panoramic view of wider landscape, with views to the north disrupted by presence of earthwork banks surrounding the Lower Lake, as well as filtered views into the Cannon Hill character area.
- Sparse, filtered views of the Lower Lake, the pedestrian walks around it and of the leisure spaces to the north.

#### [Plates 4.10.14-4.10.17]



**4.10.14** *View of Park Road South villas*



**4.10.15** *View to residential belt on Park Road East*



**4.10.16** *Panoramic views over flat meadow and long ranging views to Liverpool*



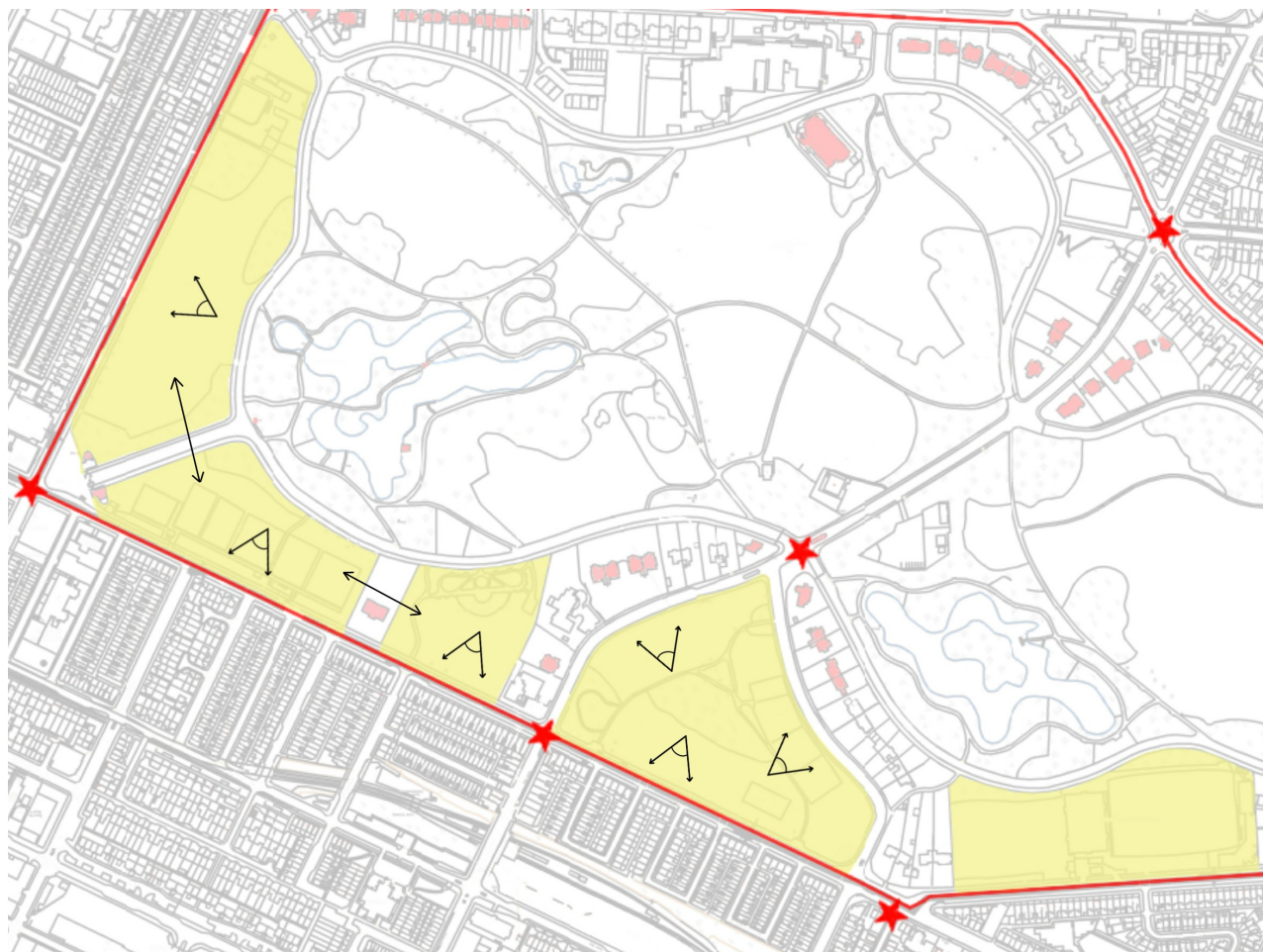
**4.10.17** *Sparse views towards Lower Lake and Rockery*

## 4.11 Character Area G: Boothby Ground and Ancillary Leisure Spaces

### 4.11.1 Design Intent and Evolution

The Boothby Ground and ancillary leisure spaces were, under Paxton's original design, intended to be infilled with additional residential accommodation - apparently a mixture of terracing and villas. However, the Long Depression of the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the plots remaining vacant, and thus the area was integrated into the park itself from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1890s the current football ground had been established for more than a decade and the vacant parkland area overlooking Park Road East was in use as an archery ground.

Since this period, they have been used to fulfil much needed amenity provision in the form of active leisure facilities and - since 2006 - visitor amenities in the form of the Visitor Centre **[Plate 4.11.1]**.



4.11.1 Character Area G



#### 4.11.2 Landscape and Built Character

Each of the three spaces within this character area are distinct from one another, either by residential development or more coherent areas of Paxton's landscape. Located along Park Road North and Park Road East, they are separated from the main park spaces and residential property by either the carriage drive and fencing or belts of domestic housing (as is the case of the Boothby Ground).

Most of the space within these areas is dominated by either grass or hardstanding pitches and courts for public leisure, frequently accompanied by clubhouses and changing spaces. These include tennis courts, basketball courts, bowling greens and football pitches. However, the impact of these uses is softened by mature planting. In the case of Birkenhead Park RFC, low-level historic fencing separates it from the park, whilst denser shrubbery and trees almost completely obscure it from Park Road North. This is also true of the bowling green, which is not publicly accessible, but visible from within the park, with sparse coverage of mature planting to the road and carriage drive **[Plates 4.11.2-4.11.6]**.

The buildings associated within these leisure uses are a mixture of historic and modern examples. None are listed and most date to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rather than the park's original conception. However, the 1892 Birkenhead Park RFC pavilion building is of local historic value. The black and white timbered building is typical of sports pavilions of the period, with a targeted door panel and Ipswich windows exhibiting

a playful vernacular revivalist style; the Edwardian bowls pavilion and store are also of some value, though they are much plainer **[Plates 4.11.7-4.11.9]**.

The landscape within the Boothby Ground and areas to the east are more characteristic of the rest of the park's landscape, with perambulations and clusters of trees dotted through the landscape around the open areas **[Plates 4.11.10-4.11.12]**.

The white and silver U shaped Visitor Centre constructed in 2006 forms the centre of a public amenity space, surrounded by planted beds, benches, a metal sculpture, picnic benches to the rear and cycle storage **[Plates 4.11.17]**.



4.11.3 Basketball Court on Boothby Ground



4.11.2 Tennis court on Boothby Ground



4.11.4 Bowling Green





**4.11.10** Rear of Bowling Clubhouse from Park Road North



**4.11.11** Boothby Ground entrance



**4.11.5** Houses seen from playing fields



**4.11.6** Wooded areas south of playing fields



**4.11.7** View towards Grand Entrance showing open football field space



**4.11.8** Birkenhead RUFC



**4.11.9** Bowling Green shelter building with shuttering





4.11.12 Wooded area on Boothby Ground



4.11.13 Boothby Ground tree lined boundary



4.11.14 Visitor Centre



4.11.15 Planted beds outside visitor centre



4.11.16 Cycle racks outside Visitor Centre



4.11.17 Sculpture outside visitor centre

### 4.11.3 Views

The location of the leisure spaces on the edge of park's land creates a low-lying visual barrier between the immediate and wider setting of the conservation area. In many cases this ensures that the leisure spaces can claim a close spatial and visual relationship with other parkland character areas; the Boothby Ground, being separated from the parks by Ashville and Cavendish Roads, contrasts with this.

Overall, the key views and visual features are as follows:

- Panoramic views of immediate setting to Park Road North and Park Road East, as well as to most other landscape character areas.
- Intervisibility between active leisure amenities.
- Panoramic views of principal elevations of residential belt on Cavendish Road and northern reaches of Ashville Road (Boothby Ground).

#### [Plates 4.11.18-4.11.20]



**4.11.18** Panoramic views of Park Road North from Boothby Ground



**4.11.19** Active leisure amenities and views of Cavendish Road

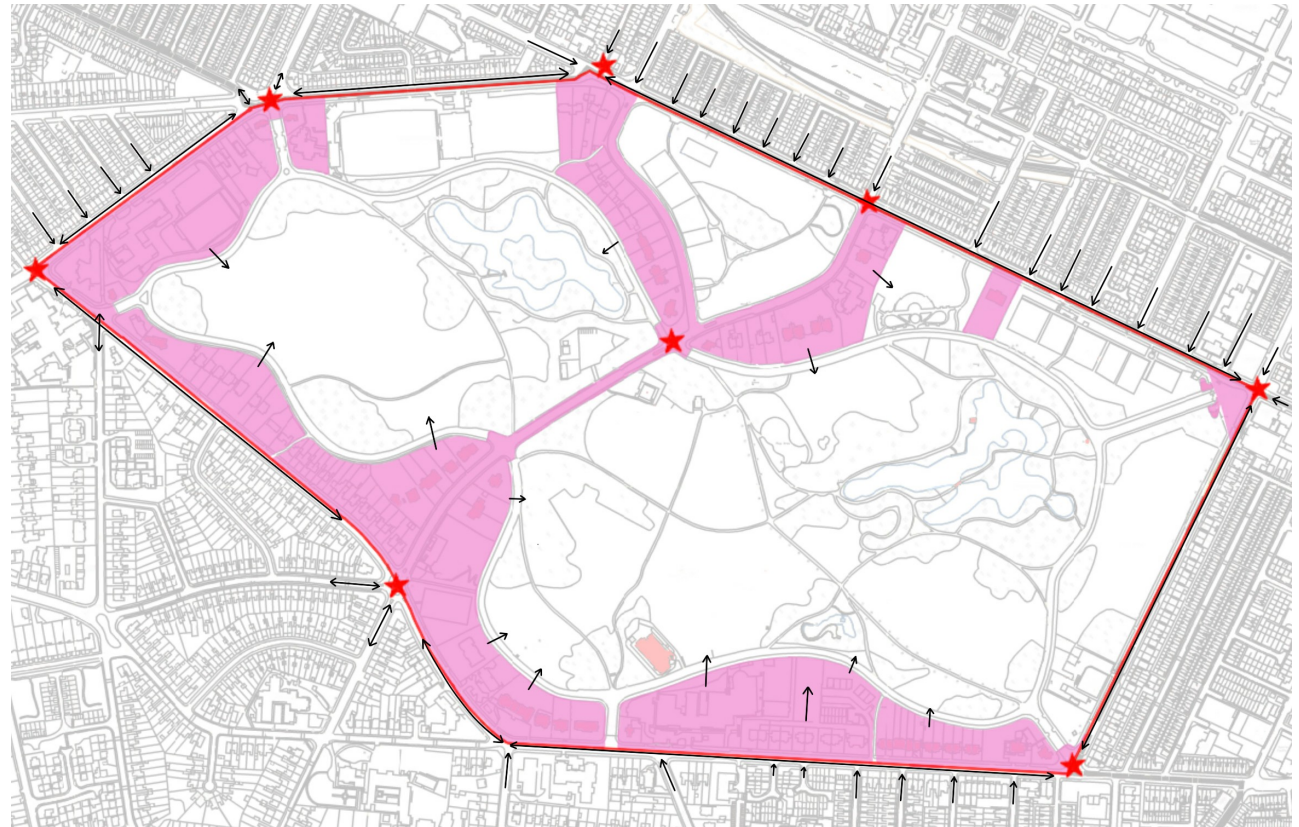


**4.11.20** Views of Park Road East from leisure facilities



## 4.12 Character Area H: Residential Streets

Surrounding the green core of the conservation area deep residential plots define the edge of the landscaped park, their mature planting extending the rich verdant character of Paxton's park into the townscape. Park Road West, Park Road South, Park Road North, Ashville and Cavendish Roads serve as key movement nodes around the edge of the park, whilst highlighting the extent of the original parcel of land purchased by the Birkenhead Improvement Commission **[Plate 4.12.1]**.



4.12.1 Character Area H

#### 4.12.1 Design Intent and Evolution

The residential villas are constructed on plots gradually sold off from the original package of land, with the sale value of the land funding the park's construction; as such, the evolution of this area is crucial to understanding its character and significance of the wider townscape that surrounds the park itself. Indeed, the area's reflection of the stylistic variety seen in the park buildings highlights their gradual construction through the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, whilst their large plots overlooking the park and high architectural quality underline the area's decidedly middle-class status.

The development of the townscape was therefore closely tied to that of the park, but was a much more gradual and staggered process, with land sold off slowly through the 19<sup>th</sup> century reflected in sale plans of the plots, whilst historic maps highlight that most of the development took place between 1860 and 1890. Development along the roads usually radiated out from the lodges and gateways, clearly articulated in the finer urban grain to the centre of the roads.

The first houses within the estate were built on the southern half of Ashville Road and are primarily constructed in local sandstone, mostly being in place by 1858. However, development of the north side of Ashville Road, Cavendish Road and Park Roads West and South was accelerated from around 1860; by 1880 these roads were mostly developed. Small infill development did however continue in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when additional semi-detached housing was built on Park Road West, Park Road North and Cavendish Road.

#### 4.12.2 Landscape and Built Character

##### Ashville Road

Ashville Road is a long, curving street that cuts through the parkland to create dedicated carriage access. Running from south-west to north-east it hosts some of the earliest and most historically prominent villas within the conservation area at its northern and southern extremities, with the park boundary, landscaping and prominent gate piers defining its gateway point into both the **Upper and Lower Parks [Plates 4.12.2-4.12.4]**.

The earliest residential buildings constructed as part of the Park were built within the southern area of Ashville Road. Whilst it is characterised by a rich stylistic variety, it is united by a sense of architectural quality this is unique even within the conservation area. All of the six villas are listed at Grade II and are highly visible from the park; it is probable that the majority were designed by Walter Scott. Running north up the road, **no. 16** is an exceptionally well-screened classical building designed as part of the original development of the park by Charles Reed or Walter Scott, set far back from the road within a rich and mature landscape. **59 and 61** are also classical in style, but with influences from the French Renaissance style, enriched with broken pediments, dormer windows, Dutch gables and an octagonal turret.

**12 and 14** contrast with the rich Baroque influence of their neighbours, with a more austere Tudor style in brick, whilst **no. 10** exhibits a picturesque gothic or Gothick style, with arched traceried windows,

ogee hood moulds and a later curved conservatory to the left. **No. 57** is the only Jacobean style building within the conservation area, and was designed for William Hind in 1854. Mannerist columns and rich strapwork are applied to the Dutch gabled front elevation. **Highgate House** echoes that of 12 and 14 Ashville Road, built in a Tudor style. This house was also probably built for the Hind family, with their crest located above the door **[Plates 4.12.5-4.12.10]**.

A dense cluster of listed buildings, street furniture and gate piers are located at the junction between the carriage drive and Ashville Road, mostly constructed as part of the original design of the park between 1843 and 1847. Two entrance lodges demarcate the gated access points for the carriage drive, serving as landmarks within the townscape and guiding visitors through the gateways and between the piers (all of which are listed at Grade II). On the road's eastern side, and marking the access gate into the Lower Park, is the Grade II listed **Central Lodge**. Designed by Lewis Hornblower and John Robertson, it is broadly classical in style. Whilst the building has suffered from neglect, there are signs of works being undertaken to restore it to its original form. To the west, **1 Cavendish Road's (Grade II and also by Hornblower and Robertson)** raised site ensures a highly visually prominent position with the townscape, its Picturesque Tudor character contrasts with the classicism of the opposing structure to enhance the effect of transition between the two parks **[Plates 4.12.11-4.12.13]**.



Two small islands exist within the road at the junction, with historic gate piers located on them, whilst an **early Pillar postbox (Grade II)** is located outside of the Central Lodge **[Plate 4.12.14]**.

As the road moves north, only the east side is built up with housing, the western side being the Boothby Ground. The quality of housing is lower here, with **19-25 Ashville Road** being substantial domestic revival influenced semi-detached houses. Though large and set within substantial plots, their complete loss of mature planting and boundary harms their setting. **15-17 and 11-13 Ashville Road (both Grade II listed)** date to the early phase of the park's development, designed in a simple Tudor style, in dark brick **[Plates 4.12.15 and 4.12.16]**.

Beyond these successful compositions however, the townscape becomes more fragmented in character. The **Heyberry House care home** presenting is a much less successful composition. Though partially screened by retained planting, the building's substantial massing ensures that it is highly visible both from the street and park. Though the former **Vicarage (Grade II)** juxtaposes against this detrimental addition to the streetscape, the low-lying **Ashville Lodge** similarly departs from the character of the area, detracting from the gateway **[Plates 4.12.17 and 4.12.19]**.



**4.12.2** Entrance to Ashville Road from northern gateway



**4.12.3** Entrance to Ashville Road from southern gateway



**4.12.4** Southern side of Ashville Road, dominated by earlier housing



**4.12.5** 16 Ashville Road





4.12.10 Highgate House



4.12.11 Gatepiers within centre of Ashville Road gateway



4.12.12 Central Lodge



4.12.6 59 and 61 Ashville Road



4.12.7 12 Ashville Road



4.12.8 10 Ashville Road



4.12.9 27 Ashville Road





**4.12.13** 1 Cavendish Road



**4.12.14** Domestic revival buildings overlooking Lower Park



**4.12.15** Pillar postbox outside Central Lodge



**4.12.16** Domestic revival buildings overlooking Lower Park



**4.12.17** 11-13 Ashville Road



**4.12.18** Heyberry House from park



**4.12.19** Former Vicarage on Ashville Road

## Cavendish Road

Connecting Ashville Road with Park Road North, Cavendish Road separates the Boothby Ground from the boundary of the Upper Park. Residential in character, it was developed in stages, beginning with the eastern end of the road in the 1840s; the size, scale and design quality of the housing declines as it moves to meet Park Road North. The designations reflect this, with the three Grade II listed semi-detached villas clustered towards Ashville Road.

The plots follow the curving line of the carriage drive, subtly varying in their size but with the houses comfortably set back deep into their plots. Mature planting and hedging obscures the elevations to Cavendish Road in many cases, but tall gates, closeboard fencing and modern gate piers can be seen at **2-3 Cavendish Road (Grade II)**, undermining the original design and restrictive covenants for the housing. In many cases gate piers are in poor condition, and the boundary railings are highly variable in their retention and character across the road **[Plates 4.12.20 and 4.12.21]**.

Subdivision has occurred, much like on Ashville Road, to most of the largest villas at 3-6, and with much of the garden now replaced by hardstanding for parking. However, the contrast between the two buildings is marked, with the much richer planting at **6-7 Cavendish Road** more effectively obscuring the buildings and hard landscaping than at 3-4 **[Plate 4.12.22]**.

Stylistically Tudor and Gothic revivalist styles dominate the largest and oldest villas, snaking back from **1 Cavendish Road**. 1 and 2 are both stylistically and materially similar, designed in a Picturesque form of Tudor from sandstone. However, **4-5 (Grade II)** varies the Tudor stylistic influence, built of brick and exhibiting diapering, with tall multiple-flue stone chimney stacks and mullioned windows with stone surrounds to echo Henrician brick-built dwellings like Hampton Court and Framlingham Castle. Vernacular revivalist styles, influenced by the architecture of Norman Shaw and others, dominate the northern reaches of the road, with large, mullioned bay windows, heavy stone quoining and contrasting brick detailing defining the architecture of **6-12 Cavendish Road**.

There is a strong interplay between the park and the rear facades of the houses, which are highly visible from the carriage drive in the Upper Park; in the case of **1-5 Cavendish Road**, they also terminate key views around the Upper Lake. As a result, they are designed almost as if they have two principal facades, with many of the key architectural features and ornament visible from Cavendish Road and the Boothby Ground also visible from within the park. However, this relationship is diminished with the addition of close board fencing behind the park railings, probably resulting from security concerns but which disrupts the original design intent **[Plates 4.12.23-4.12.26]**.

Much like elsewhere, the public realm in this area is relatively poor and inconsistent. Though the road is not highly trafficked, with generous pavements encouraging pedestrian passage through the area, paving is broadly concrete and modern streetlighting

is sporadically distributed. The mature planting on the edge of the plots successfully draws out an arcadian character onto the street, but the lack of screening to the Boothby Ground tennis courts ensures that this is not reflected on both sides of the street.

## Park Road North

Park Road North is the longest of the four roads that surround the Birkenhead Park, curving at the junction with Laird Street and the junction with Mallaby Street, Bidston Avenue and Norman Street. However, because of the failure to sell many of the plots on the road, the townscape is dominated by railings and the park's green landscape; with the limited number of dwellings constructed dating to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and primarily located around the gateways. Indeed, most of the buildings visible on the road relate to ancillary sports and leisure functions and are discussed elsewhere, with a car wash and other more ephemeral uses Creating a mixed character of variable quality **[Plates 4.12.27 and 4.12.28]**.

The principle historic villa on Park Road North is **Royden House (Grade II)**, an Italianate pair of houses now subdivided into flats. The eight-bay sandstone building is three storeys tall with a basement, its isolated position within the townscape enhances this sense of scale and massing, juxtaposed with the flat green space that it is surrounded by. Rich channelling, substantial sash windows and a central porch surmounted by a tripartite pedimented window all define the building's high design quality **[Plate 4.12.29]**.



Travelling west, the side elevation of Ashville Lodge is visible, but no additional buildings are visible until the junction with Laird Street, on which **12 Cavendish Road**, and **135-139 Park Road North** are located. All dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these buildings have been poorly altered, with a dominance of hardstanding undermining the historically verdant character of the plots **[Plates 4.12.30 and 4.12.31]**. Beyond this, the townscape is more fragmented, with the park's leisure spaces and Rugby Club dominating the road's eastern side. Some of these railings are historic but remain in a relatively poor state of repair **[Plate 4.12.32]**. The car wash and RUFC buildings are mostly modern and of little inherent value **[Plates 4.12.33 and 4.12.34]**.

Travelling further southwest, a cluster of houses surrounds the **Norman Lodges West and East (both Grade II)**. The only entrance to be flanked by lodges on both sides, they were designed as part of Paxton's original scheme in a Greek Revival style. Bi-axially symmetrical and with a two-storey centre and flanking single-storey wing, the buildings exhibit a fluted doric porch. Both are now partially obscured by vegetation, and their status as landmarks is disrupted by parking and close board fencing **[Plates 4.12.35-37]**.

The other housing clustered around the lodges is mixed in both character and date. The **Wirral Age UK building** stands at **142-3** on the site of a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century house, which has now been substantially expanded. **Roan Lodge, Burns House** and **Regency Lodge** were all constructed in the 1950s and 60s on substantially smaller plots than the rest of the residential townscape and are architecturally modest. **South Grange** and **Stavely** form a modest semi-

detached house dating to the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though also sited within a much smaller plot than the buildings on Park Road West and South, and the boundary treatment is far less clear than elsewhere, the buildings underline the varied and phased development that has taken place on the less successfully developed road **[Plates 4.12.38-40]**.

At the road moves towards Claughton Village it is dominated by the presence of the **Wirral Hospitals' School's Joseph Paxton Campus**. Located on the site of the former Park High School for Boys, its substantial scale and mid-century brutalist style contrasts starkly with the rest of the area, its detrimental impact exacerbated by the limited green space in which it is set. Its rear is highly visible from within the southwest of the Upper Park **[Plate 4.12.41]**.

Though several entrances to the park and Boothby Ground can be seen along the road, only those between the Norman Lodges and the piers of Royden House are listed (all at Grade II). Due to its length, the road hosts several different paving and boundary treatments, of varying condition. Bus shelters clutter the street spaces in some areas and present a particular issue where they obscure historic buildings **[Plates 4.12.42-4.12.44]**.

The road's character is dominated by the ancillary leisure spaces around its edges, as a result of its relatively slow development. However, this does mean a number of other small ancillary buildings and vacant sites are visible within the townscape **[Plate 4.12.45-4.12.47]**.



4.12.20 Curving line of Cavendish Road



**4.12.21** 2 and 3 Cavendish Road



**4.12.22** 6 and 7 Cavendish Road showing rich planting



**4.12.23** 1 Cavendish Road



**4.12.24** 4 and 5 Cavendish Road



**4.12.25** 8-9 Cavendish Road



**4.12.26** 10-11 Cavendish Road



## Park Road West

Running from the end of Claughton Village High Street to meet Park Road South on Cannon Hill, Park Road West is defined by its substantial plots with prominent views over the Upper Park. The area immediately to the east of the Castellated Lodge represents a relatively intact collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings constructed on plots sold off by the Commissioners; the largest villas are located to the west, at **76 and 74 Park Road West**, with the scale of the buildings and plots decreasing towards to east.

Beginning in the west, **Claughton Medical Centre** is a modern fan shaped building constructed in 2008 on the corner site between Park Road North and Park Road West. Occupying a substantial site within the townscape, its scale and massing ensure its visual prominence. However, it is not of any design quality and reduces the legibility of the park because of its location, hard landscaping and poor-quality boundary treatment [**Plates 4.12.48 and 4.12.49**].

Beyond the Medical Centre is the Claughton Village entrance to the Park, overlooked by the **Castellated Lodge (Grade II)**. A picturesque interpretation of a medieval castle, every element of the building is crenelated, though its rough cube shape reflects Hornblower and Robertson's designs for the other lodge buildings. The original **gate piers (Grade II)** and gates remain in place, with the swirling pattern of cobbles reflecting the paving and public realm visible in the other carriage drive gates [**Plates 4.12.50 and 4.12.51**].

The largest villas are located at **76 and 74** (the latter listed at Grade II). Both constructed from brick in the same gothic style, they probably share the local designer, Walter Scott as architect. However, whilst the latter is well screened and retains historic garages and outbuildings, no. 76 is in a poor condition, having been converted into flats, had a reasonably poor pastiche modern addition and the garden and boundary treatment having been lost [**Plates 4.12.52 and 4.12.53**].

**72-58** are set within longer plots of variable size, which are sandwiched between the straight Park Road West and curving contours of the carriage drive. All are constructed from brick, utilising similar design elements and an overarching gothic style. Machicolations and polychrome are utilised across many, with canted bays at the ground floor and stone dressings to windows and doors. However, whilst the buildings themselves are of architectural merit, their large plots have majorly diverted from the restrictive covenants set to control their development. None are listed.

Conversion into HMOs has resulted in gardens being converted to tarmacked car parking, with the original boundary treatment mostly lost and much of the mature planting removed. In the case of **no. 64** the house has also been stuccoed with cement render, covering the unusual polychromatic brickwork and features of architectural interest [**Plates 4.12.54 and 4.12.55**].

Architecturally unassuming, **58a-46** are of little significance, but their smaller plots serve to emphasise the large plot size of the higher quality buildings at **44-32**, as well as the Victorian buildings [**Plates 4.12.56-4.12.59**].

From the roundabout to the south of Ashville Road to the point at which Park Road West meets Park Road South, the built form rapidly deteriorates, with a large vacant tennis court, now partially overgrown and concreted, forming a particular eyesore [**Plate 4.12.60**].

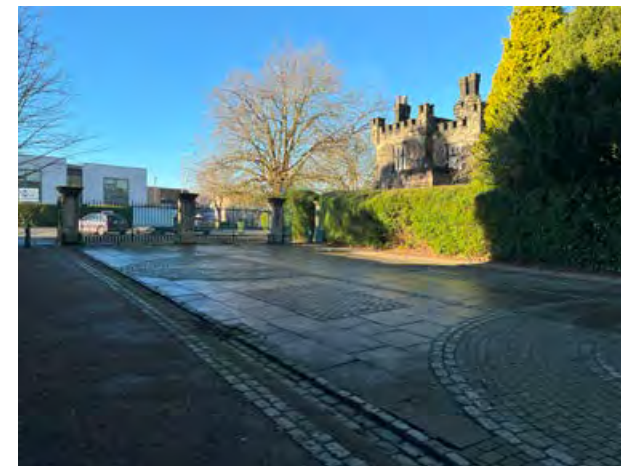
Though historically this area, rising towards Cannon Hill House (Grade II) and its carriage house, hosted several high-quality villas, these have gradually been lost since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, replaced by **Dures and Blair Court**. Both blocks are of substantial massing and scale. Though they have broadly retained the historic landscaping to the rear, this is, in this case, detrimental as it renders their poorly articulated and detailed rear elevations highly visible from the park. They have also substantially undermined the original boundary treatment, with hedging having been planted in one of the original stone plinths [**Plates 4.12.61-4.12.64**].



**4.12.48** View looking east from Claughton High Street



**4.12.49** View looking north along Park Road West from Cannon Hill



**4.12.50** Entrance to Upper Meadow on Park Road West from park



**4.12.51** Castellated Lodge



**4.12.52** 76 Park Road West



**4.12.53** 74 Park Road West





**4.12.54** Tall villas at 64 and 62 Park Road West



**4.12.55** 58 Park Road West retains some of its leafy character



**4.12.56** 58a Park Road West



**4.12.57** Architecturally unassuming semi-detached houses



**4.12.58** Architecturally unassuming semi-detached buildings along Park Road West



**4.12.59** Higher quality early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing





4.12.60 *Former tennis court*



4.12.61 *Dures Court*



4.12.62 *Blair Court*



4.12.63 *Carriage house to Cannon Hill*



4.12.64 *Planting in boundary plinth*



## Park Road South

Running from Cannon Hill in the west towards Birkenhead Centre in the east, Park Road South represents perhaps the most intact of the four roads running around the perimeter of Birkenhead Park. The largest and most architecturally significant villas (now mostly flats) are located to the west, clustered between Cannon Hill and the Italian Lodge arrival point. Though the architect of some is unknown, a number were designed by the architect Walter Scott **[Plate 4.12.65]**.

**Cannon Hill (Grade II)** is a sprawling terrace of Italianate houses located at the apex of Cannon Hill, now in use as flats. Originally Paxton's plan for the residential belt included a several large, terraced groups like Cannon Hill, but few were constructed, and even fewer survive. Loosely symmetrical, a small lodge or carriage house is also located within its grounds and probably dates to the period of its original construction. **Cannon Mount and 90-94 Park Road South (all Grade II)** are all of a similar scale, but stylistically and materially vary to create a sense of intrigue within the townscape. The rear elevations are highly visible along the carriage drive, as it sweeps up towards and from Cannon Hill **[Plates 4.12.66-4.12.69]**.

**The Italian Lodge (Grade II)** follows the cube like dimensions of many of the other lodges, but is supplemented with an Italianate Campanile, giving the lodge an added sense of height within the townscape and allowing it to visually compete with some of the larger buildings within its setting **[Plate 4.12.70]**.

**Birkenhead Park School** dominates the area to the east of the **Italian Lodge (Grade II)**. Designed in a neo

-Georgian style typical of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it covers a massive plot and is of unrivalled scale and massing within the conservation area and is highly visible from within the park. However, as the road continues east it returns to a much smaller scale, with **72-54** all being tall semi-detached Victorian villas. Though there is some stylistic and material variation between them, they are mostly of a similar footprint, with canted bays to each side and standing at a similar height; the houses are unusual in their gardens not stretching back to meet the curve of the carriage drive. Their character is substantially eroded by their poor condition and conversion, none of these are listed **[Plates 4.12.71 and 4.12.72]**.

To the rear of **54-56 Park Road South** a major development of modern housing has been undertaken in recent years, with work starting in 2021. The development takes its name from the famed Andrew 'Sandy' Irvine, who is postulated as the possible first summiteer of Everest alongside his partner, George Mallory, and it is positive that their historic association with the area is highlighted in the street name. However, whilst this development is of some quality, it is very poorly screened from the park, the villas in front of it and the pedestrian access point into the park. It is also much denser than the development that characterises the park and its residential belt **[Plates 4.12.73 and 4.12.74]**.

Moving further east, the architectural quality and scale of the dwellings again increases. **20-30 Park Road South (Grade II)** is a large terrace of six houses, defined by its steep gabled bays and symmetry; now converted into flats. Beyond this, the sense of rhythm and consistency in character is created by **18-8 (Grade II)**, which are three semi-detached villas designed in a picturesque

gothic style, which in many ways exemplifies that character of the movement. Wavy bargeboards painted in bright colours add a sense of whimsy to the buildings, which are constructed in a rock-faced stone with a Welsh slate roof **[Plates 4.12.75 and 4.12.76]**.

**2 Park Road South**, now in use as the Diocesan Offices, is however an early and representative example of the design intent for the residential belt within the park. Set in a large mature plot and designed in a grand classical style, with Doric portico and retained sashes, its architectural quality is evident from both its principal elevation to the road and the elevation visible from within the park **[Plates 4.12.77]**.

The condition of many of the buildings is poor, suffering from the effects of subdivision into HMOs (which has taken place to a huge number of those buildings located between Birkenhead Park School and the junction with Park Road East); the loss of boundary treatments and the green landscaping enforced by the original covenants is perhaps even more impactful. Equally the quality of the public realm is relatively poor, being a highly trafficked road with few crossing points and little signage to direct individuals into the park itself.

The issues with the road are exemplified by the **Gothic Lodge (Grade II)**, which is located on the corner plot, where the road meets Park Road East. Constructed of buff sandstone, it is in a visibly poor condition and is minimally visible from Park Road South, where its principal elevation is obscured by overgrown vegetation **[Plate 4.12.78]**.



4.12.65 View west along Park Road South



4.12.66 Cannon Hill



4.12.67 Cannon Mount





**4.12.68** 94 Park Road South



**4.12.69** 90 and 92 Park Road South



**4.12.70** Italian Lodge



**4.12.71** Birkenhead Park School



**4.12.72** Tall semi-detached villas



**4.12.73** 54-56 Park Road South





4.12.74 Irvine Way



4.12.75 20-30 Park Road South



4.12.76 18-8 Park Road South villas



4.12.77 2 Park Road South



4.12.78 Gothic Lodge



## Park Road East

Adjoining Park Road South and Park Road North, the road is substantially shorter than both stretches of public highway that it connects. Like Park Road North, the failure to sell many of the plots on Park Road East ensures that very few buildings are located here. As such, the railings, stone plinth and boundary treatment form most of the townscape, with the condition of the buildings which do exist being broadly detrimental **[Plate 4.12.79]**.

Though historically two villas were constructed, only one remains, associated with the **Royal British Legion**. Constructed in brown brick with stone quoining, six bays wide and three and a half storeys tall it is substantially set back from the road within the park. Adhering to the restrictive covenant imposed on the land sold by the Birkenhead Improvement

Commissioners, the building's unusual pattern of fenestration, height and isolation ensures that it is an imposing structure. However, the building is in exceptionally poor condition and has been extensively altered, with metal shuttering to the ground floor, smashed windows (albeit modern UPVC) and graffiti to the rear. The boundary has also been undermined by the addition of metal link fencing, and mesh **[Plate 4.12.80]**.

To the south of the house sits a low-lying **scout hut and garage**. Formerly known as the **'Memorial Hall'**, it was probably constructed at an unknown date following the First World War. Whilst the garage is of no architectural interest, the hut was probably related to a historic bowling green that is no longer intact and is of some interest, though this is relatively unclear from its form **[Plate 4.12.81]**.



**4.12.79** View north along Park Road East



**4.12.80** Royal British Legion



**4.12.81** Scout hut

## 4.13 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

Character Area	Strengths	Weaknesses/Issues
A: Upper Park Meadow	<p>Retains sense of naturalistic meadowland intended by Paxton and Kemp's design</p> <p>Retention of hillocks and earthworks intended by Paxton and Kemp's design</p> <p>Consistency in benches and street furniture</p>	<p>Drainage in the centre of the meadow can be poor during the winter months</p> <p>Some historic planting has been lost, reducing sense of 'hide and reveal' and instead creating filtered views</p> <p>Park boundary wall inconsistent, with little original boundary treatment remaining</p> <p>Concrete plinths for benches are visually detracting</p>
B: Upper Lake	<p>Retains sense of serpentine expanse of water, creating constantly evolving views, with rich planting creating coverage of the pedestrian walk</p> <p>Consistency in benches</p> <p>Good screening of nursery and park yard</p>	<p>Angling platforms have degraded</p> <p>Park boundary wall inconsistent, with little original boundary treatment remaining</p> <p>Inconsistency in bins around the lake</p> <p>Hard surfaced paths around the lake subject to root growth, resulting in undulating tarmacking</p>
C: Cannon Hill Meadows	<p>Retained strong views across the landscape and sense of arcadian character, with views carefully funnelled by historic planting</p> <p>Retained historic paths through the landscape</p> <p>Partial retention of close intended spatial relationship between surrounding townscape and parkland</p>	<p>Detrimental extension, hard surfacing to rear, and fencing to front of the cricket club features within several prominent views</p> <p>Historic planting through landscape degraded in some areas</p> <p>Boundary between park and townscape gardens inconsistent and substantial massing of modern blocks are visually detracting; fencing to eisteddfod stone is rusting and does not mimic any of the historic estate railings or other forms within park</p>



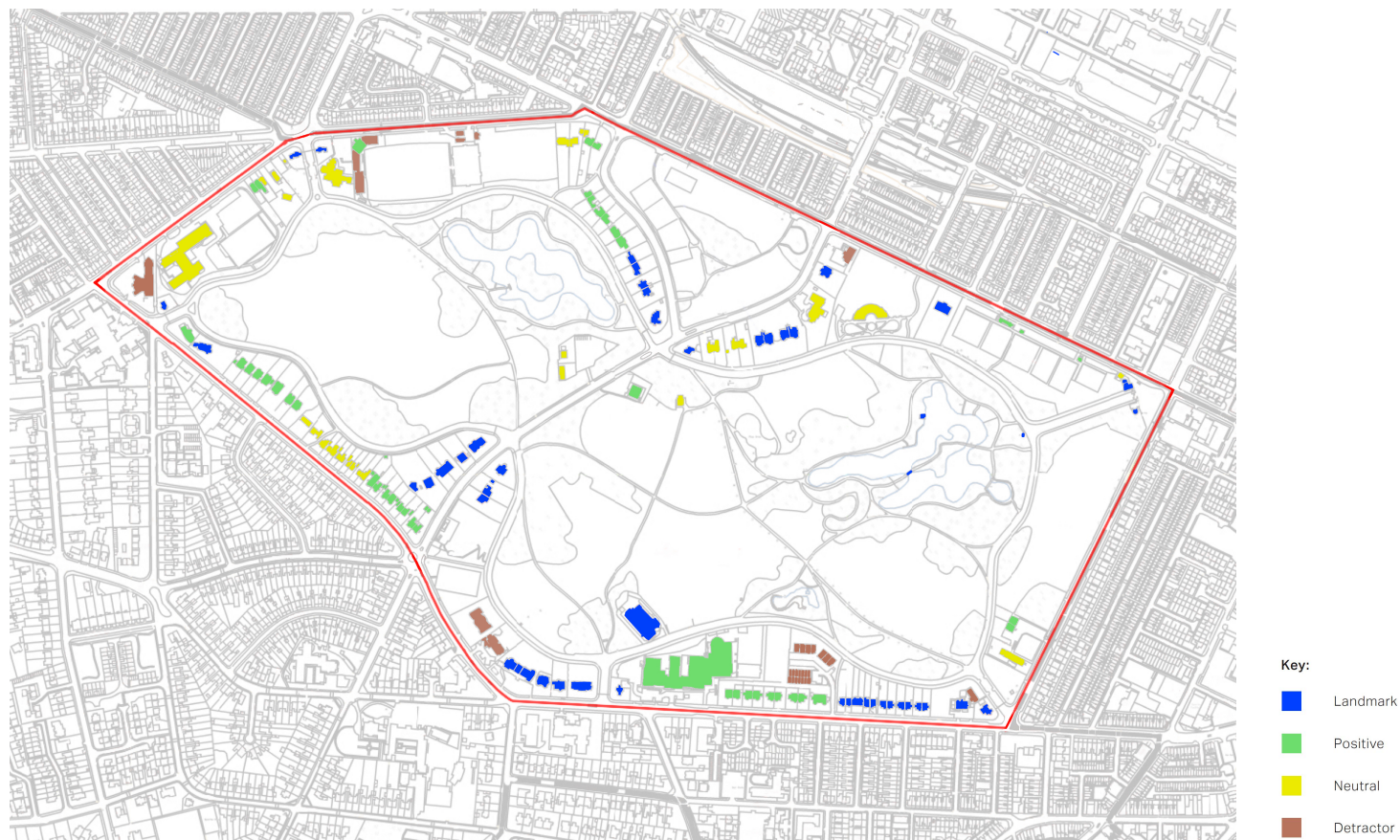
D: Balaclava Field	<p>Retains sense of amenity space, with some historic areas of planting</p> <p>Provision of amenities for families and sports</p>	<p>Detrimental addition of modern amenities, including hard surfacing to children's playground and changing rooms</p> <p>Park boundary wall inconsistent, with some poor quality and rusting chain-link fencing.</p> <p>Reduction of historic relationship with Cannon Hill as a result of planting of avenue between Rockery hillocks and planting</p>
E: Lower Lake and Rockery	<p>Retains sense of serpentine expanse of water, creating constantly evolving views, with rich planting creating coverage of the pedestrian walk</p> <p>Retention of hillocks and earthworks intended by Paxton and Kemp's design</p> <p>Retained and restored park buildings, including Grade II listed Jackson Memorial, Roman Boathouse, Swiss Bridge, and unlisted wooden bridges</p>	<p>Some historic planting lost, probably including roses, other flowers and shrubbery to lower-level beds</p> <p>Visually prominent concrete angling platforms and exercise equipment detrimental</p> <p>Jackson memorial in poor condition</p> <p>Hard surfaced paths around the lake subject to root growth, resulting in undulating tarmacking</p> <p>Continued challenge of vandalism to structures around the Lower Lake</p>
F: Night Pasture	<p>Retains sense of naturalistic meadowland intended by Paxton and Kemp's design</p>	<p>Insertion of Coronation Walk has disrupted historic views, altering its previous termination in planting</p> <p>High visibility of detracting British Legion Building and surrounding high-level fencing</p>
G: Boothby Ground and Ancillary Leisure Spaces	<p>Provision of sporting and amenity space, including the large visitor centre, bicycle racks, tennis courts, basketball courts and bowls greens</p> <p>Historic bowls pavilion, rugby club and others adding to sense of historic amenity value</p> <p>Retained or high-quality reinstated boundary treatments</p>	<p>Sense of design being unresolved, due to not forming part of original design intent</p> <p>Hard surfacing and poor condition of basketball and tennis courts</p> <p>Poor drainage in some areas, particularly close to hard landscaping</p>

H: Residential Streets	<p>Rich stylistic and material variety in buildings, often exhibiting high quality designs by prominent local architects</p> <p>Retained architectural features and detailing across many buildings</p> <p>Retained elements of historic boundary treatments and paving, where they survive, add to the character of the area and visually ally it to the associated park</p>	<p>Some poor-quality modern development, whose scale and massing is disproportionate to the rest of the townscape</p> <p>Poor quality public realm, with inconsistent paving, street lighting and street furniture.</p> <p>Substantial degradation and loss of historic boundary treatments, piers and mature planting to the front and rear of properties, undermining intended relationship with the park</p> <p>Some buildings and gardens are in a poor condition or cluttered with security detailing</p>
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## 4.14 Summary of built significance

[Plate 4.14.1]



4.14.1 Summary of Built Significance



## 5 Setting, Gateways and Views



## 5 Setting, Gateways and Views

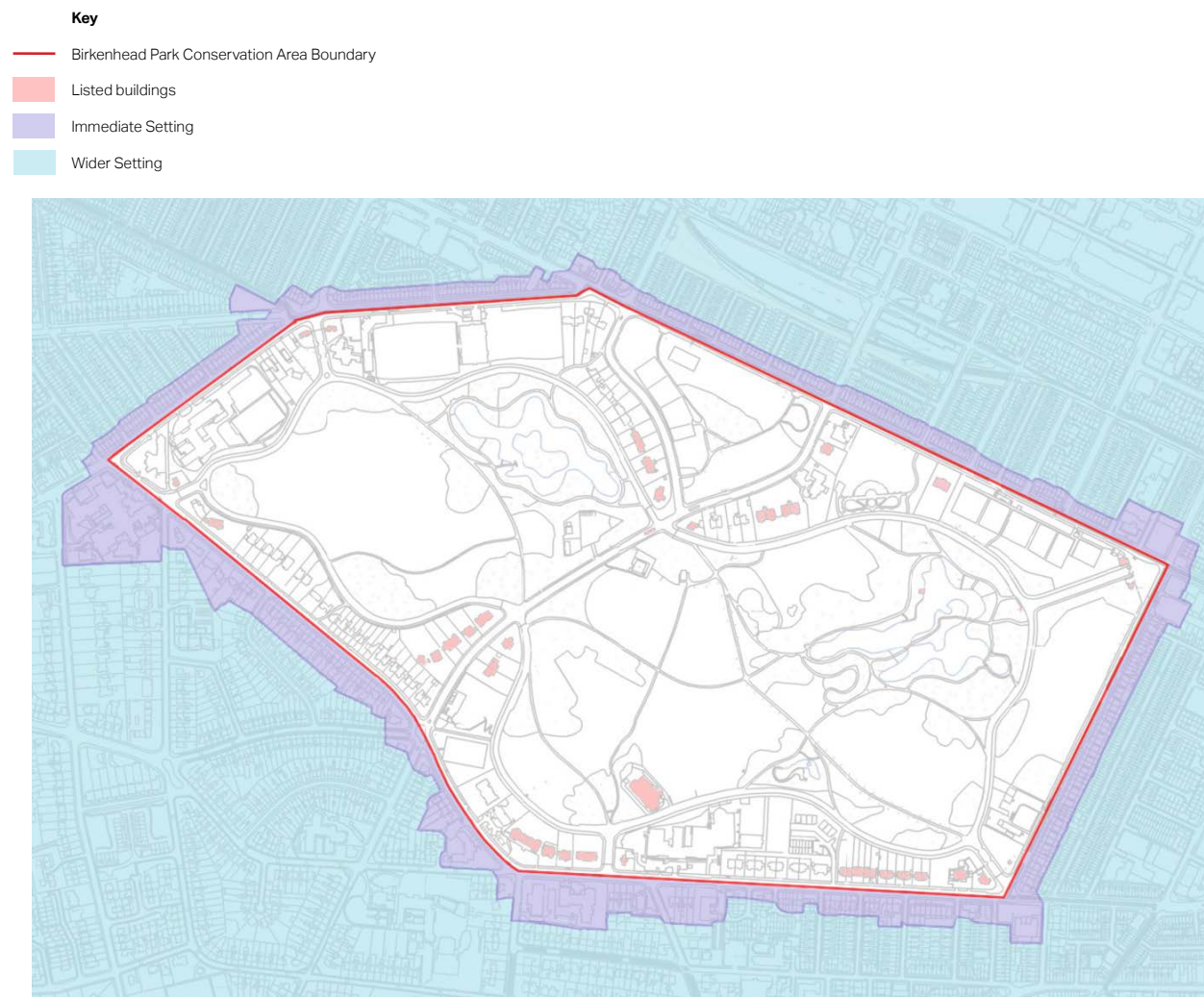
### 5.1 Summary of Setting

A unique green oasis within an otherwise densely populated residential area, the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area was originally laid out in a pocket of undeveloped agricultural land. However, today its landscape character contrasts starkly with its urban setting.

The historic park is now surrounded by Victorian and Edwardian terracing, primarily built between the 1880s and 1910. Common for Victorian public parks within urban areas - which were often built to provide green relief from industrial centres and dense housing and therefore located within such areas – the marked change in character is not unique. Nonetheless, this setting has a substantial impact on the experience of the park and conservation area, its urban pattern highlighting the historic development of Birkenhead.

Whilst the surrounding urban context lacks the special qualities of the park itself, it is highly sensitive to change due to its role within the setting of the conservation area, the extended setting of the Grade I listed Registered Park and Garden and further heritage assets that are situated within the area. This setting is considered in two strands; the immediate setting surrounding the park most sensitive to change, and the wider setting, which claims a reduced but still important visual relationship with the park. These distinctions have informed recommendations within the accompanying Management Plan.

**[Plates 5.1, 5.1a and 5.1b]**



5.1 Setting Map



5.1a Park Road North terrace within immediate setting



5.1b Large villa south of conservation area



### 5.1.1 Immediate Setting

The immediate setting of the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area is almost completely residential. It is defined by those buildings that directly overlook the park or the buildings that bound it. Several key features define its broad character:

- **Unity in use:** Mostly residential housing, with very small clusters of commercial and public buildings at gateways.
- **Shared material palette:** primarily red and brown brick for the main structure, some stone dressings to windows and doors, with slate or tile roofing.
- **Height and spatial arrangement:** Two to two and a half storeys in height, buildings are generally semi-detached or terraced, set back from the road but in plots substantially smaller than those seen in the conservation area.
- **Architectural modesty:** The rich detailing of the villas is replaced with more restrained architectural detailing in some cases, with the majority of the buildings being of more limited architectural merit.

There is however subtle variation within this immediate setting, specifically between the roads that bound the park, which is crucial to understanding the differences in experiencing the park

On Park Road West, and on the western half of Park Road South, the housing is generally semi-detached, set in smaller but not ungenerous plots, often dating to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and frequently

rendered or constructed in stock brick. These homes, whilst architecturally non-distinct, echo something of the spacious character of the villas on the opposing sides. This character has however been eroded by the redevelopment of some larger historic plots with inappropriately scaled modern blocks of flats, care homes and modern housing developments; these include Epworth Grange on Park Road West, the Grove and Park House Care Homes and St. Hugh's Close on Park Road South **[Plates 5.1.1-5.1.3]**.

Park Road North and East are much more densely developed. Smaller scale and lower quality red brick terraced housing dominates Park Road North, whilst Park Road East comprises semi-detached housing, also mostly constructed from red and brown brick and within small plots. However, a number of the buildings in Park Road East exhibit a high amount of architectural detail with moulded brickwork and stained-glass windows **[Plates 5.1.4-5.1.6]**.

To the northeastern gateway of the conservation area a small cluster of commercial and institutional buildings stand within the setting of the conservation area - their original purpose as a group of amenities including the Queen's Hotel Pub, Laird Art School, former Park Cinema and former Assembly Rooms however is now less defined. This function is echoed at the southwestern gateway, where sprawling Sixth Form College Birkenhead's campus visually dominates much of the setting, obscuring Claughton Village high street from much of Park Road West **[Plates 5.1.7-5.1.9]**.

The immediate setting of the conservation area is at great risk of further degradation with several structures' derelict and facing the threat of demolition or inappropriate development. In some cases, these include prominent buildings, such as the former Catholic Apostolic Church (previously listed at Grade II) and former Cole Street Primary School, which as of 2024 was under substantial redevelopment **[Plate 5.1.10 and 5.1.11]**.

Boundary treatments vary much more widely within the immediate setting of the park, clearly indicating those buildings that did not form part of the original land allocation. However, the public realm broadly mimics that of the main roads within the conservation area; low quality concrete paving and tarmac are the norm on both roads and pavements alongside modern streetlighting and a general lack of signage and street furniture.



5.1.1 Southern side of Park Road West



**5.1.2** *Park Road West semi-detached housing*



**5.1.3** *Epworth Grange*



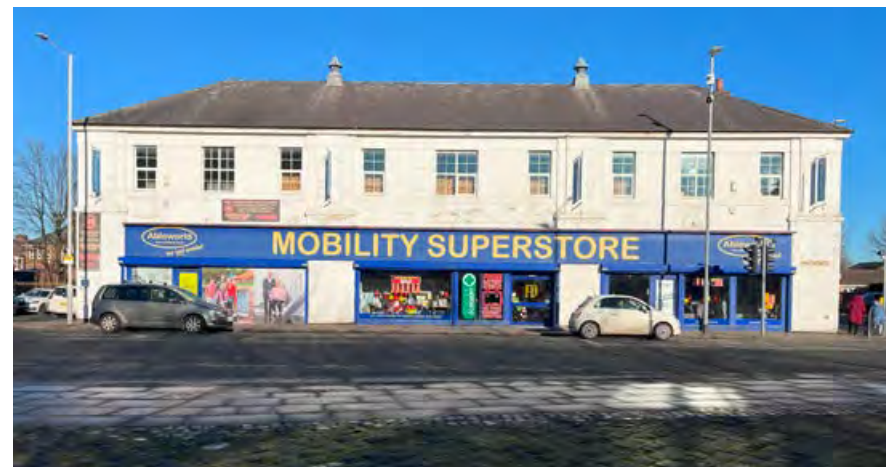
**5.1.4** *Park Road North terraces*



**5.1.5** *Park Road East semi-detached houses and terraces*



**5.1.6** *Park Road East with view into back-to-backs*



**5.1.7** *Mobility Superstore at northern gateway*





**5.1.10** Former Apostolic Church in derelict state



**5.1.11** Former Cole Street Primary School redevelopment



**5.1.9** Queen's Hotel at northern gateway



**5.1.8** Former cinema at northern gateway

### 5.1.2 Wider Setting

The conservation area's wider setting is more varied in character, with a mixture of residential areas, small commercial shopping clusters, Claughton Village high street and the more industrial spaces surrounding Birkenhead docks. As a result of the more protracted nature of development within the wider setting its historic character is also much more mixed; though to the north the park represents a disintegration of the clear and linear street pattern laid out by William Laird from the 1820s, most of the immediate setting was developed over the course of around 80 years, with little clear phasing of development.

A sense of coherence is derived from:

- **Street pattern:** the grid-iron arrangement of the terraced streets that surround it to the north, south and east highlight the planned development of much of its surroundings. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century development to the west exhibits a different pattern, but the large estates of homes within it also highlight the planned nature of its development.
- **Funnelled views:** relatively distant streets that run parallel to the park but meet terraces running perpendicular to Park Road North and South create funnelled views into the conservation area.
- **Shared scale:** echoing the scale of the immediate setting most of the buildings within the area are between two and three storeys in height, with the majority being either terraces or small semi-detached villas.

#### [Plates 5.1.12 and 5.1.13]



5.1.12 Views along grid-iron terraces



5.1.13 Shared small scale of terraces in wider setting



However key points of difference include:

- **Architectural quality:** Whilst the small-scale terracing to the north of the conservation area exhibits limited architectural detailing and is of limited architectural quality, the larger terraces and grand villas to the south and west are richly detailed, high-quality examples of early Victorian architecture.
- **Types of development:** Unlike the immediate setting of the area, the wider setting exhibits several historic high streets, including the historic core of Claughton village, which contrast with the residential character and more industrial areas that form the setting. Towards the more industrial centres of the town of Birkenhead several large tower-blocks dominate the skyline and substantially differ from the otherwise much smaller scale of the area.
- **Periods of construction:** Whilst much of the terracing to the north and east of the area dates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, much more variation can be seen to the south and west; here much of the housing dates to the 1930s, but further south the large villas towards Oxton are much earlier, mostly having been constructed by Charles Reed in the 1830s and 1840s.
- **Topography:** The north of the conservation area is broadly flat, with a soft slope upwards towards the docks. However, the southern and western setting dramatically inclines up to Grange Road West, Grosvenor Road and Grosvenor Mount. This is most visible on Manor Hill, which follows the path of Ashville Road to the south.

**[Plates 5.1.14-5.1.21]**



**5.1.14** Small-scale architectural detailing on terraces



**5.1.15** Unusual architectural detailing



**5.1.16** Tower blocks to north of area



**5.1.17** *Cloughton village high street to west of area*



**5.1.18** *19<sup>th</sup> century villas*



**5.1.19** *Early 20<sup>th</sup> century terracing*



**5.1.20** *Steep slopes characteristic of southern and western areas*



**5.1.21** *Flatter topography of northern area*



## 5.2 Gateways

### [Plate 5.2.1]

The perpendicular arrangement of terraces located within the conservation area's wider setting, and the high number of entrances into the park, ensures that several minor gateways are present within the area. However, the most prominent gateways exist at each corner of the conservation area, where the roads that bound the park meet those out of the Birkenhead Park area at key nodal points, with the built form signalling a change in the development pattern **[Plates 5.2.2-5.2.8]**.

The Grand Entrance Lodge (Grade II\*) forms the principal gateway into the conservation area and park, its grand architectural scale ensuring its legibility as the primary entranceway. The crossing of Park Road North, Conway Street, Vittoria Street and Park Road East forms the transport node closest to Birkenhead town centre and out towards the docks. The stop of a Merseytravel bus service, whilst visually detracting, further illustrates the area as an arrival point **[Plates 5.2.9 and 5.2.10]**.

In some cases, the gateways lack landmarks that highlight the presence of the park and conservation area. This is true of the western gateway to the south of Claughton High Street and the roundabout that forms the junction between Ashville Road, Park Road West, Manor Hill and St. Davis's Road. In the case of the former, the Claughton Pharmacy building overshadows the historic Castellated Lodge. However, in the case of the latter, the 1920s and 30s

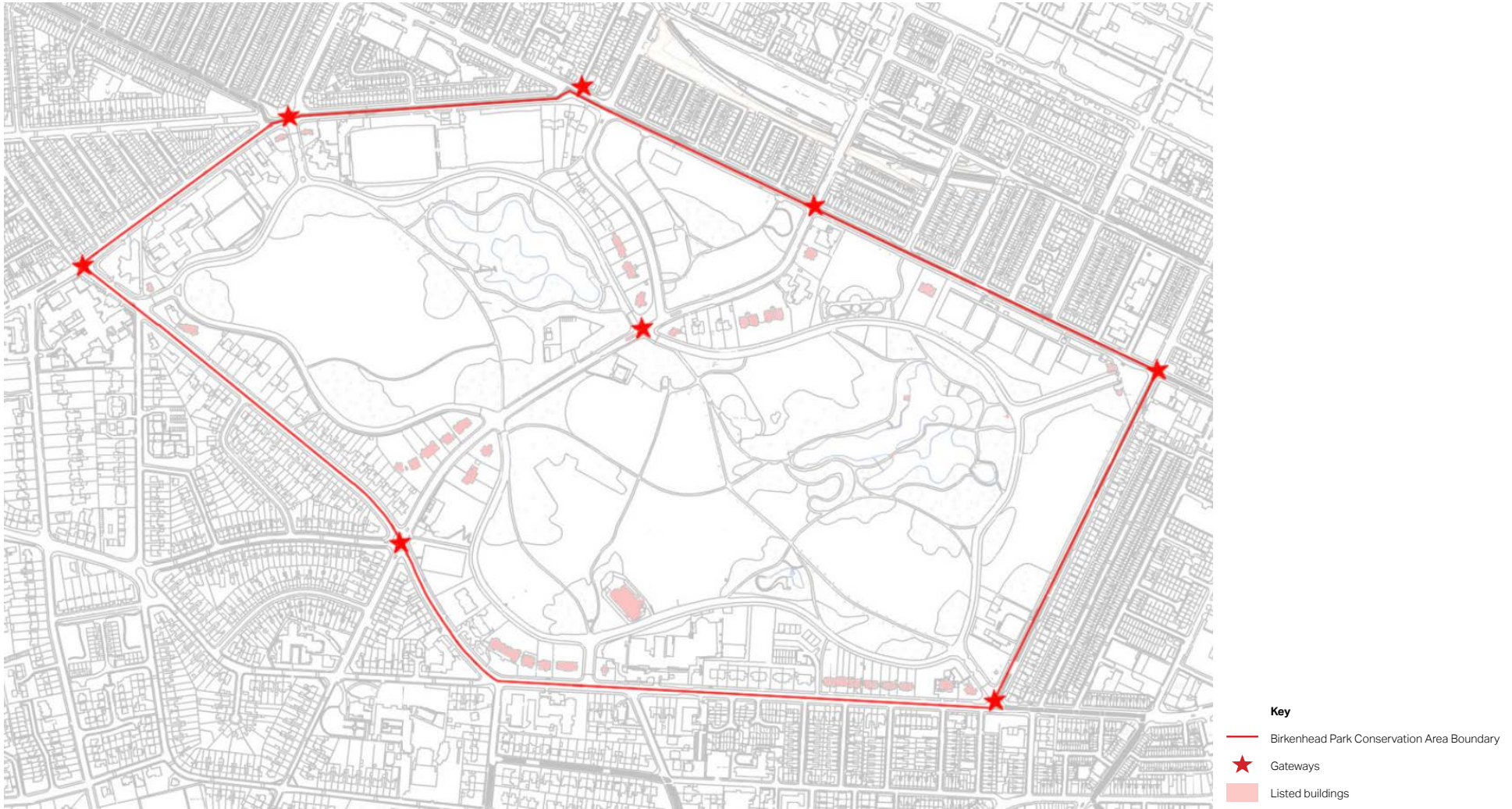
housing estate in the setting of the area diminish the townscape role of 18 Ashville Road; the covering of the gate piers that flank the pedestrian entrance to the Lower Park exacerbate this reduced sense of the park's presence.

Though the northern gateway also lacks a clear landmark building, the view here into the Boothby Ground and of the high-quality housing along Cavendish Road ensures that it is legible arrival point into the conservation area and park landscape **[Plate 5.2.11]**.

In some cases, vegetation has disrupted the impact of the landmarks and thus of the gateway, with only the open space and converging transport nodes denoting an entrance to the park. This is the case on Park Road North, where the curve of the road around the park is a point of convergence for Mallaby Street, Norman Street and Bidston Avenue. However, the Norman Lodges that flank the entrance, are mostly obscured. Similarly, the southeastern gateway comprises a junction between Park Road South, Claughton Road and Park Road East, with the Gothic Lodge historically serving as a key landmark; this too is now hidden from view by the mature planting and high fencing that dominates **[Plate 5.2.12]**.

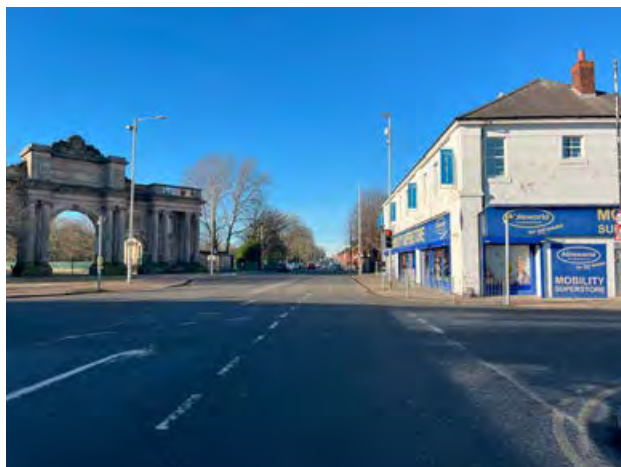
Across the gateways the quality of the public realm is relatively poor, reducing the sense of arrival to the park. Whilst the gates and gate piers themselves mark the entrances into the parkland, the surrounding paving, street furniture and signage fail to highlight the significance of the access points and the space being entered; in some cases the cracking of setts, intrusion

of roots and poor-quality paving also presents serious accessibility issues to wheelchair users and those with other physical disabilities, issues which are exacerbated by parking within some gateway areas.



5.2.1 Gateways Map





**5.2.2** *Northeastern gateway*



**5.2.3** *Southeastern gateway*



**5.2.4** *Southwestern gateway*



**5.2.5** *Ashville Road gateway*



**5.2.6** *Western gateway*



**5.2.7** *Northern gateway*





5.2.8 Ashville Road and Duke Street gateway



5.2.9 Grand entrance gateway to northeast



5.2.10 View west along Park Road North.



5.2.11 Boothby Ground and Cavendish Road mark entrance into park conservation area



5.2.12 Norman Lodge gateway's impact obscured by vegetation growth



## 5.3 Views

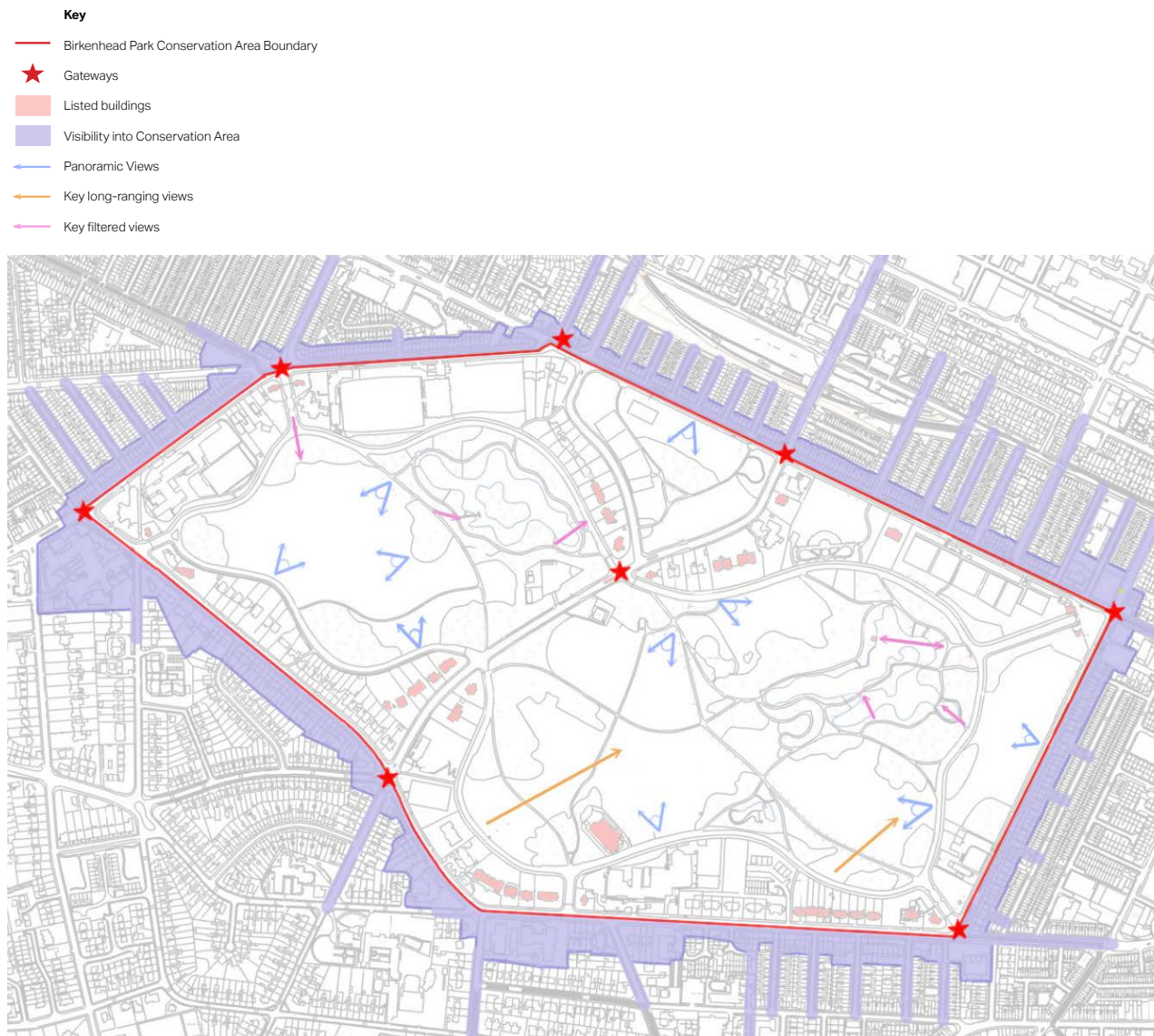
Views from within the park of the townscape and across character areas are discussed in Section 4, in the analysis that corresponds to each Character Area. Views and visibility into the conservation area from its setting, and out of the conservation area are discussed below **[Plate 5.3.1]**.

### 5.3.1 Views into the Conservation Area

The variable topography within the park itself and its surroundings substantially impacts levels of visibility through the conservation area. To the north of the conservation area the streets subtly slope towards the docks, whilst the west and south rapidly slope. To the east and northwest, the surrounding setting is relatively flat. This results in the following views:

- Panoramic views into the park where the residential townscape does not border it (i.e. where houses within the setting directly overlook the park boundary).
- Panoramic views into the residential townscape from the immediate setting.
- Short funnelled and focused views of either the residential townscape or park from terraces that meet Park Road North and South.
- Long-ranging views from linear roads within the setting that meet gateways (e.g. Duke Street, Claughton Road, Manor Hill).

**[Plates 5.3.2-5.3.5]**



**5.3.1** Key Views Map



5.3.2 Views into park from immediate setting



5.3.3 Views into townscape from immediate setting



5.3.4 Short and funnelled view into park



5.3.5 Long ranging view along Duke Street into conservation area



### 5.3.2 Views out of the Conservation Area

The long, mostly straight roads that bound the conservation area lend themselves to strong views out of the area into the wider townscape. Whilst some of these views are more limited, and visibility is further explored in the discussion of immediate and wider setting, there is variation on visibility from each of the gateways and roads in the area.

Overall, the key views and visual features are as follows:

- Long-ranging but focused views from east to west along Park Road North and Park Road South, with the former looking towards Laird Street and Conway Street and the latter looking towards Claughton Road and Edgerton Road.
- Long-ranging but focused views from north to south from Park Road West and Park Road East, with the former looking towards Alderley Avenue and Palm Grove and the latter looking towards Vittoria Street in the north.
- Long-ranging but focused views from north-east to south-west along Ashville Road, with visibility of Duke Street and Manor Hill.
- Focused views from gateway sites along roads and streets away from the conservation area. This often includes panoramic views of gateways and nodal points from the lodge buildings and park entrances.
- Visibility of housing and terracing extending from opposing sides of Park Road North, South, East and West (only the side of the

road hosting original development that borders the park is included within the conservation area boundary)

- Funnelled and focused views into the wider setting created by terraces meeting Park Road North and South at right angles.

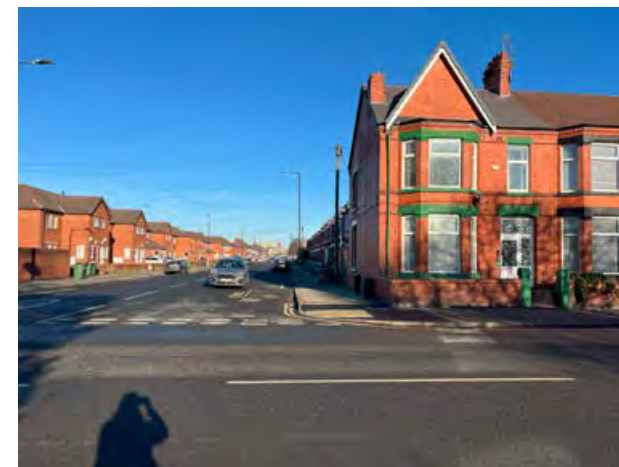
#### [Plates 5.3.6-5.3.8]



**5.3.7** Panoramic views of housing in immediate setting



**5.3.6** View from Laird street looking east towards conservation area



**5.3.8** Funnelled and focused view into the wider setting where terraces meet the conservation area



## 6 Negative Factors and Opportunities for Enhancement



## 6 Negative Factors and Opportunities for Enhancement

### 6.1 Overview

Birkenhead Park is a unique oasis of green space and design quality within an otherwise densely packed suburban area. Its special interest as a municipal park built for the enjoyment of all is highly legible in its continued leisure use, remaining a vibrant community space that is evidently a source of local pride and identity. However, its vitality and quality as a park enveloped by a rich residential townscape is threatened in the long term by several key issues:

- The erosion of the original design intent by means of small-scale changes including incremental loss of detail to residential buildings poor upkeep and cluttering of facades and, crucially, boundary treatments and gardens.
- Intense economic pressures prompting demolition, subdivision and extension.
- A reduction in green space and boundary treatments on the edges of the conservation area, undermining the setting of the buildings and the area's sense of intact and unified design.
- Poor quality and inconsistent public realm on Parks Road, East, West, North and South.

Looking towards the future of the park, there are opportunities for the conservation area to be enhanced, drawing on its rich history to better engage existing leisure visitors and inspire a new generation with love for this treasured landscape. The discussion below aims to draw out the issues that threaten the area, whilst considering how it can continue to grow and flourish as the 'People's Garden'.<sup>3</sup>

- 
- 3 Frederick Law Olmsted described Birkenhead Park as a 'People's Garden' in his book *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* that was published following his visit in 1850.



## 6.2 Negative Factors and detracting elements

### 6.2.1 Poor Quality Later 20<sup>th</sup> Century Developments

#### Impact on significance: High

There have been relatively few new developments within the conservation area since the production of the previous appraisal, with most of the historic buildings within the park remaining intact. However, where new buildings have been constructed, they have frequently been of substantially greater massing and scale than the original residential villas designed around the park, harming the rhythm within the townscape. The majority have been designed to support provision of care and other public services within the conservation area.

In the cases of Heyberry Court and Blair Court, the modern buildings are highly visible from the

landscaped park, altering its setting. Though the influence of Paxton's early, proposed terraced schemes around the park are visible within these designs, they do represent a substantial departure in materiality, scale and design; none of the buildings represent the high-quality design principles sought as part of the earlier management plan, though some are better screened than others from the park.

Several other buildings are of poor quality, or otherwise undermine the key design principles on which the park was constructed. A particularly prominent cluster is located to the west of the area, bounding the Upper Meadow and along Park Road North. Whilst Claughton Medical Centre is well screened and set back within the plot, being minimally visible from within the park itself, the Joseph Paxton Campus of the Wirral Hospitals' School is highly

visible, its substantial post-war building sprawling across a large site with relatively little screening. Similarly, several ancillary buildings attached to the Rugby Club are highly visible both from the street and the road, with poor quality corrugated roofing and shuttering detracting from the earlier clubhouse building on the site.

The car wash building also seen on Park Road North deviates substantially from the otherwise green verdant and architecturally rich townscape. The fully concreted yard and bright signage to the building creates a visually dominant effect within the townscape, which could benefit from being softened. This is similarly true of Ashville Lodge, which utilises a similar dark brown brick that is otherwise not present within the conservation area **[Plates 6.2.1-6.2.3]**.



**6.2.1** detracting Car Wash building on Parks Road North



**6.2.2** Dures Court



**6.2.3** Modern housing buildings highly visible from park



### 6.2.2 Unsympathetic Extensions

**Impact on significance:** Currently low but potential to be high

There are relatively few unsympathetic extensions within the conservation area. The previous appraisal notes that this may be the result of the building's already generous proportions but is possibly also influenced by the presence of the restrictive covenants.

However, where buildings are and have been extended, the impact is higher than it might otherwise be. The dual aspect element of the area ensures that most of the buildings' elevations are relatively visible. As such, the design of any extensions that might be proposed would have to be extremely carefully designed not to have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area.

Extensions that are most likely to be harmful to the building are dormers located on classically designed buildings; here the shallow roof pitch and sense of symmetry would render them highly visible, and those that would degrade the sense of quality within the townscape, especially if introducing elements such as UPVC features that would contrast with the main building. They are also especially prominent within the park, such as at the Cricket Pavilion **[Plate 6.2.4]**.

As regeneration of the area continues, it is likely that development pressure on the large residential plots will increase, and extensions are possibly more likely.



**6.2.4** Poor quality extension within park to cricket club

### 6.2.3 Alterations to Historic Detailing and Materials

#### Impact on significance: High

Though small-scale detailing to buildings within conservation areas is frequently lost, the cumulative impact of this on character and appearance can be substantial - particularly the case in townscapes defined by rich ornament. Often resulting from poor maintenance, upgrade and refurbishment the impact of ad-hoc loss of detailing and unsympathetic alterations can be seen most notably across the conservation area's residential villas, including the degradation of historic roofing materials, ornamental metalwork, windows, doors, historic joinery and other materials.

Of note is the loss of original timber windows in favour of UPVC replacements. The arrangement of the windowpanes and glazing bars defines much of the area's character, creating a sense of visual variety and intrigue within the townscape, highlighting the wealth of those constructing the private villas that encircle the park. The addition of modern rooflights and dormers is also of particular note, most intrusively impacting the more classically influenced buildings in the conservation area, whose shallow hipped roofing and symmetrical fenestration patterns define their character. Door replacements are less common within the area, but where doors have been lost they are generally replaced with obtrusive UPVC options, which cause harm to the character of the area.

Roofing materials are sometimes replaced with concrete tiles, which adversely impacts the conservation area, being of clearly modern character. However, it may also present structural problems beyond aesthetic issues, being heavier and more prone to slips as well as being more difficult to clean and maintain.

Many of the most unsympathetic of alterations are associated with historic buildings that have been converted to other uses. Converting a single dwelling for multiple-occupancy, unless very carefully considered, often results in a number of changes that are detrimental to the appearance of the building and therefore have a knock-on effect on the streetscape. This can be clearly seen at Royden house, but is prevalent across the conservation area.

The cluttering of facades and garden spaces are also associated with incremental change, with high levels of security protection located to buildings within the park and in its residential townscape. Shuttering and modern fencing is visible to buildings within the park, especially notable on buildings associated with the cricket club outside of the sporting season. To residential properties high levels of wiring to facades, security lighting, cameras and alarms can be seen. Whilst it is acknowledged that security of the properties remains a concern for many residents, the cumulative addition of further wiring and security clutter over multiple decades has resulted in complex layers of wiring across elevations, undermining the visual prominence of the rich detailing visible on many buildings.

Within the park, shuttering and additional gates can be seen on both cricket club buildings and the former Legion building. These features are particularly obtrusive during non-opening hours, but there is still a metal box above and around windows even when fully opening, often obscuring details around the openings. They also contribute to a feeling of a lack of security and safety, which undermines the utopian vision on which the park was founded and designed

Additionally, the concrete angling platforms seen within the Lower Park Lake highlights that even within the central parkland environment, improved consideration of the details and materials used in conservation works can tangibly impact the park **[Plates 6.2.4-6.2.7].**





**6.2.4** Poor quality extension within park to cricket club



**6.2.7** Detrimental shuttering to cricket club



**6.2.5** End of terrace showing addition of clutter to facade and loss of detailing



**6.2.6** Villa showing loss of garden, rendering, loss of original windows and doors



#### 6.2.4 Boundaries, Gardens and Yard (including deviations from the original covenants)

##### Impact on significance: Extremely High

Whilst degradation of historic boundary treatments, gardens and planting is common across conservation areas, the consistency of the boundary treatments within the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area is crucial to the legibility of its character and significance. However, despite highly restrictive covenants laid on the land when originally sold, many of the historic gateposts flanking properties and park entrances have been lost, painted or are badly

damaged, with the original or historic railings or walls often in the same condition or poorly replaced with modern materials. Gardens have frequently been replaced with hardstanding car parking for HMOs, and in many cases small garages and additional buildings have been constructed on the sides of the homes and in the gardens.

Within the park itself there is a lack of consistency in the treatment of the railings and stone plinths surrounding them. In several cases vegetation and damage have impacted the gate piers and boundary itself.

In addition to being sacrificed for parking, many of the gardens have been paved over to reduce maintenance requirements. Their original verdant green character has therefore been exchanged for one of uniform graveling or hardstanding. To the rear of residential properties gardens generally remain intact, but their relationship to the park has often been degraded through the addition of close-board and chain-link fencing, or substantial walling. In some cases anti-theft and trespassing measures have included glass shards in concrete and barbed wiring on boundary treatments, with high security gates often inserted between the historic gate piers **[Plates 6.2.8-6.2.13]**.



6.2.10 Close board fencing disrupting historic park boundary



6.2.8 Non original rear boundary with glass shards inserted



6.2.9 High gates infilling gate piers





**6.2.11** *Original boundary treatment and garden lost*



**6.2.12** *Damage to historic gate pier*



**6.2.13** *Poor quality modern fencing to boundary*

### 6.2.5 Condition

#### Impact on significance: Moderate

The general condition of some buildings within the conservation area is poor in places, mostly resulting from a lack of regular upkeep and maintenance. This is typically worse to the residential dwellings that form the park's boundary than the buildings and landscape within the park itself - which has broadly been well maintained since the 2002-7 restoration work. However, a few of the lodges which are in private ownership are in a poor condition. Broadly linked to economic factors that have limited maintenance and redevelopment of the townscape, this is contrasted with the landmark buildings within the park itself, which remain in a good condition and state of repair.

Within the parkland landscape the condition of paving surfaces in some areas is poor, with root growth and drainage causing damage to tarmacked drives and pedestrian walks. There are also signs of issues of deterioration to the bridges in the Lower Lake, with paint peeling - probably because of normal wear and tear.

Whilst the condition of the parkland's individual elements of planting is relatively good, the overall condition of the landscape in historic terms is less strong. After 180 years of management very few original plants remain; a lack of diversity in species and age characterises the landscape, contrasting with the vibrancy of the park described upon its opening [Plate 6.2.14].



6.2.14 Villa in need of repointing



### 6.2.6 Public Realm

#### Impact on significance: Moderate

The heavily trafficked roads around the edge of the conservation area, which form key commuter transport nodes across the wider Birkenhead area, create barriers to pedestrian access. Pedestrian access around the conservation area is further impacted by the presence of large numbers of wheely bins and clutter to the roads, most visible on Park Road South and West, where many dwellings have been subdivided into flats.

With no coherent public realm scheme to these roads, the condition of paving and provision of streetlighting within the park and its surroundings is poor. Though limited public realm schemes of the 2000s aimed to tackle these issues, root growth, uneven ground and drainage issues have impacted the accessibility of the space.

To the edge of the conservation area there are almost no wayfinding elements to signal the existence of the park behind the belt of residential villas. Though eight signs note the existence of the conservation area, they are not always obvious and fail to fully reveal the existence of the park, or the townscape's shared identity with it. Some signage offers public interpretation within the park, but this is limited. This

failure reduces the potential for incidental footfall from the surrounding community and misses an opportunity to educate those visiting the park without a knowledge of its significance.

Standard street signage, safety measures such as railings at crossings, bus stops and sheltered are generally installed on the roads around park, which do not respect or understand its international significance. Similarly, signage to properties both within the conservation area and its immediate setting are often overly prominent in scale, design and siting, and fail to respect the clear character of the area **[Plates 6.2.15-6.2.18]**.



**6.2.15** Cracking and damage to paving by roots



**6.2.16** Poor quality standard signage on Duke St



**6.2.17** Brightly coloured yellow bus stop



**6.2.18** Concrete paving, bins and bus shelter characteristic of conservation area

### 6.2.7 Vacant Sites, Subdivision and Intensive Redevelopment

#### Impact on significance: High

The area remains at threat from poor quality development of vacant or badly damaged sites. A number of sites are either vacant, or in such poor condition that they might be considered Heritage At Risk and are most at risk of poor quality development. This is most notable on Irvine Way, where the scale of recent development has been extremely high. However, it remains an issue throughout the immediate setting of the area **[Plate 6.2.19]**.



**6.2.19** Vacant parking site on Park Road North

### 6.2.8 Anti-social Behaviour and Damage

#### Impact on significance: Moderate

Anti-social behaviour such as illegal riding of motorised scooters and bikes through the park compromises its experience as it was originally designed to be: a quiet and picturesque retreat from urban sprawl. However, the much larger threat is seen in vandalism of the landscape and buildings within the conservation area. Notable at the Royal British Legion building on Park Road East, the risk of arson and criminal activity within vacant and unoccupied spaces is high **[Plate 6.2.20]**.



**6.2.20** Royal British Legion building in partially vacant state



### 6.2.9 Signage

Whilst many of the buildings within the area remain in use as residential dwellings, some operate as commercial premises, care homes and offices. The signage, shuttering and banners to these buildings, as well as those visible from the park and conservation area, forming part of their immediate setting, frequently detracts from the conservation area. This is most commonly an issue around the gateways into the edges of the conservation area, where commercial buildings and small high—streets are concentrated around nodal junctions.

Where possible signs should work with existing space on the building, if it has historically existed as commercial premises, or should be carefully site and designed as not to intrude on the verdant and leafy character of the area. Where signs are large, and located close to the residential townscape, they undermine the domestic character of the area. This is the case at 12 Cavendish Road, a former house converted in a dentist's clinic, whose large sign overshadows the experience of the garden.

There are few examples of box signage and illuminated signage within the conservation area. Instead, large fascia signage is more commonly used, often brightly coloured in contrasting primary colours that juxtapose with the green and verdant landscape. Temporary banners are also visible within the conservation area, frequently mounted on the historic railings that characterise the park. However, post and panel signs are the most common within the conservation area, usually located to stretch above the height of the historic park railings and poorly obscured by vegetation. All of these starkly contrast with the residential character of the townscape and erode the visual impact of the historic boundary treatments that define the park **[Plate 6.2.21]**.

### 6.2.10 Development Pressures, Successes and Losses

There has been limited development in the area in the last 10 years. However, one major development has been undertaken in recent years, highlighting the value of the large plots in which the villas sit.

Irvine Way, enabling development that has supported the conservation of the former ESWA social club and Andrew Irvine's childhood home on Park Road South, is a large cul-de-sac development of houses and flats that directly overlook and bound the park. Utilising the former garden space of 54-56 Park Road South, it represents a substantial intensification of the historically leafy plot. Whilst the building it is sat close to is unlisted and the homes are not poorly designed, they represent a departure from the existing townscape and further development to the rear of plots in this way should not be supported in the future.

The visitor centre within the park also represents a relatively recent substantial development within the park but has successfully enabled for greater amenity provision within the park **[Plate 6.2.22]**.



**6.2.21** *Detracting fascia signage to car wash*

## 6.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

There are numerous opportunities to manage and enhance detracting elements of the conservation area, offering a valuable chance for its overall condition to be uplifted, and the legibility of its architectural and historic interest improved. Supporting the vibrancy of the area and its historic environment, specific recommendations are outlined in detail within the accompanying Management Plan's recommendations (see section 7.4 for a summary table of these).

At a small scale, there are opportunities to retain and reinstate buildings' architectural detailing and prominent features, reduce clutter to the facades of historic buildings and improve the appearance of landscaping, historic planting and boundary treatments within and outside of the main park. In many cases, a lack of awareness of the value of



**6.3.1** Retention of historic detailing impacts experience of park

individual features and the character of the area has resulted in this loss; the production of new maintenance and energy efficiency guidance will help to provide clear information to building owners on how to maintain the condition of their properties, whilst audits of the area and enforcement action by the council and relevant stakeholders would help to maintain the area's character on a wider scale **[Plate 6.3.1]**.

The introduction of several planning controls, including Article 4 directions and Local Development Orders, would support the maintenance of the conservation area's condition, whilst the production of Design Codes and guidance would serve to inform developers and building owners on the appropriacy of their proposals. They would help to ensure that any new development is carefully considered and designed to a high standard, considering the context of the surrounding historic environment and its character. A lack of information on how to manage the environment is often what has resulted in the construction of poor-quality modern development, a loss of original features within the park or the insertion of inappropriate street furniture, paving and signage within the public realm. The commissioning of further studies on historic planting, succession planning and design guides will help to inform the management of the environment going forward **[Plate 6.3.2]**.



**6.3.2** Buildings in good condition enhance the character of the area



On a larger scale, the enhancement of public-facing areas within the conservation area would help to improve the visual appearance of the park and historic buildings' surroundings. Though limited areas of historic paving and the public realm survive, both within and outside of the park, new public realm schemes and a reinstatement of park amenity provision might support wayfinding within the area, helping to create a coherent identity for Birkenhead Park, ultimately attracting new visitors and improving the legibility of the historic environment **[Plate 6.3.3]**.

Maintaining the events programme within the park and extending the interpretation elements within it would support community ownership and appreciation of the area, ensuring that its unique character and historic value is understood and upheld by those who visit, live and work in the area.



**6.3.3** *Historic park bench adds to the quality of the public realm.*heic

## 6.4 Boundary extension and additional designations

### 6.4.1 Boundaries

The boundary of the Conservation Area has remained intact since its original designation, with the previous appraisal noting that it almost exactly follows the boundary of the original park designed by Paxton. No boundary extension to the conservation area has been proposed as part of this assessment, with the original boundaries to the area to be retained.

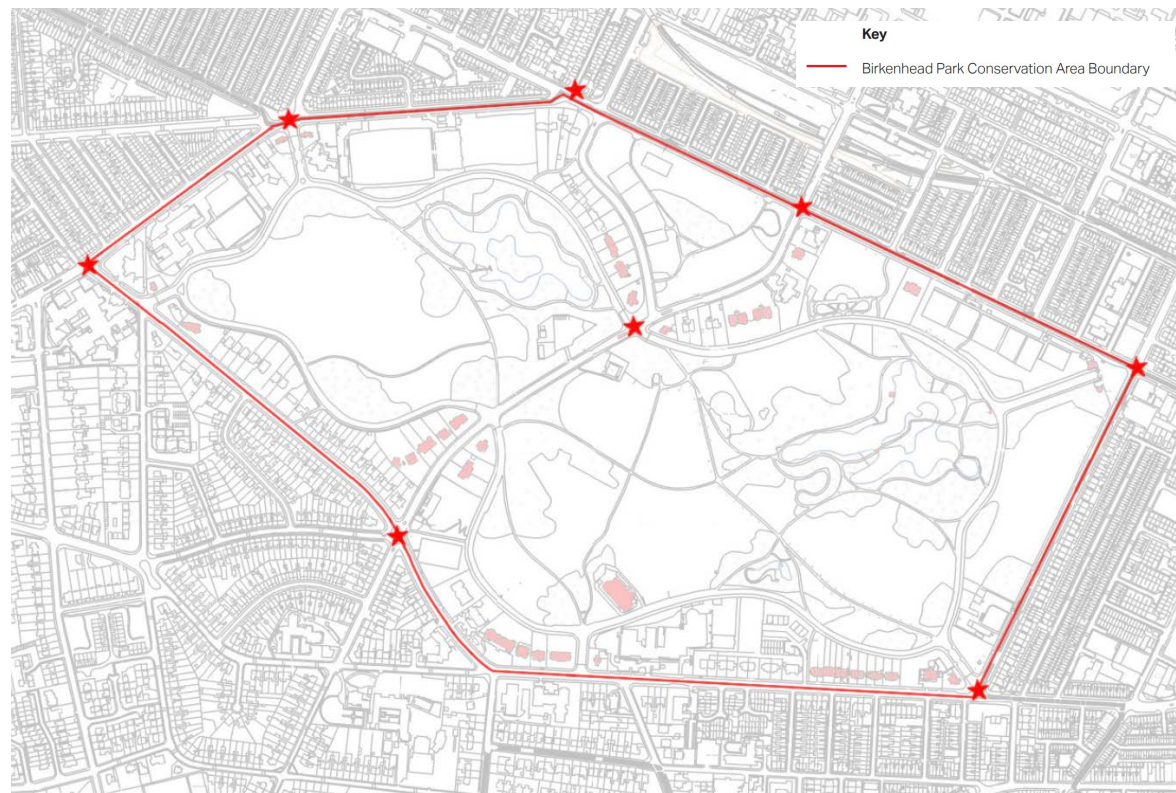
As a development united under one clear vision and design intent, the current boundary represents the original parcel of land intended to form the Birkenhead Park development; whilst not of a single phase the current conservation area represents the full extent of the area designed by Joseph Paxton for the park. With the historic and architectural character of the

conservation area principally derived from the park's status as the first municipally funded public park, the retention of these original boundaries is crucial to the area's integrity as a complete multi-phase development united under one design intent. This can be seen within original sale plans of the park. As a result, the other areas within the proposed study area were not included within the boundary as part of this assessment **[Plate 6.4.1]**.

The line of the conservation area, which falls along the centre of Park Road North, Park Road South, Park Road East and Park Road West, was considered an appropriate boundary. Able to encompass the public realm to the townscape along the road, whose state directly impacts the character and experience of the conservation area, the poor quality of the public realm to the adjacent pavement ensures that an extension to the boundary would be unnecessary. **[Plate 6.4.2]**



6.4.1 Sale plan of Birkenhead Park plots, 1850 (Wikimedia)



6.4.2 Birkenhead Park Conservation Area Boundary



### 6.4.2 Additional designations

However, it is noted that some of the park's wider setting analysed as part of this assessment was of high architectural and historic value, and therefore worthy of designation. Located to the south-west of the park itself, sandwiched between Oxton and Claughton villages, is an area of early 19<sup>th</sup> century residential development, mostly designed by Charles Reed. With several Grade II late-Regency and early Victorian era villas, townhouses and terraces, the area forms a coherent block of affluent, aspirational suburban development that echoes the character of Oxton Village and Birkenhead Park's residential townscape.

Centering on Devonshire Place, Devonshire Road, Charlesville and Reedville, the area is defined by large mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century villas in an Italianate or gothic revivalist style. With the street pattern probably designed by Charles Reed as an affluent suburban development, it now comprises a leafy suburb. Aptly representing the desire of the Birkenhead Improvement Commissioners to create a middle-class commuter town for the growing city of Liverpool, its generous plots and high-quality housing demonstrate the rapid growth and development of the area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Topographically raised above Birkenhead Park, the area forms a particularly sensitive portion of the park's wider setting. However, its substantial listed Regency townhouses, terraces and early Victorian villas are at risk of redevelopment. As such their designation as a conservation area would not only support the conservation of the area itself but would also offer from protection of the Grade I listed Birkenhead Park's setting **[Plate 6.4.3]**.



**6.4.3** *Proposed Conservation Area*



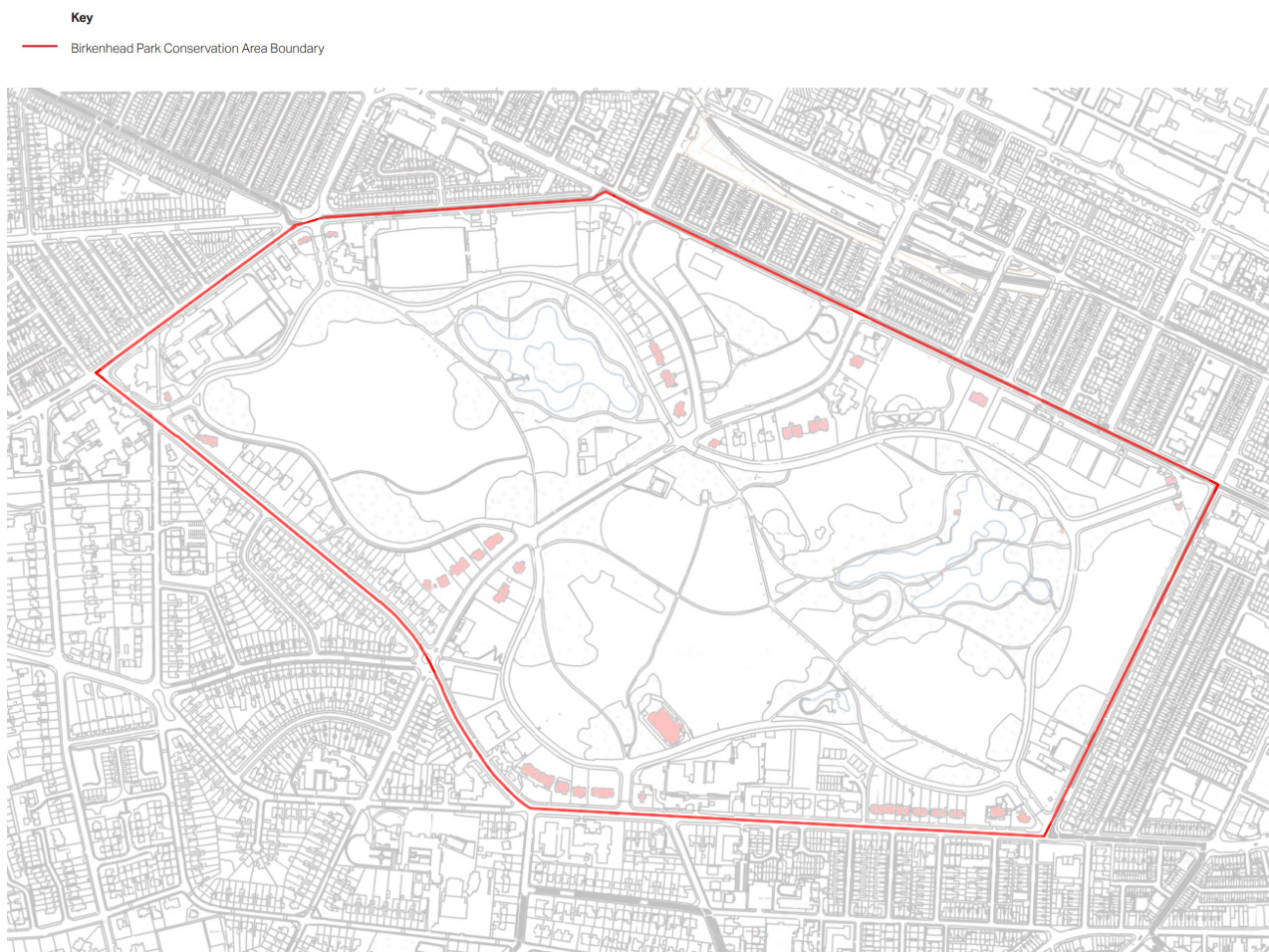
## 7 Management Plan



## 7 Management Plan

### 7.1 Introduction

The Birkenhead Park Conservation Area was designated in 1977 and currently retains its original boundaries. A Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was produced by Donald Insall Associates for the Council in 2007-9, and retained its original boundaries at that date **[Plate 7.1]**.



**7.1** Birkenhead Park Conservation Area Boundary

The following set of management aims and principles are based upon the understanding of the conservation area outlined in the Appraisal, most critically the challenges and opportunities for enhancement identified in Section 7. They seek to provide guidance to WMBC in determining planning applications for development and to building owners and developers when preparing development proposals. They also seek to guide WMBC in planning enhancements to the public realm.

It is essential that any Management Plan supports a modern community and considers both social and economic factors. In view of this, a stakeholder consultation process has been undertaken and has formed an important aspect in formulating the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, whilst a formal public consultation process is undertaken as part of the adoption process. Conservation areas are not frozen entities, and the contribution of Birkenhead Park should be seen in the broader context of both Birkenhead and the Borough of Wirral more broadly. Therefore, it is essential that these principles remain flexible and are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant to the changing ambitions, issues and priorities of the people who live in, work in and visit Birkenhead, as well as to the contribution that the conservation area makes to the broader context of the Wirral Peninsula.

The main aim of the following principles is the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area through:

1. the protection and improvement of those existing buildings, townscape and landscape features that make a positive contribution and
2. the introduction of good quality, contemporary, design.

There is also a presumption against demolition of buildings that make a positive contribution and a wider aim to support the original design intent of Sir Joseph Paxton.

There will be some cases of overlap between this Management Plan and existing policy documents and guidance. It is not the remit of this document to address matters associated with the wider management of the community.

Each set of management principles is underpinned by a series of overarching strategic aims centred on the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. The plan then concludes with a series of recommendations and it is the intention that these are brought forward through a collaborative approach between WMBC, the local community (including owners, local interest groups and developers, amongst other groups) and various funding streams, as and when opportunities for funding arise, in order to bring about really meaningful change, where input is required from everyone.

The understanding of the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area provided in the Appraisal has allowed for the identification of several key issues. If

implemented, this management plan would contribute to resolving these issues, whilst also working to achieve the following key ambitions:

1. Help people understand the significance of the conservation area;
2. Suggest opportunities to enhance the area's character and appearance;
3. Stimulate local interest in both the protection and enhancement through high-quality development of the conservation area for present and future generations;
4. Help address the challenges facing the area;
5. Encourage the conservation, repair, reuse and management of the area's historic features and public realm;
6. Aid residents and developers in their planning of both small alterations and larger scale developments;
7. Provide officers with area specific guidance to help in their appraisal and determination of planning applications;
8. Engage with and encourage owners of properties within the conservation area to meet their responsibilities in respect of repair, reuse and sustainability and compliance with the restrictive covenants that govern their ownership;
9. Promote high-quality design in development proposals;
10. Provide WMBC with an up to date, evidence-based Appraisal and Management Plan for the designated conservation area of Birkenhead Park;



11. Contribute to the economic and social prosperity of Birkenhead;
12. Support officers with bids for further heritage protection status, as well as for in submitting a nomination for World Heritage Site.

### 7.1.1 Policy Context and analysis

A conservation area is ‘*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’ as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Section 69). When dealing with planning applications in conservation areas Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) is required to ensure that ‘*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*’ (Section 72). Also, WMBC has a duty ‘from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas’ (Section 71). This Management Plan is an example of the proposal envisaged in Section 71.

The 1990 Act (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (2013)) prevents the demolition of buildings in conservation areas without planning permission and allows for the service of Urgent Works Notices for vacant buildings in a similar way to those for listed buildings. Development carried out without the required planning permission, or failure to comply with any approval conditions, amounts to unauthorised works. Unauthorised works can include building works, changes of use, advertisements, non-compliance with conditions on an existing planning permission or the unauthorised felling of protected trees. Breaches of planning control may be subject to enforcement action by the local planning authority, WMBC.

The sections of the 1990 Act form the foundation for WMBC to help manage the built environment in such a way as to retain the special qualities of conservation areas. There are, however, a wide range of other pieces of legislation, national guidance and local policy which assist in this task. They deal with other types of heritage assets, such as listed buildings, additional controls to supplement those included in the 1990 Act (often called Article 4 Directions), various types of repair and enforcement notices, and advice on how to assess the impact of development on the setting of an area or building and many other related topics.

Consequently, it is important that this document is not read in isolation from these additional guidance and policy documents; The key local document is the Wirral Local Plan 2021 to 2037 (adopted 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025). Where applicable, links to the documents have been listed in the relevant sections below to provide additional guidance.

## 7.2 Consultation

The following comprises a summary of comments received through an online and written survey which was completed in January 2025, prior to the final consultation:

- The park itself is generally well used by the local community and forms a much-loved green retreat.
- There is a broad and overarching desire for the space to be as clean and well-maintained as possible.
- Desire for improvements to the existing space to ensure that it is as safe and accessible as possible whilst respecting its natural and historic value.
- Accessed and inhabited by a huge community who seek to preserve it as a rare high-quality example of Birkenhead's pioneering period of rapid historic development.

Relatively little mention was made of the buildings surrounding the park (and by those who live in the area rather than those who visit), suggesting that there is a broad lack of awareness of the importance of the surrounding residential area to the park's development and historic identity.

### Protection of Historic Value

Many respondents noted the historic value of the conservation area, highlighting its early date and association with the Victorian parks movement. They note the importance of the park itself and its

pioneering funding model, as well as it having inspired the design of Central Park. It is seen as an attractive place to bring visitors to the local area because of its historic significance.

However, there was also a call for better awareness of its history amongst the general population, as well as to tourists and those who might not be aware of the park's existence. It was suggested that several of the lodges and park buildings be restored and serve as a point for interpretation, whilst new information boards could be placed on gateways near the lodges to highlight their architectural style and this role in the park's 'grand tour' vision. Several respondents noted the challenges of managing the privately owned buildings around the edge of the park, which includes the lodge buildings and villas.

Overall, within the belts of residential housing, there is a need to consider how best to enable the **retention and restoration of detailing**, to **curtail development where it is not appropriate or justified** and to **maximise the quality of development** when it is. This should focus primarily on upholding the principles enshrined in the original **restrictive covenants**.

### Protection of Green Space and Nature

The value of the park as a green space was highlighted by several responses, with its tranquillity and sense of peace particularly valued by local visitors and residents. The landscape's aesthetic quality and well-maintained planting is of high value, with its impact on wildlife also noted. There is a desire for all schemes

involving built or landscaping changes to consider the impact on wildlife living within the park, as well as on its aesthetic quality.

### Vandalism, Anti-social Behaviour and Littering

Respondents note the conservation area's value partially lies in the park's status as a peaceful community space where children can safely be brought to play, the community is able to come together. They highlight that events put on by park staff encourage a sense of community cohesion and that 'all ages' are represented within the space. They also highlight the importance of the listed residential buildings and lodges around the park for their architectural value.

As a result, they were overwhelmingly concerned with the impact of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and littering in the conservation area, which is seen to disrupt this valued sense of tranquillity. Several responses suggested that this was the single largest danger to the park, its residential townscape and public realm, noting the deteriorating condition of the British Legion building on Park Road East as an example. Rubbish and dog excrement are noted as frequent issues in addition to more conscious vandalism, with both the residential spaces and the park itself affected. There was a call for the space to be cleaner and better respected by those visiting. Suggestions for ways to improve the issue from the public included a greater provision of park staff, improved lighting within the park at night and more regular cleaning of the park.



Ultimately there is a fundamental need to improve the control and management of the conservation area, including with the provision of funding to reinstate lost amenities, support the restoration of lodge buildings and the continued upkeep of the park. Vandalism presents a particular threat to the buildings within the park and is a key issue for the Parks management to resolve.

### Amenity and Leisure Provision

Many respondents noted the importance of amenity spaces within the park in supporting their experience of it, highlighting its importance as a green retreat and space for the enjoyment of nature. Others mentioned the success of events within the park in recent years, particularly in fostering a sense of community amongst local people. The park and café staff were particularly praised for their work within the space.

Few individuals commented on the specific leisure amenities that have been retained and maintained but instead highlighted the park's very existence as an amenity space.

Some responses highlighted the loss of amenities, mostly frequently focusing on the rotting of the former angling platforms on the Upper Lake. Several users of the space sought for these to be reinstated to allow angling to resume in this area of the park.

### Accessibility and Safety

Many respondents noted the positive improvement to the park brought about by the removal of vehicular access, with an improved sense of safety for visitors. However, it was noted that the loss of direct access into the park by car has substantially reduced access for those with disabilities; this is an important issue for the park's team to find solutions to.

There is a sense of the importance of the park in being an inclusive space, in which all residents and visitors can feel safe from crime; a desire for improved lighting both within the park and the surrounding townscape is highlighted.

Beyond the residential area, there are further opportunities to enhance public-facing areas on the edge and outside of the conservation area, specifically through select projects at the key transport gateways into the area; the welcome and arrival into the park and conservation area could benefit from improvement. There is a need to improve accessibility within this public space, ensuring equal access to and within the park.

### Future Vision

Respondents envision the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area much as it is today: an attractive leisure space, through which visitors can appreciate both the rich history of the park and the nature that

lives within it. However, they emphasise the need for its improved maintenance, cleanliness and even greater use as an event space, whilst stressing the importance of preserving its rich heritage. They seek to promote the area locally and nationally as a uniquely well-preserved cluster of historic value, with suggestions for its improvement including a focus on accessibility, improving awareness of its history and better enforcing against both anti-social behaviour and heritage crime.

This feedback has been explored as part of this management plan, and where feasible suggestions have been translated into policies and recommendations for the local authority.

### 7.3 Management Plan Policies

Designed by Sir Joseph Paxton as a single unified plan for a park and residential townscape, Birkenhead Park retains a lively green character and rich townscape. This Management Plan hopes to support the preservation of this unique character and design intent and therefore draws on the restrictive covenants placed on the residential plots in guiding the principles to support its management and development as an area.

These covenants require that the heirs and assigns of the original purchasers obey a number of key rules when managing their property (the full restrictive covenants can be seen in Appendix II). Managed by the Birkenhead Improvement Commissioners, the covenants underlined how the land should be managed, what should be constructed within the plots and how this should be maintained.

Many of these principles broadly align with national heritage policy but have also guided the development of the Management Plan, to ensure that the original intention of these covenants endures. Owners of historic buildings built on plots sold off in the 19<sup>th</sup> century remain bound by the original covenants, though the original commissioners are no longer in place. As a result, the relevant covenants are featured alongside the policies.

A number of key themes have been identified relating to the principal areas for the long-term preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. These

have been developed from the Appraisal and analysis of the key issues and opportunities in Section 6. They have been grouped into the following key headings:

- A. Enhancement
- B. Development and Redevelopment
- C. Townscape Public Realm
- D. Management of the Park
- E. Management of the Conservation Area



## A Enhancement of Built Environment

### A.1 Repair and Maintenance of Buildings

**Aim:** To ensure that buildings are appropriately maintained to prevent the negative impact that poor upkeep and maintenance can have on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** *Care should be taken to ensure that the 'External walls of white stone equal in quality and appearance to the Storeton stone or ornamental brickwork of either the Early English, the Elizabethan or the Tudor style with stone dressing and quoins' should be retained and maintained.*

**Principle A.1a** It is essential that buildings be subject to regular inspections by their owners in a logical sequence, considering the condition of its individual elements to understand repair needs. This should follow the Historic England guidance on regularity and include the following:

- Rainwater gutters, channels, hopper heads and pipes
- Building services, pipes and flues
- Drainage gullies
- Roof coverings, including tiles, flashings and ornamental ridge tiles
- Chimneys
- External brick or stonework, including joints and the base of walls

- Windows and doors
- Decorative elements of brick and stonework, including but not limited to columns, corbelling, hood moulds and decorative stone panels.

**Principle A.1b** It is essential that the buildings are subject to general maintenance by their owners on a regular basis. This should include the following:

- Re-painting of external joinery and ironwork
- General minor repairs to windows, including replacement of glazing where necessary
- Repointing using appropriate mixes
- Removal of debris from gutters
- Removal of redundant fixtures and fittings
- Repairs, including repair of missing or slipped roof tiles to prevent water ingress
- Repairs to masonry render and paintwork where these are already present
- Control and removal of vegetation from external walls.

**Principle A.1c** When undertaking repairs, materials should be used on a like-for-like basis and be appropriate to the building's architectural period. Salvage and existing materials should be used as far as possible.

**Principle A.1d** Features and materials that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area should be retained, or reinstated where lost. These include, but are not

limited to, clay roof tiles and Welsh slates, timber-framed windows and leaded glazing, decorative dressings in brick and stone, bay windows, ornamental ironwork balconies and canopies, overhanging eaves and decorative eaves details, bargeboards/fascias, chimneystacks and chimneypots, window tracery, decorative porches and timber doors. The rich detailing and high-quality craftsmanship and materials of these features, or any replacements, should be maintained.

**Principle A.1e** Render and paintwork should not be added to buildings or boundary walls where not present historically.

**Recommendation Ai** Wirral Borough Council should consider producing and advertising maintenance guidance for historic properties, as well as linking to the guidance documents below on their website.

#### Further Guidance Links

Historic England online guidance: Looking after Historic Buildings  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>

Historic England, Maintaining and Repairing an Older Home  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/maintain-repair/>

Historic England online guidance: Maintenance Checklist

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/maintain-repair/checklist/>

### Building Maintenance Good Practice Guide

Owning a historic home might require different levels of care and maintenance than a modern or new build home. The above guidance links, and others on Historic England's website are of particular use: [Looking After Historic Buildings | Historic England](#). The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' (SPAB) free Technical Advice Line is also a valuable resource if you would like more technical advice.

However, the following tips can be helpful as a guide to owners of historic properties:

- Remove vegetation, leaves and debris from brickwork when they are first visible- waiting for them to build up can cause longer term damage and costly repair work.
- Write yourself a maintenance and repair checklist or maintenance plan (using the best practice guidance and links above).
- Schedule in days where these checks can be completed.
- Keep thorough notes of any small works undertaken so that the condition of the building can be carefully monitored in the future.
- Regularly repaint features to ensure that they are maintained in good condition. This could include timber windows, doors, bargeboards and rainwater goods.
- Take clear images of the building at different times of year to monitor the condition of different elements of the building; this can be helpful in highlighting where things have changed.
- Where repair might be necessary, carefully consult the materials used, craftspeople employed and approach taken; this document can be used as a guide and the local conservation team are useful contacts. Using non-breathable modern materials on a historic building can cause long term damage, as historic buildings were not built to be as water-tight as modern materials.
- In most cases lime mortar should be used for repointing over cement-based mixes. This is also true of materials used in re-rendering.
- UPVC window replacements should be avoided.
- Materials should be carefully considered to match the historic form of the building.



## A.2 Alterations to Existing Buildings

**Aim:** To ensure that, as a minimum, alterations to buildings preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, with opportunities taken to bring about an enhancement where possible.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** *Care should be taken to ensure that the 'External walls of white stone equal in quality and appearance to the Storeton stone or ornamental brickwork of either the Early English, the Elizabethan or the Tudor style with stone dressing and quoins' should be retained and maintained.*

*'no building should be erected thereon should be used for any other purpose than a dwellinghouse or a stable coachhouse or other outbuildings to such dwellinghouse and that no cellar should be used for habitation separately from the dwellinghouse.'*

*'No building...should project or extend towards the said Park further from the external railing of the said Park than 190 feet' and 'should not be less than 12 feet respectively.'*

*Previous to the erection of any stabling or other outbuildings on the said parcel of land provision should be made to the satisfaction of the said commissioners for the effectual concealment of such stabling and outbuildings from the Park by planting or the same should be rendered ornamental.*

**Principle A.2a** There shall be a presumption against any alteration to buildings that breaks with, or substantially diverts from, the original restrictive covenants placed on the plots.

**Principle A.2b** The replacement of windows, doors, roofing materials and decorative details should therefore conform to traditional designs and materials found within the conservation area and be appropriate to the character of the building. The diversity of architectural styles within the area should be respected; features appropriate to one building typology or period may not be appropriate for another. All alterations should preserve the high design and material quality of the larger and earlier houses in particular.

**Principle A.2c** When works to buildings are proposed it will be expected that detracting features such as satellite dishes, ducting, lighting and alarm boxes will be removed or more discreetly located. When installing these items, the impact of such equipment on the appearance of buildings and the conservation area should be taken into consideration. It is also expected that historic features are reinstated and improvements to the building's fabric sought as part of the works. This should include:

- Poor quality modern windows and doors should be replaced with appropriate timber examples which follow evidence historic fenestration patterns
- Replacement and reinstatement of historic chimney pots where they have been lost
- Modern concrete roof tiles should be replaced with historic examples

**Principle A.2d** Extensions to landmark and positive buildings will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that they have regard to the character and appearance of the principal building. They must be of an appropriate design, mass, scale, height, colour, material, layout and form to ensure that they are subservient to the original building and that this is not obscured or overdeveloped. Extensions should not alter the character of the building or plot.

**Principle A.2e** Extensions to all buildings should:

- Respect the height, scale and general form of the building
- Respect the architectural character, scale, massing and material palette of the conservation area
- Wherever possible, be confined to secondary elevations not visible from the street or park and respect established building lines; porches and fire escapes will be discouraged
- Utilise traditional materials of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including clay tiles, brick, timber, stone and white-painted plasterwork
- Use contemporary materials when appropriate, where they are sympathetic to the building, ensuring that these are of the highest quality and are tried and tested for durability and long-term effects
- Be of a depth that is proportionate to the host building and respect any existing additions to adjoining buildings. However, not all existing extensions or alterations, which may be many years old, should be regarded as setting a precedent for future changes

- Retain a proportionate area of garden/outside amenity space and not alter the character of this, particularly where properties have large open garden settings and are highly visible from within the park
- Retain balance in the building where it was designed with a sense of symmetry in mind; this also applies to semi-detached buildings

**Principle A.2f** There is a presumption against balconies, roof extensions, dormer extensions and rooflights, where the building forms part of the roofscape visible from the park and street. Where rooflights are acceptable, appropriate flush conservation-style rooflights should be used.

**Principle A.2g** Where properties are visible from the park landscape, equal consideration should be given to the impact of each elevation on the visual amenity of the conservation area, which may be of greater prominence than the corresponding frontages. In such cases, the rears of these buildings should be treated as being equivalent to their street facing frontages. The enhancement of building rears, rear gardens and rear boundary treatments will be supported where currently detracting.

**Principle A.2h** There is a presumption against the conversion of existing dwelling houses to apartments through subdivision and/or extension, especially relating to landmark and positive contributors. Any application relating to conversion requires careful consideration of the consequent changes to, amongst others, delivery access, parking, and external services, such as condensing units. Changes that have a detrimental impact on the conservation area will not be permitted.

**Principle A.2i** Where alterations and extensions are deemed necessary and justified as part of a change of use, they should be carefully sited, consider the significance of the building in the context of the townscape and park, and located to less significant elevations and spaces. Replacements of original features should be minimise any loss and prioritise like-for-like replacement, with modern additions of new fixtures moved to less visible spaces.

**Principle A.2j** Rare and unusual surviving features within the conservation area, such as historic wooden finials and ornamental ridge tiles, should be retained wherever possible.

**Recommendation Ai** Wirral Borough Council should consider the implementation of an Article 4 direction to protect features that remain of interest and contribute to the character of the conservation area.

**Recommendation Aii** Wirral Borough Council and the local civic societies should consider undertaking enforcement action against those who depart from these policies, and an awareness campaign within the park regarding best practice and how to report complaints in need of enforcement.

**Recommendation Aiii** The Friends of Birkenhead Park should undertake bi-annual audits of the area to understand how well these policies are being adhered to.

**Recommendation Aiv** Wirral Borough Council should commission and adopt a Design Guide and Code for Birkenhead Park Conservation Area adopting this as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and promoting its uptake to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change.



## What does living in a Conservation Area mean for me?

Conservation area designation highlights that the area in which you live, work or own property is one of high historic and architectural value. However, this doesn't mean that change to the area is prevented to the detriment of the people within it. It instead exists to work with the local community to preserve what makes the area special, whilst enabling the area to be a vibrant and desirable area to exist within.

It means that new design must be of a high quality, encouraging the place to develop through time whilst supporting its existing character and what makes it feel special. Every area has a different character, defined by its materials, landscape, historic development, uses and public realm.

## So what does it mean for those living within it?

If you own an unlisted building within a conservation area your 'Permitted Development Rights' laid out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order (GPDO) are reduced. This means that planning permission is needed for a larger number of works to your building than if you lived outside of a conservation area.

If you live in or own a residential building within the area, the following works are examples of those which would sometimes otherwise be considered permitted development would need planning permission:

- Cladding to the exterior of a house with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles
- Installation/alteration/replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe on a dwelling house (where they front a highway and are on the principal elevation).
- Side extensions.
- Rear extensions of more than one storey.
- Roof extensions, including dormer windows.
- Any building or enclosure within the grounds of a house required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling (including swimming pools, garden sheds, garages and summer houses), which is between a side elevation of a dwellinghouse and the property boundary.

In the case of Birkenhead Park, where the boundary treatments, gate piers and gardens are of particular importance to the special interest of the area, boundary treatments, outbuildings and works to trees may also require permission, with six weeks' notice given to Wirral Borough Council; though they might be only a small part of your property, they are a crucial link to the history of the park.

Whilst this list is not exhaustive, the local conservation team and planning department at Wirral Borough Council will be able to advise on what works will and will not need planning permission. It is always advisable that you check with them before undertaking any works. It should also be noted that in addition to planning permission, Listed Building

Consent is required for works of alteration, demolition or extension to any Listed Building internally or externally.

The local conservation team and planning department can be contacted at [heritage@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@wirral.gov.uk) and [planningapplications@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:planningapplications@wirral.gov.uk)

### A.3 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change

**Aim:** To contribute locally to the transition to a low-carbon future by shaping Birkenhead in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, reuses existing resources and supports renewable energy adaptations. This will contribute to carbon reductions whilst also increasing future resilience to extreme weather.

**Principle A.3a** The responsible retrofitting of historic buildings is encouraged. This requires a careful consideration of the types of interventions and materials appropriate for a historic building and which will preserve the fabric and appearance of the building and the wider conservation area. Small interventions, such as upgrading to LEDs, modern electrical items or roof insulation, are cost effective ways to save energy and should be considered first before instigating more intrusive works.

**Principle A.3b** Where solar panels or solar slates are proposed they should be located to the elevations not visible from either the street or park and should be set flush with the roofslope.

**Principle A.3c** Domestic roof-mounted wind turbines are unlikely to be acceptable due to the impact they will have on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Principle A.3d** Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) and Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) should be positioned in locations not visible from the street or park where possible. Consideration should be given to the amenity of neighbours when siting ASHPs within domestic gardens; GSHPs may require archaeological mitigation.

**Principle A.3e** Domestic electric car charging points will be acceptable where existing private parking exists. The charging point should be discreetly located as close to the parking as possible.

**Principle A.3f** Where existing downpipes, hoppers or rainwater goods are being replaced, pipes with a wider diameter or a more resilient design should be considered to mitigate the harmful effect of extreme weather and the potential for water ingress associated with this. New fittings should be replaced using traditional materials (typically cast-iron or cast aluminium) where possible.

**Principle A.3g** A reduction in traffic speeds would be supported where proposed, to improve air quality within the area.

**Recommendation Ai** Wirral Borough Council should publish energy efficiency guidance for historic properties, as well as linking to the guidance documents below on their website.

### Further Guidance Links

Historic England online guidance: Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/>

Historic England online guidance: Low and Zero Carbon Technologies  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/low-and-zero-carbon-technologies/>



## A.4 Boundary Treatments and Gardens

**Aim:** To prevent the cumulative harm brought about by the erosion of a landscaped character to front and rear gardens, and a loss or replacement of the original boundary treatments that surround Birkenhead Park and define the area's boundary.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** Care should be taken to ensure that the 'The residue of the said piece or parcel of land not used as the site of any such building should be laid out as ornamental pleasure ground or otherwise according to plans submitted to and approved by the said Commissioners or their successors.'

'The ornamental pleasure ground so laid out should for ever afterwards be kept in good order and condition' and if 'they should omit for six calendar months after the completion of such building or buildings...to lay out the said land as ornamental pleasure ground or should at any time omit to keep the said ornamental pleasure ground in good order and condition...the Commissioners should be at liberty to cause the same to be laid out or put into and kept in good order and condition' and should be able to 'recover the expense thereof.'

'No entrance or opening of any kind to the said parcel of land...should at any time thereafter be made through the inner railing on the said plan without the previous concern of the said Commissioners.'

*No such entrance or opening or another communication should at any time be made through the outer railing except by the permission of the said Commissioners and subject to their approval of the plans for all gates and gateposts for that purpose*

*The inner and outer railing (including the gates, gate piers and plinth stones) should be kept in good repair and should be painted at all such times (but not oftener than ones in every three years) and of such colour as should be determined by the said Commissioners.*

*That the railing or other the partition between the said parcel of land thereinbefore expressed to be thereby granted and the land adjoining thereto should be such only as should have been previously approved of by the said commissioners.*

**Principle A.4a** There is a presumption against any alteration to gardens, boundary treatments and gate piers that breaks with or substantially diverts from the original restrictive covenants placed on the plots.

**Principle A.4b** Reinstatement of historic features, and removal of detrimental ancillary buildings, surface treatments and boundary treatments will be strongly supported, aiming to restore the buildings to the terms of the restrictive covenant.

**Principle A.4c** Front gardens should remain green spaces and any change in surfaces should be permeable and retain a landscaped character; non-permeable surfaces require planning permission. Where gardens have already been hard landscaped the full or partial reinstatement of soft landscaping will be actively supported.

**Principle A.4d** Historic materials should be retained in-situ to front paths, yards and entrance porches and reinstated where previously removed. Where modern materials are unsympathetic or poor quality their replacement with sympathetic surfaces will be encouraged.

**Principle A.4e** The loss of original, historic or high-quality replica boundary treatments, as well as the widening of openings, will be strongly resisted.

**Principle A.4f** The reinstatement and repair of boundary treatments following the historic scale and comprised of a stone plinth, historic railing forms, gate piers and stone copings is encouraged; the introduction of close board fencing or non-traditional materials should be avoided. The replacement of close board fencing is actively encouraged. Careful consideration should be given to the use of materials and techniques used for repair and replacement. Replacement with concrete and non-permeable materials will be considered unacceptable and resisted in favour of carved stone and cast-iron railings. Painting and rendering of boundary treatments to disguise damage will not be supported.

**Principle A.4g** A detailed landscaping scheme should be submitted with any planning application for new development or the redevelopment of existing properties and should enhance the setting of the Grade I listed park.

**Principle A.4h** Trees, shrubbery, planting and boundary treatments located in private gardens should be retained and appropriately maintained to preserve their contribution to the verdant character of the conservation area. Tree Protection Orders and the protection afforded by conservation area designation should be observed and, where appropriate, enforced. Efforts should be made to reduce the impact of vegetation overgrowth around buildings, boundary treatments and gate piers.

**Principle A.4i** Where attached or detached ancillary structures (such as garages) are constructed to the side of buildings these should respect the restrictive covenants in place and be sympathetic in size, scale, character and materials and be subordinate to the main building. They should retain an appropriate portion of amenity space and be carefully sited to minimise their visual impact on the street scene and visible elevations from the park.

**Recommendation Ai** Wirral Borough Council should consider commissioning a Design Guide and Code focusing on the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area, to provide guidance on sympathetic approaches to boundary treatment reinstatement and repair; alongside the landscaping of gardens, their layout and maintenance. This should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and its uptake promoted to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change.

**Recommendation Aii** Wirral Borough Council should consider the implementation of an Article 4 Direction to protect boundary treatments that remain of interest to the area and contribute to its character whilst requiring planning permission for proposed new boundary treatments that would otherwise be permitted development. This should focus on areas that retain many of their original features, such as Ashville Road, the park lodge buildings and portions of Park Road South.

**Recommendation Aiii** Wirral Borough Council should consider working with partners and stakeholders on a grant programme to support the reinstatement and repair of historic boundary treatments and upgrades to gardens where their designed relationship with the park has been eroded.

## Boundary Treatment Good Practice Guide for Residents, Owners and Developers

The original boundary treatments associated with the park are crucial to understanding its development. Though over time these have sometimes been lost, damaged or poorly repaired, any of the historic fabric that survives should be carefully and sensitively looked after.

- Original and early railings, gate posts and stone plinths should be carefully retained, maintained and checked alongside other property checks
- Careful removal where vegetation covers gate posts, railings and plinths
- Railings should be repainted at regular intervals to support their repair
- Poor quality and detrimental brick gate piers should be replaced with good quality modern replicas where possible
- Where the historic house name is known and the boundary treatment is being reinstated or replaced, this should follow existing examples and have the name carved below the coping stone
- New railings should echo decorative forms of historic railings, though they do not need to mimic them
- Gateposts should be recreated in stone wherever possible
- Cement mortar should not be utilised for repair



## A.5 Public and Commercial Frontages and Signage

**Aim:** To preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the human experience of the conservation area, particularly from within the residential townscape.

**Principle A.5a** The frontages of commercial and public buildings must be in-keeping with the character and appearance of the host building and relate satisfactorily to the design of the upper parts of the façade. Original features such as fascias, cornices, fanlight windows and mullions should be retained or, where lost, reinstated, and shopfronts should not conceal historic stonework. All ground-floor windows and doors should be timber and appropriate in character and material to the individual building. UPVC windows and doors will not normally be accepted.

**Principle A.5b** Signage must be sensitively designed and integrated into the street scene. It must not dominate the building façade and should relate to its character, scale and architectural features. Internally illuminated box fascia and projecting signs will not be acceptable. Window vinyls will not be supported where they cover the whole of a window, but frosted examples may be supported

**Principle A.5c** High-level signs will not be acceptable. Commercial and public signage must be located at fascia level and follow the pattern within the street. The location of signage on non-retail buildings must also be carefully considered so as to not harm the appearance of the building. It should not be visible from within the park.

**Principle A.5d** Visual clutter should also be avoided to the street facing elevations and security lights and cameras should be appropriately sited to minimise their visual impact. When applications for works to public and commercial buildings are proposed it will be expected that detracting elements of signage and shopfronts will be removed. Ventilation ducts, air-conditioning units, security equipment and wiring should be relocated to more discreet locations and redundant services/wiring removed. Applications for future proposals must take into consideration the impact on the appearance of buildings and the conservation area.

**Principle A.5e** Solid external roller shutters will not be permitted unless the need for these can be robustly justified and enforcement action will be taken to secure their removal where it is expedient to do so; lattice grilles or internal roller shutters may be acceptable alternatives.

**Principle A.5f** Street signage and permanent banner signs will not be approved and enforcement action may be taken where unauthorised.

**Recommendation Ai** Wirral Borough Council should produce shop front and signage guidance to support owners of historic properties, as well as linking to the guidance documents below on their website. This should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and its uptake promoted to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change.

### Further Guidance Links

Historic England online guidance: Looking after Historic Buildings  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>

## A.6 Changes of Use and Vacancy

**Aim:** To preserve the character of the conservation area as a residential townscape built around a core green amenity space.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** *Care should be taken to that no trade business or manufacture whatever should ever be carried on exercised or done upon any part of the said piece of land and premises.*

**Principle A.6a** There is a presumption against any change of use that breaks with, or substantially diverts from, the original restrictive covenants placed on the plots.

**Principle A.6b** Changes of use to landmark and positive buildings will only be permitted when it can be highlighted that the change will retain or enhance public amenity and leisure facilities within the park.

**Principle A.6c** In considering applications for change of use, the council will require information on the design of signage, car parking provision and any additional services provision, including refuse disposal.

**Principle A.6d** Changes of use will be supported in the residential townscape where it will return vacant buildings to a sympathetic sustainable use.



## B Development and Redevelopment

### B.1 New Development

**Aim:** To preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and ensure that any future development respects the prevailing form and scale and enhances its positive characteristics.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** *If the owner or assigns 'should desire instead of the said rows or blocks of houses to erect on the said piece of land thereinbefore expressed' to erect 'one or more single or double detached Villa or Villas he or they should be at Liberty so to do provided that the plan...be submitted to and approved of by the said Commissioners or their Surveyor.'*

*Houses are to 'be constructed with two fronts' with 'the principal or main entrance of such rows or blocks of houses facing the external public road there bounding the said Park.'*

*'no building should be erected thereon should be used for any other purpose than a dwellinghouse or a stable coachhouse or other outbuildings to such dwellinghouse and that no cellar should be used for habitation separately from the dwellinghouse.'*

*'No building...should project or extend towards the said Park further from the external railing of the said Park than 190 feet' and 'should not be less than 12 feet respectively.'*

*Previous to the erection of any stabling or other outbuildings on the said parcel of land provision should be made to the satisfaction of the said commissioners for the effectual concealment of such stabling and outbuildings from the Park by planting or the same should be rendered ornamental.*

**Principle B.1a** Demolition and redevelopment will not be permitted when it would break with or substantially deviate from the original restrictive covenants placed on the plots.

**Principle B.1b** Demolition or extensive redevelopment will not be permitted for landmark and positive buildings and will only be permitted for neutral buildings in exceptional circumstances.

**Principle B.1c** The demolition or extensive redevelopment of detractor buildings will be supported where the proposals would bring about an enhancement of the conservation area.

**Principle B.1d** The urban grains/patterns and historic densities of the residential townscape should be respected. The intensification or over-development of plots and the amalgamation of separate plots will not be permitted, especially where it would deviate from the restrictive covenants in place. The established domestic scale and character of properties and the common siting within plots should be respected and maintained where new development is permitted within the conservation area. Development should be set well back from the street, respecting the original design intent of the park and restrictive covenants.

**Principle B.1e** There is a presumption against development in gardens. Buildings for the incidental enjoyment of the main dwelling (such as garages, sheds and garden structures) may be acceptable, but must meet the requirements of the restrictive covenants and be of an appropriate scale, design and siting within the plot.

**Principle B.1f** Development must be high-quality and of an appropriate height, scale, massing, form, density, material and colour palette, layout, plot position, composition, detailed design and use, respect the prevailing architectural character and appearance (but avoid direct imitation), preserve the open, verdant, character of the area and complement the setting of heritage assets (particularly including the Grade I listed park). New development should not compete for visual and spatial dominance, particularly in cases where it would be visible from within park itself.

**Principle B.1g** Exemplary modern design is encouraged where it is well-designed, of an appropriate scale, using good quality, appropriate materials and carefully considered to respond to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Principle B.1h** All development should have appropriate active frontages to the street at ground floor, with equal consideration given to all street facing elevations and those visible from within the park.

**Principle B.1i** Well-considered design must be used to retain, wherever possible, positive aspects of built form, floorscape, landscape and mature planting. Development proposals must protect existing open spaces, walls, railings, materials and other elements that are an integral part of the conservation area. Where original or historic boundary treatments, railings, stone plinths and gate piers remain, they must be respected and retained.

**Principle B.1j** New development within the immediate setting of the area should be sensitive to the nodal and gateway quality of the junctions. It should not compete with the lodge buildings or detract from their setting.

**Principle B.1k** Whilst simplification of detailing may be appropriate for new development within the conservation area, this should be based on contextual design principles that must be carried through to all design details. Details should not merely be applied to a standard building type or design.

## B.2 Views and Setting

**Aim:** To protect the established and valued views of the park and its surrounding townscape.

**Relevant Restrictive Covenants:** *Houses were to 'be constructed with two fronts' with 'the principal or main entrance of such rows or blocks of houses facing the external public road there bounding the said Park.'*

**Principle B.2a** Development within the setting of the park and its lodge buildings must preserve their significance and respect their important townscape roles.

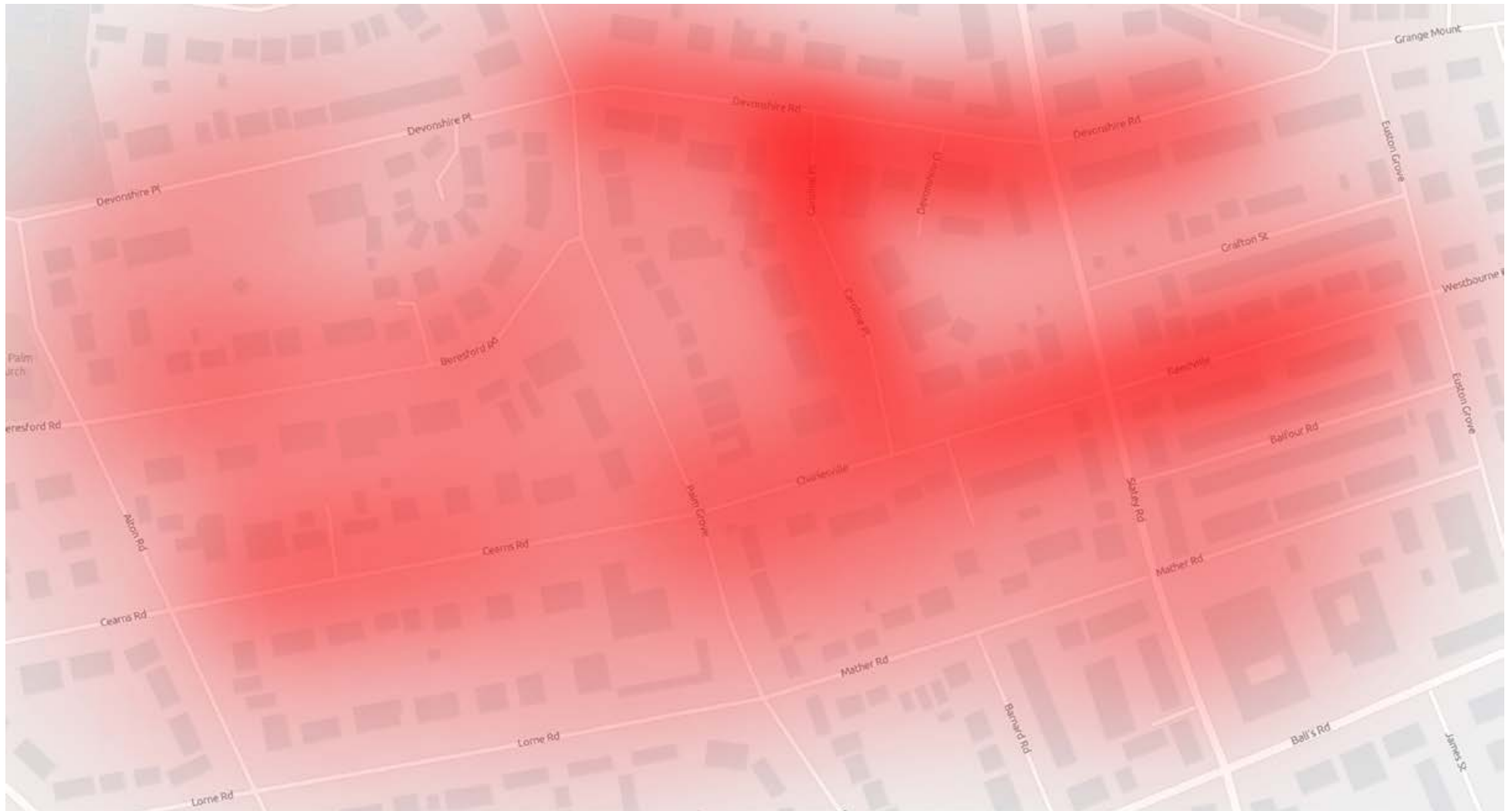
**Principle B.2b** Development within or outside of the conservation area that would harmfully intrude into the views identified in the Appraisal and cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area overall will not be permitted.

**Principle B.2c** Development within the immediate and wider setting of the conservation area (but outside the boundary) must assess the impact of the proposals on heritage significance to avoid harm to key views or incremental loss of historic character..

**Principle B.2d** Any future development within the setting of the conservation area must preserve (or better reveal) those elements of its setting that make a positive contribution to its overall character.

**Recommendation Bi** Wirral Borough Council should commission and adopt a Design Guide and Code for Birkenhead Park Conservation Area, adopting this as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and promoting its uptake to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change **[Plate 7.2]**.





## 7.2 Proposed Conservation Area

## Further Guidance Links

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2025)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/740441/National\\_Planning\\_Policy\\_Framework\\_web\\_accessible\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf)

National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, updated 2017)  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/>

## Assessment of Regeneration Proposals on View and Setting

The Wirral Local Plan 2022-2037 includes ambitious targets for redevelopment on brownfield sites within the area. The conservation area itself doesn't fall within any of the Regeneration Areas. However, the Birkenhead 2040 Framework boundary and several of the Regeneration Areas fall within both the immediate and wider setting of the conservation area.

Where the proposals have the potential to adversely impact the special interest of the conservation area the relevant Regeneration Area policies provide protection to the heritage assets that might be impacted. The following assessment considers the potential impact of the Regeneration Areas on the conservation area and its setting.

## Immediate Setting

### RA7: Hamilton Park

Covering part of the Park's immediate setting to the north, the area is currently dominated by small-scale terracing, with some visually detrimental mid-rise development located north of the Merseyrail line. However, the proposed 1025 new dwellings due to be constructed in the area to support 'the creation of a new high density residential led mixed use neighbourhood' would represent an intensification of this mid-rise development, to the visual detriment of the park and its setting. Whilst the proposed public realm improvements would be of beneficial impact to the gateways at Vittoria Street and Duke Street, they should be co-ordinated with improvements to the conservation area's public realm.

## Wider Setting

### RA4: Central Birkenhead

Covering Birkenhead Town centre, Regeneration Area 4 is located outside of the conservation area, but within its wider setting. Seeking to create a diversified and vibrant sub-regional centre, the increase in height to some areas does represent some threat to the views of Hamilton Square Station and the Liverpool Docks, which would be of a high adverse impact. However, the policy does provide for the protection of these views as part B.1. of its policy. Equally, the plan's promotion of an improved connection between the centre and Birkenhead Park would be of moderate benefit to the conservation area.

## RA5: Hind & St. Werburgh's

Covering part of the area's wider setting, the Hind Street masterplan area involves the construction of a low carbon urban garden village, which would likely have a very limited impact on the views into and out of the conservation area. Whilst the mid-rise development proposed within the St. Werburgh's Quarter would represent an increase in height within the setting, the intervening buildings would probably ensure that it was minimally visible. Policy RA5: C.3. recognises the need to preserve or enhance the setting of the heritage assets including the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area.

## RA6: Wirral Waters

Located north of RA7, the Wirral Water's scheme proposes the creation of a major, residential-led mixed use, urban regeneration scheme, including more than 3000 housing units. Whilst minimally visible due to the topography of the area north of the park, the tall building clustered proposed at SkyCity would likely be visible from the park and its immediate setting along Park Road North. Whilst better signalling the presence of the docks from the conservation area, the impact of the tall buildings would be of moderate adverse impact.



Regeneration Area	Relative location to park	Proposed scheme	Likely impact
RA7: Hamilton Park	Immediate setting	New high density residential led mixed use neighbourhood with 1025 new homes	Moderate Adverse
RA4: Central Birkenhead	Wider Setting	Building a strong core via a mix of commercial office space and residential mixed-use neighbourhoods	Minor benefit
RA5: Hind & St. Werburgh's	Wider Setting	Creation of low-carbon garden village residential neighbourhood and mixed-use residential quarter	Neutral
RA6: Wirral Waters	Wider Setting	Creation of a major, residential-led mixed use, urban regeneration scheme, including more than 3000 housing units	Moderate Adverse

## C Townscape Public Realm

### C.1 Public Realm

**Aim:** To preserve those elements that contribute to the verdant character of the conservation area, whilst enhancing the legibility of the area as a single unified design scheme developed over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Principle C.1a** The existing groups of bus stops, dustbins and benches add to the amenity value of the area and should be retained. However, they should be visually enhanced and their location considered to bring their colour and design line with the softer green colour associated with the park.

**Principle C.1b** The installation of any new street furniture (including bins, lighting columns and telecommunication cabinets) should take into account the impact of their location on the character and appearance of the conservation area, must be limited to that required and should not clutter the street or obscure building frontages. It must be of a suitable standard of design, accord with the patterns of items already in use, generally be sited to be visually unobtrusive, and have regard to the character and quality of the existing townscape.

**Principle C.1c** Trees, hedging and other soft landscaping located in the public realm should be retained and appropriately maintained to preserve their contribution to the verdant character of the

conservation area. If removal is required, they should be replaced with plants of appropriate maturity and species.

**Principle C.1d** Planting of further trees, hedging and shrubbery should be encouraged where spaces lack a sense of the area's green character or vacant and poorly developed spaces threaten the visual amenity of the area.

**Principle C.1e** Historic paving and landscaping within the public realm, including setts and stone paving, is highly significant and should be protected and maintained. Any interventions or repairs to the surfaces, including those by statutory undertakers, should be rectified in a timely manner, using matching like-for-like materials. The use of tarmac will not be acceptable.

**Principle C.1f** New development within Birkenhead Park will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that it substantially support the amenity provision within the park. Any extensions or development must follow the principles laid out in principles A2 and B1.

**Recommendation Ci** Wirral Borough Council should commission and adopt a Design Guide and Code for Birkenhead Park Conservation Area adopting this as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and promoting its uptake to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change. This should reference the public realm within the area and include guidance on street furniture design and siting, materials for paving, refuse storage and signage.

**Recommendation Cii** Wirral Borough Council should consider the introduction of a public realm scheme to create consistency in paving, signposting of the park and conservation area and of street furniture.

**Recommendation Ciii** The Council should also consider opportunities to improve the visual appearance of the street lighting, which is domineering in scale, to rationalise highways signage and improve the visual appearance of bus shelters and litter bins.

**Recommendation Civ** Wirral Borough Council and partners should consider extending any pedestrian-focused public realm schemes around the conservation area to the key transport gateways, including the Birkenhead Park Merseyrail Station.

**Recommendation Cv** Wirral Borough Council and partners should consider an improvement scheme to the Birkenhead Park Merseyrail Station forecourt.

**Recommendation Cvi** Wirral Borough Council should consider adopting a succession plan for mature trees and planting within the public realm.

#### Further Guidance Links

Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places (Historic England, 2018)  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/>



## D Management of the Park

**Aim:** To support the continued upkeep of the park as a public and community space accessible to everyone, whilst improving wider public understanding of the park's significance to foster a clear sense of its special character and identity amongst local people.

**Principle D.1a** The existing placement of dustbins, benches, angling platforms, exercise equipment and children's play equipment add to the amenity value of the area, as well as its legibility as a leisure space, and should be retained. However, in some cases they should be visually enhanced to create a consistent and coherent colour and design scheme across the park.

**Principle D.1b** The installation of any new street furniture (including bins, lighting columns, benches, play equipment, signage) should take into account the impact of their location on the character and appearance of the conservation area, must be limited to that required and should not clutter the parkland space. It must be of a suitable standard of design, accord with the patterns of items already in use, generally be sited to be visually unobtrusive, and have regard to the landscape character and quality of the park. It should broadly be focused around areas in which the historic character of the park does not relate to the enjoyment of nature and perambulation, and should not detract from historic views.

**Principle D.1c** Historic paving, landscaping and street furniture within the park, including setts, stone paving, boundary treatments and benches should be protected and maintained. Any interventions or repairs to the surfaces, including those by statutory undertakers, should be rectified in a timely manner, using like-for-like materials. The use of tarmac will not be acceptable.

**Principle D.1d** Interpretation and notice boards should be well maintained, being replaced and repaired where necessary. They should be enhanced where required and placed in minimally visually intrusive spaces that are also visible to the public. They should not be fixed to buildings within the park.

**Principle D.1e** The park should remain carefully maintained and managed, following best practice and the principles laid out in the most recent Birkenhead Park Management Plan, The Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024 and the expertise of the Park Management Team.

**Recommendation Di** Wirral Borough Council should support works to the park to upgrade and restore amenity provision where it has been lost.

**Recommendation Dii** Wirral Borough Council should consider opportunities to enhance the existing public realm within the park, including enhancing the existing street furniture to bring it together in a more cohesive design scheme.

**Recommendation Diii** Wirral Borough Council should consider extending the existing notices and interpretation boards using digital engagement tools, with varying text to support interpretation from a variety of audiences. They should build on and match the existing boards that remain in place, highlighting the story of individual elements of the park, whilst ensuring that this text is screen-reader compatible.

**Recommendation Div** An events programme should be maintained to encourage the continued use of the park by the public. Their focus on supporting the enjoyment of the park's aesthetic, historic and landscape value should be retained.

**Recommendation Dv** A study of the condition of historic planting within the park, coupled with a planting succession plan, should be undertaken or commissioned by Wirral Borough Council and partners.

### Further Guidance Links

Birkenhead Park Management Plan 2024 (Wirral Council)

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/birkenhead-park-management-plan-2020-version.pdf>

Wirral Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2014-2024 (Wirral Council, 2014)

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/wirral-parks-and-open-spaces-strategy-2014-2024.pdf/download?inline>

## E Management of the Conservation Area

### E.1 Community Engagement

**Aim:** To give the conservation area a clear identity, engage the public and developers with its special character and identity, develop awareness and foster a sense of ownership amongst building owners and occupants, in order to ensure its long-term conservation and enhancement.

**Principle E.1a** The full interactive Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be made available on Wirral Borough Council's website and in interactive format to encourage its use.

**Principle E.1b** Wirral Borough Council will continue to engage with stakeholders to deepen their understanding of the significance of the conservation area and invite their input into how its character and appearance can be conserved.

**Recommendation Ei** The opportunity to work with schools to better promote the value of the built heritage of Birkenhead Park as an educational resource and utilising the Appraisal document as a tool should be considered by local civic societies and The Friends of Birkenhead Park; including the potential for whole park surveys, research into listed buildings and the park.

**Recommendation Eii** Wirral Borough Council should consider producing and advertising maintenance guidance for historic properties.

**Recommendation Eiii** Wirral Borough Council should consider introducing new car parking space on vacant sites to support access to the park for the local community, which could include coach parking for school visits. Within the conservation area this could consider the vacant former tennis courts at the junction of Park Road West and Ashville Road, or sites around the park with an existing detrimental impact, such as the car wash to Park Road North.



## E.2 Future Management

**Aim:** To ensure the long-term conservation of the area, make sure that the conservation area is correctly managed and, where possible, bring forward enhancements.

**Principle E.2a** Owners are responsible for ensuring the appropriate consents are in place before undertaking any changes to their property (including, but not limited to, planning permission, listed building consent, advertisement consent and section 211 notices for works to trees).

**Principle E.2b** Wirral Borough Council will investigate unauthorised development and may take necessary enforcement action to ensure compliance with national and local policy, including the management principles set out above, where appropriate to do so.

**Principle E.2c** A regular review of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, should be undertaken, updating policy as required and ensuring that the plan remains a useful, relevant working document. A full review should be undertaken within five years of adoption and every five years thereafter.

**Recommendation Ei** Wirral Borough Council should work with the Friends of Birkenhead Park, Conservation Areas Wirral, and other stakeholders to encourage community ownership of the conservation area and its management, using the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as a tool.

**Recommendation Eii** Wirral Borough Council should consider introducing an Article 4(2) Direction to prevent the harmful impact of cumulative, small-scale change to residential buildings and boundaries within the area. The Council should also consider the use of Local Development Orders to streamline permissions for restricted works.

**Recommendation Eiii** Wirral Borough Council should consider commissioning a Design Guide and Code focusing on the Birkenhead Park Conservation Area, to provide guidance on acceptable conversion and redevelopment for multi-household occupancy, including reference to maintaining landscape quality where additional car parking and services are required. This should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and its uptake promoted to inform design and provide clarity over acceptable change.

**Recommendation Eiv** Wirral Borough Council should consider making recommendations for local listing to include further important examples. Non-designated heritage assets should be added to the upcoming Wirral Local List.

All of the 19<sup>th</sup> century historic buildings directly overlooking the park, such as 76-58 Park Road West, 6-7 Cavendish Road and 54-72 Park Road South should be added to the upcoming Wirral Local List.

**Recommendation Ev** Wirral Borough Council should consider designating an additional conservation area to the south of the Birkenhead Park conservation area.

Centering on Devonshire Road, Charlesville and Reedville, the area is defined by large mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century villas. With the core of the area probably designed by Charles Reed, a key designer within Birkenhead Park, it comprises a leafy designed suburb.

### Further Guidance Links

Birkenhead Park Management Plan 2018-2022, amended 2020

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/birkenhead-park-management-plan-2020-version.pdf>

Wirral Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2014-2024, undated

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/wirral-parks-and-open-spaces-strategy-2014-2024.pdf/download?inline>

Birkenhead Town Investment Plan 2021.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/birkenhead-town-investment-plan-2021.pdf/download?inline>

Birkenhead 2040 Framework Consultation Draft, March 2021.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/birkenhead-2040-framework.pdf/download?inline>

Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Including Minerals and Waste Policies). Written Statement. Adopted February 2000

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/1.-part-1.pdf/download?inline>

Wirral Local Plan 2021 – 2037. Adopted April 2025  
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/sd1-wirral-local-plan-2021-2037-submission-draft-may-2022-reg-19-publication-final-260422/download?inline>

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2021)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/740441/National\\_Planning\\_Policy\\_Framework\\_web\\_accessible\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf)

National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

Historic England online guidance: Looking after Historic Buildings  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>

Vacant Historic Buildings: Guidelines of Managing Risks (Historic England, updated 2018)  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/vacanthistoricbuildings/heag183-vacant-historic-buildings/>

Stopping the Rot: A Guide to Enforcement Action to Save Historic Buildings (Historic England, updated 2016)  
<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/heag046b-stopping-the-rot.pdf/>

Heritage Counts (Historic England, updated 2018)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, updated 2017)  
<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets.pdf/>

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/grants/our-grant-schemes/partnership-schemes-in-conservation-areas/>

Breathe New Life into an Old Place - Make It a Heritage Action Zone (Historic England)  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/breathe-new-life-into-old-places-through-heritage-action-zones/>

National Lottery Grants for Heritage  
<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grant-heritage>



## 7.4 Summary of Recommendations

This management plan, following an analysis of the risks and issues within the area has made several policies and recommendations, designed to support the local authority, owners and stakeholders with the management of the historic environment of the park. The key issues and proposed recommendations to these groups are summarised below. A table of each key recommendation and the owners of that recommendation are shown below.

There is a fundamental need to improve the **control and management of the conservation area**, including with the provision of funding to **reinstate lost amenities**, support the **restoration of lodge buildings** and the **continued upkeep** of the park. This could be done by:

- The introduction of a new public realm scheme, focusing on restoring areas of paving that have been disrupted by root growth, and drainage of areas paved in modern non-permeable materials.
- Reintroduction of angling spaces into the Upper Park.
- Vegetation growth around landmark sites and gatepiers should be carefully controlled and managed.
- Consider seeking funding for the repair of the park railings and boundary treatment and restoration of non-concrete angling spaces in the upper park

Overall, within the belts of residential housing, lodges and park buildings, there is a need to consider how best to enable the **retention and restoration of detailing**, to **curtail development where it is not appropriate or justified** and to **maximise the quality of development** when it is. This should focus primarily on upholding the principles enshrined in the original **restrictive covenants**. Relevant recommendations to support this within this management plan include:

- Use of **Article 4 Directions**, coinciding with a **Local Development Order** to streamline permissions for restricted works.
- Publication of **design guidance and coding** to provide clarity over how conversion can be done sensitively. This must include reference to maintaining landscaped quality and following the historic covenants in place when the land was purchased. A **design code specific to boundary treatments and landscaping** within the area would be particularly desirable.
- Recommendations for **local listing**, recognising some of the high-quality buildings that form the residential perimeter of the park and conservation area. Many of these are currently undesignated, and therefore at the highest risk of loss and degradation (as can be seen to the modern development at the rear of Park Road South).
- Creation of a user guide or leaflet for owners of residential properties, focusing on condition management, climate alterations, permissions required for alteration and any support or resources that might be available to support them.

- **Designation of an additional conservation area** to the south of Birkenhead Park, to protect the quality of the wider setting to the south.

Within the landscape, there is a need to **better understand the condition and age of the planting**. There is a desire to better appreciate Paxton and Kemp's original design intentions, including 'hide and reveal' views and

- A **tree and planting succession plan** should be commissioned and adopted by a historic landscape and horticultural expert, seeking to provide clarity on where historic planting remains, key areas of loss and how the original intention of Paxton and Kemp might be restored over time.

Beyond the residential area, there are further opportunities to enhance **public-facing areas** on the edge and outside of the conservation area, specifically through select projects at the key transport gateways into the area. Relevant recommendations within this management plan include:

- **Park Road North, South, East and West:** Currently the paving treatment is inconsistent across the area, reducing the legibility of the original streets constructed to serve the park. Wayfinding is almost non-existent. A coherent and consistent scheme of paving that retains and reinstates historic stone paving and setts would improve the appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the housing on its perimeter, whilst also increasing the legibility of the area as a single entity.

- **Birkenhead Park railway station and shops:** extending the proposed pedestrian-focused public realm within Birkenhead Park to the railway station, to create a coherent scheme of shopfront appearance and wayfinding from key transport gateways into the park. Further consideration could be given to improving signage from the setting of the area into it. This would be likely to draw a larger number of pedestrians through the small high-street on Duke Street or from the major public highways through and across Birkenhead.
- **Principal gateway:** improve and upgrade the existing public works scheme from the early 2000s, which is now cracking due to root growth. The location of bus shelters might be given additional consideration as part of these works.

The following recommendations, made in the above management plan, have been summarized in the table below, delineating the responsibility in taking it forward.

Recommendation name	Recommendation	Responsibility
A1: Ai	Maintenance guidance for historic properties, which links guidance documents to the website, should be produced and advertised	WMBC
A2: Ai	An Article 4 direction should be considered to protect features of interest within the conservation area	WMBC



<b>A2: Aii</b>	Enforcement action should be taken against those who depart from these policies and an awareness campaign created to support understanding of how to report complaints.	WMBC and local civic societies
<b>A2: Aiii</b>	Bi-annual audits of the area should be undertaken to understand how well policies are being adhered to	Friends of Birkenhead Park
<b>A2: Aiv</b>	A Design Guide and Code for Birkenhead Park Conservation Area should be commissioned and adopted as an SPD	WMBC
<b>A3: Ai</b>	Energy efficiency guidance for historic properties should be published	WMBC
<b>A4: Ai</b>	See A2: Aiv	WMBC
<b>A4: Aii</b>	See A2: Ai	WMBC
<b>A4: Aiii</b>	A grant programme supporting reinstatement and repair of historic boundaries and upgrades to gardens should be considered	WMBC
<b>A5: Ai</b>	Shop front and signage guidance should be produced for owners of historic properties and adopted as an SPD	WMBC
<b>B2: Bi</b>	See A2: Aiv	WMBC
<b>C1: Ci</b>	See A2: Aiv	WMBC
<b>C1: Cii</b>	The introduction of a public realm scheme to create consistency in paving, signposting of the park and conservation area should be considered	WMBC and partners
<b>C1: Ciii</b>	The visual appearance of detracting street lighting, signage and other street furniture should be improved	WMBC and partners
<b>C1: Civ</b>	Pedestrian-focused public realm schemes should be extended around the conservation area to the key transport gateways	WMBC and partners
<b>C1: Cv</b>	An improvement scheme to the Birkenhead Park Merseyrail Station forecourt should be considered	WMBC and partners
<b>C1: Cvi</b>	A succession plan for mature trees and planting should be considered	WMBC
<b>D1: Di</b>	Amenity provision should be upgraded and restored where lost	WMBC
<b>D1: Dii</b>	The public realm should be enhanced	WMBC
<b>D1: Diii</b>	An extension of the existing interpretation should be considered, matching the existing elements	WMBC
<b>D1: Div</b>	An events programme should be maintained	WMBC and Friends of Birkenhead Park
<b>D1: Dv</b>	A historic planting study and succession plan should be undertaken or commissioned for the park	WMBC and partners
<b>E1: Ei</b>	Key stakeholders should work together to encourage community ownership of the conservation area	WMBC, Conservation Areas Wirral, Friends of Birkenhead Park and other civic societies
<b>E1: Eii</b>	See A2: Ai	WMBC
<b>E1: Eiii</b>	See A2: Aiv	WMBC
<b>E1: Eiv</b>	Recommendations should be made to the local list	WMBC
<b>E1: Ev</b>	A possible conservation area should be considered to the south of Birkenhead Park	WMBC

## Appendix I: Glossary of terms

The following glossary of terms provides context for those technical or specific words used within both the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Conservation Area Management Plan, as defined by best practice guidance from Historic England, national and local planning policy:

**Architectural features:** An element of a building that contributes to its character, such as windows, doors, chimney stacks, cornices.

**Conservation:** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Conservation area:** An identified area designated by the Council for its special architectural or historic interest. The designation is undertaken to allow the character and appearance of that area to be protected.

**Detrimental:** Tending to cause harm, often in the context of the significance of the area's townscape, heritage assets or landscape.

**Designation:** The recognition of particular heritage value(s) of a significant place by giving it formal status under law or policy intended to sustain those values

**Design Code:** A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic

and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

**Gateway:** The area in the immediate vicinity of a 'gateway' or 'arrival point' such as key road junctions, ferry terminals or railway stations. As identified on the Policies Map.

**Harm:** Change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage values of a place.

**Heritage:** All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility.

**Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

**Hillock:** A small hill or mound of earth.

**Historic England:** A government body with responsibility for protecting and promoting the historic environment.

**Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora.

**Landmark:** Any structure which through its design and quality provides a memorable and prominent element in a townscape, reinforces legibility and aids navigation.

**Landscape:** The visual appearance of an area of land.

**Listed building:** Buildings of special architectural or historic interest with legal protection.

**Listed Building Consent (LBC):** The planning consent needed for works to listed buildings which affect their 'character' as buildings of special architectural and historic interest (abbreviated here as special interest), both those which impact special interest negatively and those which would enhance it.

**Local Plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

**Maintenance:** Routine work regularly necessary to keep the fabric of a place, including its setting, in good order.

**Materiality:** The use of materials or substances on buildings. It can relate to specific components, such as brick, or glass, but also relates to the increasing number of decorative or digitalised facades or exterior surfaces of buildings



**Non-designated Heritage Asset:** buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

**Pastiche:** An architectural style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period.

**Permitted development:** Permitted development rights allow the improvement or extension of homes without the need to apply for planning permission, where that would be out of proportion with the impact of the works carried out. Permitted Development rights do not apply to listed buildings, nor do they apply to development within the curtilage of a listed building

**Planning permission:** Formal permission from a local authority for the erection or alteration of buildings or similar development.

**Public Realm:** Publicly owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.

**Repair:** Work beyond the scope of maintenance, to remedy defects caused by decay, damage or use, including minor adaptation to achieve a sustainable outcome, but not involving restoration or alteration.

**Townscape:** The visual appearance of a town or urban area.

**Setting:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Significance:** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

**Sustainable:** Capable of meeting present needs without compromising ability to meet future needs.

**View:** A sight or prospect, typically of attractive natural scenery, that can be taken in by the eye from a particular place. These can be focused, funnelled, panoramic, filtered or long ranging depending on the surrounding landscape.

**World Heritage Status:** World Heritage Sites are places of Outstanding Universal Value to Humanity. It is not a list of all properties of great interest, importance or value, but only a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint.

## Appendix II: Local policies and restrictive covenants affecting the conservation area

### Birkenhead Park Restrictive Covenants

The original restrictive covenants governed the purchase of land as part of Birkenhead Park's development. Managed by the Birkenhead Improvement Commissioners, the original plots designated within the sale plans were all subject to comprehensive restrictive covenants, which underpinned how the land should be managed, what should be constructed within the plots and how this should be maintained. The covenants generally remain in place.

The restrictive covenants governing 54 and 56 Park Road South are laid out below:

1. The 'proposed sites and elevations' of the rows or blocks of houses shown on the original sale plan 'should be submitted to and approved of by the said Commissioners of their Surveyor'
2. If the owner or assigns 'should desire instead of the said rows or blocks of houses to erect on the said piece of land thereinbefore expressed' to erect 'one or more single or double detached Villa or Villas he or they should be at Liberty so to do provided that the plan...be submitted to and approved of by the said Commissioners or their Surveyor'
3. 'The residue of the said piece or parcel of land not used as the site of any such building should be laid out as ornamental pleasure ground or otherwise according to plans submitted to and approved by the said Commissioners or their successors'
4. 'The ornamental pleasure ground so laid out should for ever afterwards be kept in good order and condition' and if 'they should omit for six calendar months after the completion of such building or buildings...to lay out the said land as ornamental pleasure ground or should at any time omit to keep the said ornamental pleasure ground in good order and condition...the Commissioners should be at liberty to cause the same to be laid out or put into and kept in good order and condition' and should be able to 'recover the expense thereof'
5. 'No building...should project or extend towards the said Park further from the external railing of the said Park than 190 feet' and 'should not be less than 12 feet respectively'
6. 'External walls...be of white stone equal in quality and appearance to the Storeton stone or ornamental brickwork of either the Early English, the Elizabethan or the Tudor style with stone dressing and quoins'
7. Houses were to 'be constructed with two fronts' with 'the principal or main entrance of such rows or blocks of houses facing the external public road there bounding the said Park'
8. No entrance or opening of any kind to the said parcel of land...should at any time thereafter be made through the inner railing on the said plan without the previous concern of the said Commissioners.
9. No such entrance or opening or another communication should at any time be made through the outer railing except by the permission of the said Commissioners and subject to their approval of the plans for all gates and gateposts for that purpose
10. The inner and outer railing (including the gates, gate piers and plinth stones) should be kept in good repair and should be painted at all such times (but not oftener than ones in every three years) and of such colour as should be determined by the said Commissioners
11. That the railing or other the partition between the said parcel of land thereinbefore expressed to be thereby granted and the land adjoining thereto should be such only as should have been previously approved of by the said commissioners
12. Previous to the erection of any stabling or other outbuildings on the said parcel of land provision should be made to the satisfaction of the said commissioners for the effectual concealment of such stabling and outbuildings from the Park by planting or the same should be rendered ornamental
13. Keep in good and sufficient repair the roads (if any) and drains upon and under the said parcel of land
14. That no building which should be erected thereon should be used for any other purpose than a dwellinghouse or a stable coachhouse or other outbuildings to such dwellinghouse and that no cellar should be used for habitation separately from the dwellinghouse.



15. No trade business or manufacture whatever should ever be carried on exercised or done upon any part of the said piece of land and premises

### **Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 (Adopted April 2025)**

The Wirral Local Plan was adopted by the council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. As the statutory document that sets out guidelines for all development in the Wirral it provides a framework from which to base decisions about planning applications. The following policies relate to the conservation area specifically, or to management of conservation areas and heritage assets:

#### **Policy WP 3.1 Conservation Areas**

Birkenhead Park (CON-SA3.2)

B. Proposals within Birkenhead Park Conservation Area will be supported where they:

1. conserve and enhance the Park's historic context in volume, scale, form, materials and quality;
2. preserve and enhance the setting, character and appearance of an extensive Victorian public park including its buildings backing on to the Park such as lodges, terraces and villas;
3. retain unifying features of design, such as gate piers, boundary fences and walls, and the nature and extent of landscaping throughout the Conservation Area;
4. give priority to the residential use of historic buildings;

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5. preserve uninterrupted, tree-lined, open vistas within the "inner park" as delineated by the route of Park Drive;
6. introduce an effective landscaping treatment to Park Drive which allows glimpsed views only of houses backing on to the Park;
7. avoid development of backland areas facing the park consistent with the restrictive covenants affecting private land beyond the periphery of Park Drive.

#### **Policy WD 2.1 Protecting Heritage Assets**

A. Development proposals which conserve and where appropriate enhance Wirral's historic environment will be supported.

B. Development proposals which have the potential to impact upon a heritage asset or its setting must be accompanied by proportionate evidence set out in a Heritage Impact Assessment.

C. Harm or loss to designated heritage assets and their settings will not be permitted unless there is clear and convincing justification in line with national policy. Proposals likely to cause substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a heritage asset or its setting will only be permitted where:

1. there are exceptional circumstances to clearly justify substantial harm or loss to a grade II Listed Building or grade II Registered Park or Garden; or

2. there are wholly exceptional circumstances to clearly justify substantial harm or loss to a Scheduled Monument or equivalent archaeological asset, a grade I or grade II\* Listed Building or Registered Parks and Gardens, or World Heritage Sites ; and
3. the development is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, which would clearly outweigh the harm or loss, or all the following apply:

- i. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- ii. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- iii. conservation by grant funding of some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- iv. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

D. Development proposals likely to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset or its setting will only be supported where it is clearly demonstrated that the harm will be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate securing optimal viable use.

E. Development proposals will be supported where they seek to retain and enhance a nondesignated heritage asset. Proposals affecting the significance of a non designated heritage

asset will be assessed with regard to the degree of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset and the public benefit of the proposal.

## **Policy WD 2.2 Conservation Areas**

F. Development proposals that conserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Wirral's Conservation Areas will be supported. Proposals will be assessed using, where relevant, any Conservation Area appraisals, management plans and /or master plans for the area which have been approved by the Council. Demolition will only be supported within a Conservation Area as part of approved plans for the redevelopment or treatment of the site, where the proposals are compatible with the wider objectives of Conservation Area designation.

G. New proposals for development shall have integrity and authenticity, and respect the form, mass, materials and character of the existing context. If a traditional design is proposed, this should be based on a thorough understanding of the style, and fully detailed. Poorly designed pastiche will not be permitted.

## **Policy WS 7.1 Design Principles**

A. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that the development has been planned so that its function and appearance will enhance the character of the area and provide a high standard

of amenity for existing and future occupiers, having regard to: Policy WS 8 Strategy for Sustainable Construction, Renewable and Low Carbon Energy; published advice in the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents and Design Codes; and the National Design Guide or any superseding guidance.

B. Development proposals should in particular demonstrate how they have, where appropriate, addressed the following design principles and requirements:

1. be inclusive, enabling use by all, irrespective of their physical ability and other characteristics such as, but not limited to, age and gender;
2. be visually attractive and positively enhance the character, appearance and setting of the surrounding area;
3. ensure that the density, height, scale, massing and siting is appropriate in context;
4. incorporate high quality materials which complement and enhance surrounding areas and adjacent development;
5. provide a high standard of internal and external amenity that creates comfortable places to live, work and visit - addressing thermal and acoustic comfort;
6. use active design principles to make active travel and physical activity an easy, practical and attractive choice;
7. contribute to the creation of adaptable, safe and accessible places with active frontages;
8. provide for the protection and enhancement of existing healthy trees and hedgerows of visual and wildlife value;
9. provide or protect high quality

landscaping including unifying features such as gates, piers, walls, boundary treatment between public and private areas;

10. ensure that extensions to existing buildings will match or complement the design and materials of the existing buildings;

11. provide underground service ducts to enable future connections for open source cable, broadband and electronic communications, electric car charging, waste collection and district heating networks, where relevant, and minimise the need for external apparatus;

12. provide an appropriate standard of sustainable transport and highway access, including for emergency services, delivery and waste collection vehicles;

13. provide integrated waste storage and on site provision for collection, recycling and management of waste likely to be generated by the development;

14. provide level access and appropriate internal and external space for lifetime needs;

15. address any issues related to public health and where relevant submit an appropriate Health Impact Assessment;

16. in flattened development to provide for communal space for social purposes and for the storage of belongings where appropriate.



**Policy WS 8.3**  
**Improvements to Historic Buildings**

D. Proposals to enhance the environmental performance of heritage assets will be supported where a sensitive approach to design and specification ensures that the significance of the asset is not compromised. Any works should be undertaken based on a thorough understanding of the building's historic evolution and construction (where these matters relate to the heritage significance of the asset), architectural and historic significance and demonstration of the buildings environmental performance. Planning applications should be accompanied by an assessment of the buildings current fabric and energy performance and that expected on completion of the works.

Donald Insall Associates