



Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Clifton Park Conservation Area

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

For Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council



Contact Information

Kate Martyn (Practice Director)

E: kate.martyn@insall-architects.co.uk

Amelia Bircham (Assistant Heritage Consultant)

E: amelia.bircham@insall-architects.co.uk

Manchester Office

www.donaldinsallassociates.co.uk

T: 0161 359 4326

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Preface

Legislative Background

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act local authorities have been empowered to designate as Conservation Areas those areas within their districts which 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 Borough Council has designated 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 Borough 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. Further, 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

The character of the Clifton Park Conservation Area is defined by its origins as a grand early Victorian villa estate, laid out in the 1840s by architect Walter Scott. The area presents a rich and layered townscape, shaped by its phased development and the aspirations of Birkenhead's growing middle class. Its distinctive curvilinear street layout, generous plots, and stylistic diversity reflect the Victorian ideals of suburban living, with Classical, Gothic Revival, and Vernacular Revival styles coexisting across the area. The architectural quality is highest along Clifton Road dating to the earliest phase of development, where detached and semi-detached villas sit within mature gardens framed by wide boulevard-style roads, evoking the estate's original grandeur.

Over time, the estate evolved to include denser terraced housing, particularly in its western parts, resulting in a varied urban grain and contrasting scales. While the early villas exhibit high-quality materials such as Storeton sandstone and ornate detailing, later phases introduced red brick terraces with simpler ornamentation. Despite post-war losses and modern interventions, the area retains a strong sense of identity through the interplay of architectural styles, plot shapes and the evidence of the estate's original masterplan, further reinforced through retained historic boundaries and surviving features and its visual connection to both Birkenhead and Liverpool.

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 the Appraisal and Management Plan.

CLIFTON ROAD

1 Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Location

The Clifton Park Conservation Area is situated in the town of Birkenhead on the east side of the Wirral peninsular. Located south of the Borough Road dual carriageway and Pyramids Shopping Centre, the area sits between the centre of the town and historic settlement of Tranmere.

The historic core of Tranmere, located further to the south, was originally a small village founded by the Vikings. As Birkenhead developed into an affluent suburb in the early-mid 19th century, the land between Tranmere and Birkenhead became known as Lower Tranmere, its open fields converted to wealthy villa estates for the middle classes. Surrounded by residential development to the south, east and west, the Holt Hill and Tranmere Park developments were part of this development push and now abut Clifton Park to the south. From the conservation area's easternmost boundary, it stands only 0.7 kilometres to the docks on the peninsula's east shore, with intervening small-scale terraced housing.

The area itself is relatively small, covering the original extent of the development, (0.06 square kilometres) and comprising eight roads focused on Circular Road, Clifton Road, Lowood Road, Brookland Road and The Woodlands. Circular Road and Lowood Road form the core of the area, with its unusual plan spanning out from this central ring. The area's boundaries are defined by Rodney Street to the east, Borough Road (A552) to the north, Whetstone Lane (B5148) to the south and a much more inconsistent boundary to the west.



1.1.1 Location of Clifton Park within Wirral

[Plate 1.1.1]

1.2 Topography and Geology

The Clifton Park Conservation Area's topography varies, with the south-eastern corner of the area sitting considerably higher than the area's north. This is most evident on Clifton Road, with runs from north to south, initially with a gentle slope that becomes a relatively steep incline at it moves north to Whetstone Lane. However, the other roads within the area are generally level.

The highest point of the conservation area stands at 38m above sea level, where 144 Whetstone Lane meets the pavement; the lowest point of the conservation area is near its north-eastern gateway and stands at only around 10 metres above sea level, just south of the convergence of Clifton Road and The Woodlands.

The area covering the historical township of Birkenhead is thought to be built on bunter pebble beds overlain with boulder clay. However, the higher areas of the conservation area's south-eastern corner are built on areas of the Chester sandstone formation, which stretches towards the historic core of Tranmere and results in the raised topography of the area.

[Plate 1.2.1]



1.2.1 Sloping topography of sites on Clifton Road

1.3 Use and Condition

The conservation area is primarily in residential use, though a small number of historically residential buildings have been converted into community and public uses. The buildings constructed as part of the original Clifton Park development are generally either in single occupancy or have been converted into apartments. Generally, set within generous plots and gardens, these are all private amenity spaces for the dwellings.

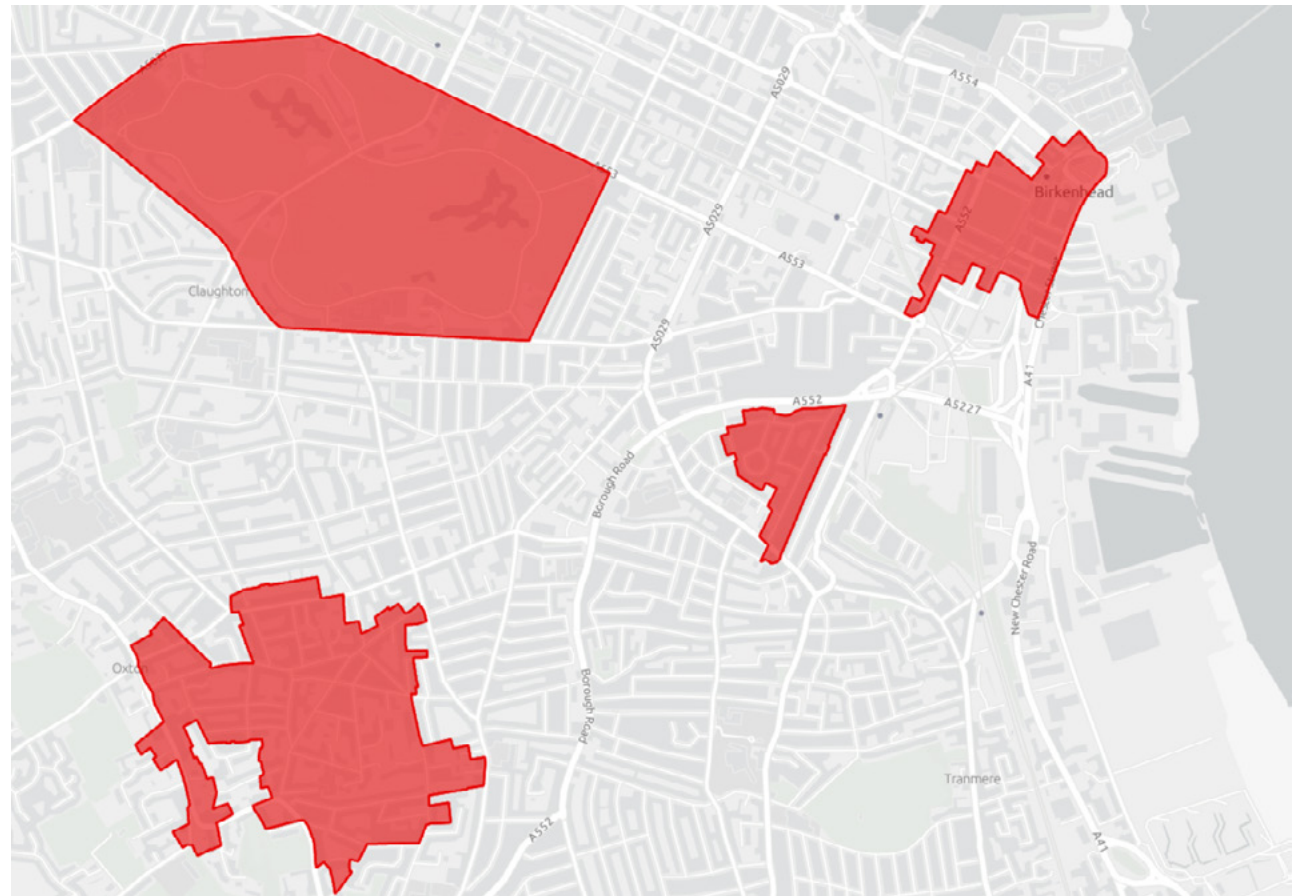
The condition of the buildings within the conservation area is highly variable and declining. The area has been on the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register since 2021 and is noted as being in a poor condition which continues to deteriorate. The area’s residential buildings are inconsistently maintained, with some in good repair but others have been subject to a lack of regular maintenance and are in an extremely poor condition. Boundary treatments have frequently been eroded and lost, with gardens often poorly maintained or fully covered with hard landscaping.

1.4 Conservation Area Context

Three conservation areas are located within proximity to the area, with the majority relating to the 19th century development of Birkenhead, from a relatively rural area punctuated by dispersed villages into a sprawling planned town of multiple phases. Clifton Park was initially designated in July 2004 as part of a push to ensure that the Wirral's heritage was better protected and designated in the first decade of the 21st century. However, the areas which surround it generally relate to the earlier flurry of designations on the Wirral from the 1970s including:

- Oxton Village Conservation Area (designated 1979)
- Birkenhead Park Conservation Area (designated 1977)
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area (designated 1977)

[Plate 1.4.1]



1.4.1 Surrounding conservation areas

1.5 Policy Context

Designated a conservation area in 2004, Clifton Park is relatively well protected by national heritage designations. The buildings of the highest architectural quality within the area are generally listed at Grade II, with a total of 18 listed buildings within the conservation area boundary.

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 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 Clifton Park Conservation Area was first designated in July 2004, with a Conservation Area and Appraisal and Management Plan prepared by Donald Insall Associates.

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 Wirral Borough Council, to provide an updated appraisal of the area and a robust plan for its constructive longer-term management.

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 1st 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’. 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.

1.6 Aims

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides Wirral Borough Council with up-to-date evidence for the Clifton 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;
- Help address the challenges facing the residential townscape;
- 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 Wirral Borough Council with an up to date, evidence-based Appraisal and Management Plan which can inform further work to regenerate the area.

[Plate 1.6.1]



1.6.1 Historic streetscape to conservation area

1.7 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.



2 Significance

2 Significance

2.1 Special Interest, Character, and Appearance

The Clifton Park Conservation Area derives its principal interest from its status as a well-designed early Victorian villa development, constructed at the height of Birkenhead's early phase of expansion. Mixing a rich variety of architectural styles, materials and road designs, the generous proportions of the villas exemplify the high status of their desired occupants.

Once a 'large plot of wasteland' the grand villa estate emerged as an assertive expression of Birkenhead's economic and social optimism of the 1820 - 1840s. Developed speculatively during a period of rapid expansion on the eastern coast of the Wirral, the unusual curving street layout represents an evolution of the grid-iron street plan created at Hamilton Square into the grand residential developments common of the early Victorian period. Aspirational in scale and design, the estate is typical of the style of Birkenhead architect Walter Scott, whose ability to work in a variety of architectural styles created a rich and visually layered townscape overlain on an ambitious masterplan that carefully considered the site's unusual plan. A relatively early example of Scott's work, many of the buildings within it reflect his later designs at Birkenhead Park, with the majority listed at Grade II.

However, the fractious and frenetic development of the estate equally reflects the personal circumstances of its builder and visionary, Captain William Sharp, who was declared bankrupt prior to the completion of the development. Predominantly comprising later 19th century housing, the architectural quality of these buildings is comparatively low when considered next to the large Walter Scott villas on Clifton Road and the western side of The Woodlands.

[Plates 2.1.1 and 2.1.2]

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



2.1.1 Large storeton stone villas typical of the area



2.1.2 Grand brick villa

2.1.1 Exposition of Victorian Residential Ideals and the Growth of Birkenhead

Spacious in both its planning and situation, Clifton Park typifies early Victorian ideas about suburban growth. Distanced from the working-class terraces of the city and positioned outside of the main settlement, the estate's early villas reflect the increasing stratification of its society's class structure, with the grand and spacious homes of the growing middle classes built outside of urban centres. Aspirational in name, possibly after the existing Clifton Park villa estate in Bristol, the development's title hints at the green and open parkland that formed aristocratic estates of the 18th century. Located within the open countryside, Clifton Park underscored the increasing social and domestic pressure to seek refuge from industrialising city centres in favour of open spaces outside of the urban sprawl with carefully curated views and landscaping.

Remaining close to the Tranmere Ferry and new Chester-Birkenhead railway, Clifton Park serves as a physical expression of the Victorian's push for commuting into and out of major industrial centres; the estate offering the convenience of excellent transport links whilst offering the respite desired from the burgeoning centre of Liverpool.

One of the earliest such developments in east Wirral (alongside Rock Park), it simultaneously replicated existing villa estate designs and came to typify the middle class suburbs that soon grew up around Claughton, Oxtan and Birkenhead Park. Indeed, the juxtaposition of grand Walter Scott villas and later Victorian and Edwardian housing articulates

the phased expansion of Birkenhead, its initial development as a middle class semi-rural escape superseded by the construction of its own docks and shipbuilding industry. As such, the mix of housing, variety in detail and materiality eloquently expresses both Victorian residential ideals and the development of east Wirral simultaneously.

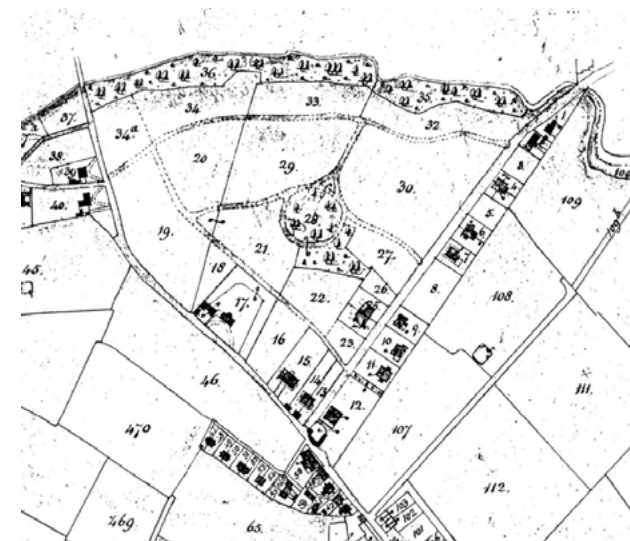
2.1.2 Fluid and Spacious Villa Plan

The original masterplan by Scott, which laid out the roads and plots in which the residential townscape was constructed, represents a considerable departure from the grid-iron arrangement of Hamilton Square and the other late-Georgian period developments in Birkenhead. Whilst Clifton Road is a single straight avenue running from north to south, its alignment is less strictly determined by cardinal directions than in many of the area's early developments and is contrasted by the soft and fluid lines of The Woodlands, an unusual circular road.

The generously proportioned plots, wide boulevard-style roads and large, spacious housing of the Clifton Park estate contrast starkly with the tight urban grain of the terracing to Hamilton Square and other speculative developments in Tranmere. Mimicking the curving lines of the earlier Rock Park development to the south, Clifton Park expands greatly on this plan, creating a central circular plot, surrounded by snaking curvilinear roads that create a variety of views across the estate. The arrangement creates unusually shaped plots with a sense of variety within the plan, which is overlaid by a stylistic diversity in the villas themselves.

Though partially undermined by later development in some areas, Scott's original plan responds effectively to the awkward dimensions of the area to create a general sense of both generosity, and enclosure and privacy, within what was once a high-status development designed for the burgeoning middle classes.

[Plate 2.1.3]



2.1.3 Villas plan on Tithe Map, c.1843

2.2 Setting

Setting makes a limited contribution to the conservation area by highlighting the appeal of the site as a high-status villa estate. The views over Birkenhead, the Mersey and Liverpool from the high points within the estate, its proximity to Hamilton Square, the coast and turnpike road underscore its development as a middle-class estate which was originally built in a green open landscape.

These elements are manifested in:

- **Views over the coast, Birkenhead and towards Liverpool:** Limited long-range views between buildings and from the apex of Clifton Road highlight the estate's elevated position above and away from the urban sprawl of Liverpool, highlighting the original impetus and position of the development as a suburban escape from the city.
- **Surrounding terraced developments:** Whilst of limited architectural interest, the Edwardian and later Victorian terracing to Rodney Street, Hollybank Road and West of Maple Street highlight the frenetic and phased development of the estate and Birkenhead more widely – the small-scale worker's housing contrasts starkly with the grand villas which were originally planned to fill the estate.

Much of the estate's original setting has however been completely lost. The open landscape that once surrounded the estate is now occupied by late Victorian and Edwardian terracing and the majority of key views are dominated by the massing of the Pyramids Shopping Centre whilst the early woodland and stream that defined the estate's northern boundary has been replaced with a large dual carriageway, with the stream infilled. As such, a large element of the original impetus for development is no longer visible, with the setting merely outlining the historic development of its surroundings rather than contributing to the legibility of its historic development.

[Plate 2.1.4]



2.1.4 Wider setting of the area

3 Historic Development: A Timeline

3 Historic Development: A Timeline

3.1 Early Development of Birkenhead and Tranmere

Though the eastern side of the Wirral peninsular has been the site of recorded settlement since the Viking period, the area resisted the levels of development seen across the River Mersey in Liverpool. Whilst strategically located on the river, the eastern side of the Wirral's isolated position as a peninsula ensured that it remained a primarily agricultural area during the medieval and early modern period. Populated by small clusters of farms and isolated settlements of only a few hundred people, Birkenhead and Tranmere were both small rural communities typical of the wider Wirral at the start of the 19th century [Plate 3.1.1].

Several small pools and inlets existed on the eastern coast of the peninsula, creating tidal rivers and streams that ran into the open agricultural areas of the Wirral. Early descriptions of these water courses suggest that they could be forded during low tide but otherwise ran fast into Tranmere; the boundary of the historic townships of Tranmere and Birkenhead was defined by one such river, known variously as The Happy Valley, Grange Vale, The Rubicon', Birkenhead Pool and Tranmere Pool [Plate 3.1.2].



3.1.1 Blaeu's Map of Cheshire, 1762-5 (NLS)



3.1.2 Burdette's Map of Cheshire, 1788 (NLS)

3.2 Expansion of Birkenhead (Early 19th Century)

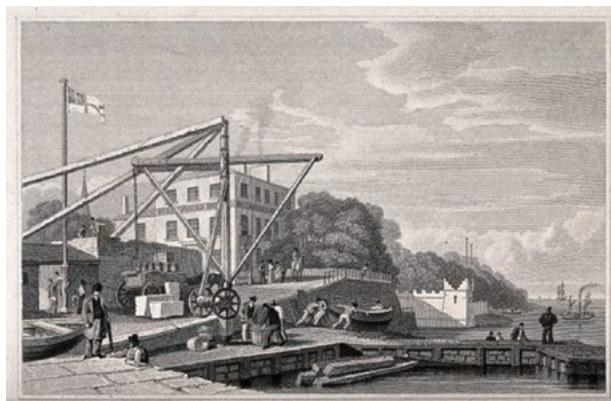
Though ferries had run across the Mersey since the medieval period, the arrival of the first steamboat ferries in the early 19th century considerably improved the connection between the flourishing port of Liverpool and relatively rural Wirral peninsula; the once laborious crossing reduced to only 10 minutes [Plates 3.1.3 and 3.1.4].

Defined by their farming output, the presence of Birkenhead Priory and separated from one another by small watercourses, the small villages dotted across the rural landscape of East Wirral combined a lack of urban development with proximity to the British Empire's most prominent port.

Whilst the potential of the area as a bathing resort was understood by the Lord of the Manor at the turn of the 19th century, the considerable appeal of East Wirral's location and transport connections was only truly recognised in the early decades of the 19th century by William Laird. Originally seeking to build around Liverpool, Laird instead set up a boiler factory and shipbuilding yard around Wallasey Pool. In the same year he employed prominent Edinburgh architect James Gillespie Graham to lay out a grand new town. Built on an ambitious rectangular street plan, the 1820s and early 1830s saw the construction of one of the largest planned settlements in the north-west.

The construction of Hamilton Square and creation of the Birkenhead Improvement Commission resulted in the construction of much residential infrastructure

and amenity provision. As a result, the 1830s and 1840s saw a considerable building boom, with suburban estates constructed on the coast at Rock Park in the 1830s, as well as Birkenhead Park and Oxtan in the 1840s. The arrival of the Birkenhead-Chester railway in 1840 accelerated the speculative development of similar high-class villa estates.



3.1.3 Illustration of Birkenhead Ferry terminal, 1831 (Look and Learn)



3.1.4 Tranmere ferry, 1844 (Wirral History)

3.3 Development of Clifton Park

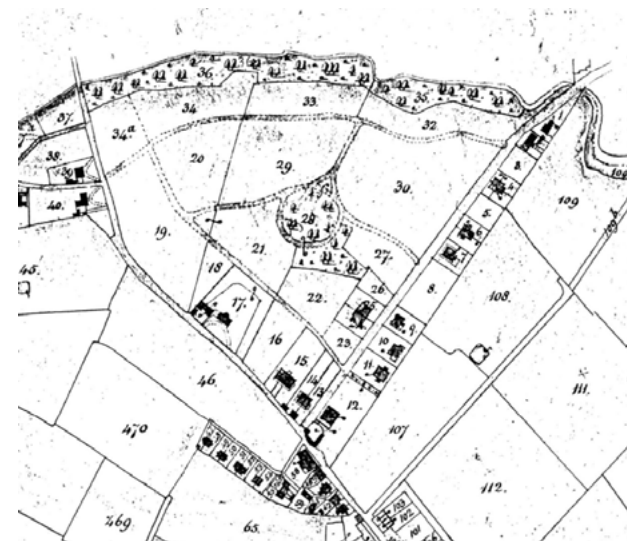
The accelerated pace of industrialisation from the start of the 19th century, coupled with the improvement of transport links to city centres, saw the development of the villa estate in the early decades of the century. With prominent examples constructed in Clifton, Bristol and Edge Hill in Liverpool, there was increasing pressure on non-manual workers of means to escape the growing smog and squalor of city centres. As such, the 1820s - 1840s saw the transformation of agricultural edges of cities into clustered suburbs of middle- and upper-class homes, seeking to benefit from the clean air and naturalistic setting of the green belt.

Originally a merchant and ship's captain, Captain William Sharp apparently recognised the potential of land that he had acquired on Tranmere's northern boundary in 1818. By 1842 Sharp had commissioned Birkenhead-born architect Walter Scott to design a villa suburb named Clifton Park, its name seeking to draw aspiration comparisons to aristocratic parkland estates. Defined by Whetstone Lane to the south and rising topography of the area stretching up to Holt Hill, the site was a relatively awkward one; the hard linear field boundary to the 'wasteland' in Sharp's ownership contrasted with the curving broken plans of the idealised early Victorian suburbs.

However, Scott responded inventively to Sharp's brief and by 1843 a clear road layout had been constructed, the curving woodland and Grange Vale stream reflected in the soft undulation of the roads at the core of the area. An unusual circular plot formed the centre of the layout, with the straight field boundary reflected in the boulevard of Clifton Road. A small cluster of additional buildings were built on Holt Hill in much less generous plots, also owned by William Sharp [Plate 3.1.5].

The villas constructed by Scott were designed in a variety of styles, often reflecting the architecture of J C Loudon and his mentor George Smith. Houses were generally detached and semi-detached, set within generous square plots and advertised as being of the highest standard, with generous views. Whilst some properties appear to have been speculatively constructed, adverts for the sale of building plots in 1843 suggest that Sharp also sold off land to individuals and developers immediately after the layout of the roads was completed. Described as 'beautifully situated in the Park, at a short distance from Woodside Ferry' the development evidently sought to underscore the transport connections between its rural surrounds and Liverpool [Plate 3.1.6].

Reflecting Scott's designs at Birkenhead Park, his work was described in 1843 as 'very elegant', the estate designed to serve the wealthiest of Liverpool's merchant class.



3.1.5 Villas plan on Tithe Map, c.1843



3.1.6 Clifton Park, 1864 (Wirral Memories)

3.4 Early Problems (1842-1860s)

Despite Scott's inventive planning, the estate was beset with problems from the outset of its development. Contrary to the seeming idyll of the area's northern woodland setting, the snaking stream that divided Birkenhead from Tranmere was a considerable nuisance to residents. Stretching towards Tranmere Pool, the area was apparently in use by local tanners, who sought a clean water source. As such, in 1848 Dr. Hunter Robertson's Report on the Sanitary State of Birkenhead described the stream as:

'one continued mass of abomination, consisting of all sorts of decomposed animal and vegetable matter, and sending forth an effluvia of so offensive and deleterious a nature as often to make the houses in the neighbourhood, particularly in Clifton Park, almost uninhabitable.'

Designed as a high-class villa suburb, boasting the benefits of clean air and views over east Wirral's natural scenery, the smell of the area may have contributed to poor sales. This effect was only worsened with the opening of the gasworks to the east of the estate; though crucial to the supply of lighting to homes and streets, the smell of the gas was apparently deleterious to the character of the area, whose situation only continued to worsen with the construction of a large abattoir with its setting [Plate 3.1.7].

In addition to the odorous surroundings and loss of its rural setting, poor economic conditions also prevented the full realisation of Sharp and Scott's original vision. By the middle of the 1840s the town was engulfed in an economic downturn, bringing its early 19th century building boom to a grinding halt. Whilst conditions had improved by the start of the 1850s, Captain William Sharp's capital had dried up, and in 1852 he was declared bankrupt.



3.1.7 19th century gasworks (iStock)

3.5 Middle Phase of Development (1860s and 1870s)

Much of the estate remained undeveloped in the 20 years following Captain Sharp's bankruptcy. Whilst Clifton Road was built up along both sides by 1858, plans of Birkenhead from this period show that only a small number of other villas were peppered across the wider reaches of Scott's plan, which was otherwise mostly empty. Whilst there had been a minor upturn in Birkenhead's fortunes during the 1850s, the soaring success of the docks on the other side of the Mersey contrasted with the enduring poor fortunes of the Wirral's most built up areas during this period **[Plate 3.1.8]**.

Whilst modest in its scale, a second phase of development appears to have occurred during the 1860s or 1870s, with OS maps showing a large building constructed on The Woodlands and two semi-detached villas built on the circular plot at the area's core. By this period the wooded area south of Borough Road was no longer in place, with some boggy marshland located between the rear of the villas and road's edge. Grangevale Terrace, a large block of small houses with canted bays, rear yards and a unifying alleyway had been constructed by this time, alongside two further terraces located to the rear, with a small access road allowing for pedestrian and carriage access between The Woodlands and Borough Road **[Plates 3.1.9]**.

Exhibiting stylistic similarities, the semi-detached villas built to Lowwood Road were possibly constructed as a small speculatively development, rather than by an individual family. Likely influenced by the loss of Sharp's capital, which had funded the earlier phases of development, this pattern of piecemeal development was one that continued through the rest of the 19th century.



3.1.8 Map of Birkenhead, 1858 (NLS)



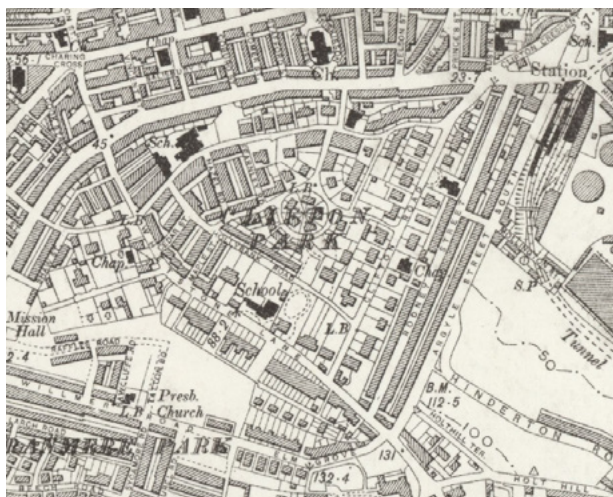
3.1.9 Birkenhead Central Station, late 19th century
(Arcades of the Past)

3.6 Final Phase of Development (1880-1900)

The final phase of Clifton Park's development concluded at the turn of the 20th century, probably having been prompted by the construction of the Mersey railway; with improved transport links between Birkenhead and Liverpool, there was an explosion in the construction of speculative terraced housing.

Comprising small terrace homes of between two and three bays, rarely taller than three and a half storeys, this was designed as mass housing for the rapidly increasing numbers of manual workers across both sides of the Mersey. Generally built in red brick, with simply brick ornament and small bays, the linear blocks contrasted starkly with the grand villas set in generous plots and vast gardens. Indeed, the snaking plan designed by Scott for the villa estate failed to maximise the number of houses that could be fitted within it, so new linear roads were laid out in between the curving streets that formed its original plan. As a consequence, Clifton Park was no longer a grand suburban villa estate set in rural surroundings, but part of Birkenhead's urban sprawl, which soon absorbed the village of Tranmere **[Plate 3.1.10]**.

Despite its absorption into the wider urban setting of Birkenhead, the architectural quality and attractive setting created by the broken and often curved street layout sets these terraces apart from those on Rodney Street and south of Whetstone Lane. Indeed, whilst the buildings starkly contrast with the early stone examples designed by Walter Scott, their quality and character speak to the enduring success of his early plan.



3.1.10 OS map showing terraces, revised 1897-9, published 1904-9 (NLS)

3.7 Early 20th Century (1900-1939)

Little development took place in the early decades of the 20th century, the terraced housing within the area all having been completed by 1898. However, tram lines had been added to Borough Road in the north, improving connections to the docks in the north.

The 1930s saw the construction of a small collection of houses to Brookland Road, but otherwise the area experienced little change.

3.8 Second World War

The conflict of 1939-1945 had a considerable impact on Birkenhead as a key bombing target during the Blitz. Whilst it is unclear if any bombs directly hit the conservation area, its surroundings were badly damaged **[Plate 3.1.11]**.



3.1.11 Aerial image of Clifton Park, 1948 (HE)

3.9 Post-War Decline

Having suffered from heavy bomb damage during the Second World War, much of Birkenhead's historic core was redeveloped in the 1950s and 1960s. By 1974, Borough Road had been considerably expanded to create a large dual carriageway, resulting in the demolition of Grangevale Terrace and other housing to the south. The construction of the large flyover dwarfed the former Clifton Crescent to the north-east of the area, undermining the area's historic setting.

This loss across the area's setting was reflected in modern additions and demolition within Clifton Park. By 1974 16-22 Clifton Road had been replaced with modern semi-detached housing. Additionally, a modern bungalow had been constructed to the vacant site on Lowwood Grove. Of relatively poor architectural quality, the former case resulted in the loss of an early villa, a trend reflected in several other late 20th century demolitions across Clifton Road, the south side of Lowwood Road and The Woodlands. By 2004 none of the churches constructed in the area during the 19th century survived. Whetstone Lane bore the worst of the demolition by 1974, with the expansion of the Laird School of Arts and Crafts having subsumed the houses that once comprised the Birkenhead Institute, the vicarage having been lost and a Child Guidance Centre replacing early villas. These sites continued to be redeveloped during the late 20th and early 21st century **[Plate 3.1.12]**.

The loss of appreciation in Victorian architecture during the post-war period is therefore reflected within its townscape, with many of the largest and grandest villas lost during the late 20th century.



3.1.12 38 & 40 Clifton Road prior to demolition, 1982 (DIA)

3.10 More Recent Years

In 2004 Clifton Park was designated a conservation area by Wirral Borough Council. The condition of the area was noted in the supporting Conservation Area Appraisal to be relatively poor. However, it has continued to decline.

In more recent years the estate has continued to struggle, and the conservation area was added to Historic England’s Heritage At Risk Register in 2022. The area is considered to still be declining, with its poor condition considered highly vulnerable to further deterioration.

Some of the smaller properties within the area, especially around Circular Road and The Woodlands, have been successfully renovated. However, many remain at risk and are in a declining condition.

4 Character and Townscape Assessment

4 Character and Townscape Assessment

4.1 Summary

The Clifton Park Conservation Area centres on the streets laid out by Walter Scott as a suburban villa estate, situated within a broad, roughly triangular site south of Birkenhead town centre. Clifton Road forms a linear spine to the area, containing the earliest villas on the estate, with Circular Road and Lowood Road forming a tight circular core. Between these roads, a mix of snaking curvilinear and straight streets populate the estate, stretching west from Clifton Road along the former boundary of 'The Rubicon' towards Tranmere Pool. Creating a fluid character defined by a sense of internal privacy and limited external views, the area is defined by its variation in scale, materiality, style and urban grain.

With Clifton Road, Whetstone Lane and a small number of plots to The Woodlands developed first as grand villas, the estate's urban grain is loosest to the outer roads. Later development within the interior of the park is generally denser, filling out the large plots in which they sit, which themselves have often been subdivided to accommodate larger numbers of properties. In a very small number of cases historic coach houses remain to the rear of properties, often built in brick.

As a result, there is rich stylistic and material variety within the area, creating a mixed and layered townscape whose architecture and public realm illustrates the historic development of the villa estate, its initial difficulties and later infilling. Overlaid onto a masterplan by one of Birkenhead's most prominent architects, the built form aptly expresses the grand aspirational character of the town's early building

boom. Large villas sit within generous mature plot and wide boulevard-style roads underscore the early Victorian character of the area, whilst later terracing illustrates the rapid development of the smaller scale workers housing following the improvement of transport connections to Liverpool at the end of the 19th century.

The historic gated entrance to Whetstone Lane and Clifton Road in the south remain the key gateways within the area, but are informally defined now that the original gates have been lost and Clifton Crescent eroded. Originally set in leafy agricultural surroundings, with views over Tranmere Pool and the coast, the development of its setting now limits this to a handful of built-up views looking north over Birkenhead and Liverpool; the Three Graces and Birkenhead's Woodside Ventilator all visible in views from Clifton Road and between buildings to the south of the area.

The wide streets designed by Scott create a sense of unity within the otherwise architecturally varied area. Designed to accommodate the grand carriages and coaches of the middle and upper classes the estate was designed to serve, this defines the streetscape. Peppered with historic boundaries, gateposts and historic postboxes, this early Victorian character is most legible on Clifton Road.

The public realm within the area is highly variable, with a mix of green and leafy surroundings to Clifton Road and the western side of The Woodlands contrasting with the terraced housing and modern blocks of flats fronting directly onto the pavement with limited soft landscaping. Few areas of historic paving and road surfacing survive and street lighting, signage and other street furniture is generally modern and inconsistent **[Plates 4.1.1- 4.1.3]**.



4.1.1 Grand villas by Walter Scott



4.1.2 Later 19th century terraces



4.1.3 Leafy plots along Circular Road and late 20th century public realm

4.2 Key Built Features and Characteristics

4.2.1 Scale and Form

The varied scale, form and spatial characteristics of the Clifton Park conservation area illustrate its phased development and varying fortunes. Intended to comprise a single-phase villa estate, the large spacious plots originally laid out were gradually subdivided over time, reducing the sense of the upper-class suburb that Captain William Sharp hoped to create. However, it aptly demonstrates the development of the area over the course of the 19th century. The following characteristics underpin this:

- **Variation in scale:** The earliest villas within the estate are generally detached or semi-detached, comprising two to two and a half storeys; the internal proportions however evoking a sense of height and grandeur. Rooflines generally vary aligned with architectural styles, breaking up the massing within the townscape. As a result, the later terracing, though also generally two storeys tall, are of limited townscape presence in comparison, generally only two or three bays wide and much reduced in total height. Indeed, aside from the tall polychromatic terraces on Brookland Road, the mass terrace housing within the area is defined not by a sense of verticality, but by their horizontal massing.
- **Diversity of plot size and shape:** The original plots laid out as part of the early villa estate vary in size to a degree, but are generally spacious and regular in shape. The villas generally sit within the centre of

square or rectangular plots, though some examples to the south are sited to the rear. As a result, generous driveways, large front gardens and leafy rear gardens define much of the area's character to Clifton Road. This arrangement is echoed by the large semi-detached houses built during the 1860s and 1870s on Lowood and Circular Road. However, the unusual plan of the circular central plot constrains plot and garden sizes, with their front boundaries subordinate to Scott's snaking estate plan. This starkly contrasts with the later terraced blocks typically constructed on linear streets built between the snaking roads that formed the original masterplan for the estate, these terraces were sometimes built in reclaimed woodland, with small front gardens and rear yards.

- **Varied urban grain:** The Victorian ideal of the villa estate exhibits a very loose urban grain, building plots being generous, with considerable space between each dwelling. Whilst this standard was adhered to in the early stages of development, the frenetic and speculative construction of terraced housing to the western side of the estate resulted in the construction of several small linear roads to the west of the area. Here the urban grain is considerably tighter, with minimal gaps between buildings and limited permeability outside of the main roads. As such, the urban grain is considerably varied, articulating changes to the pattern of development through time.

[Plates 4.2.1 and 4.2.2]



4.2.1 Mixed scale between villas and terracing



4.2.2 Loose urban grain around Circular Road

4.2.2 Materiality

The materiality of the built form is variable but broadly aligns with different phases of construction. The overarching palette is set by the stone buildings designed by Scott, which dominate Clifton Road and are peppered within the rest of the townscape. However, brick is prevalent in the area west of Clifton Road, underscoring the sense of contrast in scale and grandeur. The following materials are common within the area:

- **Early use of stone:** Most of buildings constructed in the first phase of the estate's development utilised the buff Storeton sandstone typical of the high-status houses designed during Birkenhead's early 19th century building boom, with Welsh slates used for the roofing. In many cases these buildings have been stuccoed or painted, degrading the legibility of the original materials. The majority of these buildings are concentrated to Clifton Road.
- **Sandstone dressings:** Used much more sparingly in the later villas built on the estate, many of the larger brick villas used sandstone for the majority of their sills and bay windows. Sandstone gate piers are also common to middle and later phase villas.
- **Brick:** Red and brown brick is used across later villas, with polychromatic detailing supplied by the use of pressed brick, blue engineering and buff bricks. These villas primarily date to the second phase of construction, delineating those constructed in the 1860s-1910. However, some of the early villas appear to have been simply faced with sandstone, as seen on the Masonic Lodge on Clifton Road. Moulded pressed brick was also used for ornamentation on the later terraced houses.
- **Tiled roofing:** Though broadly clad in slate and clay tiles, there has been substantial replacement with concrete tiles. More decorative ridge tiles have often been lost, though notable survivals can be seen to 10, 47-49 and 44 Clifton Road.
- **Timber:** Treated timber is a common material used within the bargeboards and other architectural features; a limited number of surviving finials can be seen within the middle phase villas.
- **Ironwork:** Wrought and cast iron is scant within the area, but is used for ornamentation on a small number of middle phase villas and later terraces.

[Plates 4.2.3 and 4.2.4]



4.2.3 Storeton sandstone to Fearnley House



4.2.4 Polychromatic brickwork to later villa

4.2.3 Prominent Styles

Initially developed as a large villa estate, the conservation area was then developed in successive phases over the course of the 19th century. As such, the stylistic variety seen within the area's earliest villas is reflected in the layering of styles, scales and housing types throughout. The Victorian fashion for revivalism is a consistent stylistic thread across the area, drawing together the mixed material palette and housing types.

This diversity is further reflected in the varied road layout; buildings of differing styles sit side-by-side, adding to the sense of reveal within the curving and dynamic townscape views and reflecting Walter Scott's unusual ability to design in a mix of aesthetics.

The majority of the buildings within the area fall within the following stylistic movements:

- **Classical/Italianate:** Generally constructed in stone or stuccoed, the classical villas that line much of Clifton Road primarily date to the 1840s and 1850s. Generally built on square plan forms, they typically adopt features such as cornices, quoins, heavy channelled rustication, friezes and columned porches. Projecting cornices, heavy eaves and the heavy classical proportions of the buildings often reflect an Italianate and Palazzo style, with simpler Greek Revival villas utilising acroterion and acanthus scrolled patterns. Most roof pitches are relatively low, often hipped and generally obscured by parapets, balustrading or a pediment. 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.
- **Picturesque Gothic Revival:** Many of the buildings designed by Scott blend Jacobean, Baronial, Gothick and blended medieval gothic elements to create a distinctive picturesque gothic style. Generally constructed in Storeton sandstone, the buildings exhibit stylistically mixed stone tracery to windows, shaped gables and pitched dormers. Crenelation, quatrefoils and unadorned shields are used to ornament doors and walls, with simple arched windows common across the buildings.
- **Gothic Revival:** Buildings with details derived from the gothic styles of the medieval period are more commonly dated to the post 1850 period, though Scott frequently designed in an eclectic gothic style. Within the conservation area, they generally date between 1850 and 1880, with only light gothic features used outside of polychromatic brickwork, arched windows and prominent chimneys.
- **Vernacular Revival:** Light references to the Jacobean and Elizabethan period can be found within Scott's work, but the late 19th century buildings across the conservation area exhibit a stylistically varied Vernacular Revivalist style. Defined by the use of red pressed brick, half timbering and a light use of render to localised areas, the buildings' detailing is primarily reflected within stained glass windows, carved timber work and moulded brick. On Clifton Road three villa houses exhibit a more sophisticated form of the style, with carefully detailed parterring in the form of domestic and agricultural scenes.

[Plates 4.2.5-4.2.8]



4.2.5 Classical villa to Clifton Road



4.2.6 Picturesque Gothic



4.2.7 Gothic villa to Woodlands and Clifton Road



4.2.8 Vernacular revival house to Clifton Road

4.2.4 Leading Architects and Designers

Whilst several phases of construction took place on the estate, likely involving a number of different architects, only the initial layout and early houses are attributed to a known designer. Walter Scott, the Birkenhead-born architect was originally commissioned by Captain Sharp to design the layout of the streets within the plan and is thought to have designed the bulk of the early villas within the estate.

Having been articled to George Smith of Edinburgh, Scott's designs are rooted in his mentor's work; close similarities can be seen between Smith's published designs for labouring houses and Scott's picturesque gothic buildings. Designing ably in a variety of styles, though many private houses with the Wirral have been suggested as having been designed by him, few are definitively attributable to his practice. Working from Birkenhead and Liverpool, Scott was evidently a prolific designer, working at Birkenhead Park and as Borough Surveyor for the town concurrently. A number of the buildings within the conservation area closely resemble his works at Birkenhead Park, with 10 Ashville Road and 42 Clifton Road closely resembling one another.

4.2.5 Typical Features and Details

Though the conservation area's interest is rooted in the streetscape's variety, there is some consistency in the details used across the consecutive building phases. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Windows and doors:** Though uPVC windows dominate much of the conservation area, most of the early villas within the area retain timber sash windows. Frequently mixing forms, Scott's eclectic architecture is effectively articulated by the mix of windows and doors used in his buildings. Generally, the grand early villas exhibit large rectangular and arched sashes typical of the early 19th century, underscoring the generosity of rooms' internal proportions. However, across the rest of the area semi-circular arched, straight sided pointed arched, four-centred arched and segmental arched heads are all present. Surrounds are in a mix of materials that reflects their variety in age and material, but the early stone villas often exhibit rich tracery, heavy architraving, scrolled brackets and pediments to windows. Buildings constructed in the late 19th century appear to have originally had timber casement windows, often with leaded opening upper panes and sometimes utilising stained glass of multiple colours. However, these have generally been lost, with only a very small number of surviving examples to The Woodlands and Fearney Road.
- **Chimneys:** Adding a sense of interest, variety and height to the roofscape, tall chimneys are highly visible and characterise the area. In places they are the most architecturally ornate element of the building - the twisting barley sugar chimneys to 40 Clifton Road articulates the inventiveness seen across the area. Even the later villas exhibit tall chimney stacks, often with multiple flues, generally bookending the building. Thus, they form a key element of the streetscape, with even simpler examples delineating the position of the buildings within it.
- **Carved stonework:** Sometimes seen in rich window tracery to the gothic buildings constructed by Scott, carved sandstone detailing is frequently used on the main face of the wall to create dramatic effects to otherwise relatively simple elevations. Heavy channelled rustication and pilasters contrast with the simplicity of the carefully dressed ashlar.
- **Polychromy and ornamental brick:** Moulded brickwork is common across the area, generally in a red pressed brick to the later buildings. Used heavily in the late 19th century terracing within Clifton Park, the juxtaposition of differing brick types creates visual interest across the townscape.
- **Eaves, gables and bargeboard details:** Heavy eaves details are typical across the area, with scrolling, corbelling and considerably cornices visible to the earliest villas. Frequently constructed in stone, these elements are generally heavy and enriched in differing styles, including acanthus leaves and egg and dart mouldings. The heavy appearance of these overhanging eaves adds to the considerable sense of scale to the villas. In later villas and gothic examples, ornamental bargeboards are common, with brick bracketing replacing the heavy scrolled brackets seen on the Italianate villas at the apex of Clifton Road.
- **Roofing:** The varied pitches and roof forms within the conservation area are of particular interest, the elevated road adding to their visibility when travelling through the estate. Generally roof forms align with the styles in which the building was built; this is especially true of the original stone villas. Gothic and Vernacular Revival buildings generally exhibit steeply pitched gabled roofing, often with

small, pitched dormers and unusual Jacobean and Elizabethan style shaped gables, whilst classical buildings generally utilise shallow hipped or flat roof forms, which are obscured by parapets or balustrading. Variation within the roofline is especially common to the semi-detached and terraced houses in the area.

[Plates 4.2.9-4.2.18]



4.2.9 Historic canted bay



4.2.10 UPVC windows in historic bay



4.2.11 Carved tripartite windows



4.2.12 Grand classical doorcase



4.2.13 Carved stone channelling, pilasters and detailing



4.2.14 Carved stone porch and tracery



4.2.15 Polychromatic brick



4.2.16 Heavy classical eaves



4.2.17 Curvilinear bargeboards and slate roof



4.2.18 Ornamental bargeboards and arched windows

4.2.6 Boundaries and Surfaces

- **Paving:** Paving within the estate primarily dates to a late 20th century or early 21st century public realm scheme, with a mix of late 20th century red blockwork and concrete tiling. Areas of lowered curbs are built solely in red blockwork, with a patterned mix of the materials to pedestrian paving. Some localised areas of tarmacking have replaced this scheme. The road surface itself comprises tarmacking to most roads, though blockwork is also used to Circular Road and Lowwood Road. One small circular area of historic stone slab paving and curb is located at the point of convergence between Lowwood Grove and Lowwood Road.
- **Piers:** Piers to the historic villas are generally constructed in sandstone, comprising pillars of varying heights surmounted by carved capstones. Generally, the capstones are relatively large, with some pillars carved to exhibit a panelled effect. In some cases, piers have been lost and rebuilt in brick, whilst most have been painted or rendered. Small piers have been retained to some terraces, located at regular intervals within stone or brick boundary walls.

- **Boundary walls:** There is little consistency in the boundaries that surround houses on the estate. Though it might be assumed that the early villas, constructed as part of the initial phase of construction, might share consistency in boundary treatments, this is not the case. To Clifton Road some boundaries consist of low brick walls capped with stone and surmounted by railings, others comprise rough sandstone, hedging and fully replaced modern fencing. As such, the original appearance was likely one of some variety, reflected in the later treatments to the terraces.
- **Railings and gates:** Wrought iron railings are common to the boundary treatments across much of the area. Generally inconsistent in both colour and form, the majority are modern and generally unsympathetic to the historic appearance of the area.
- **Close-board fencing:** Close-board fencing is relatively common within the area, both in timber and concrete. Primarily constructed to separate side boundaries within the terraces and semi-detached villas and to the rear of buildings, some examples of tall fencing and gates can be found to the front elevations of properties.



4.2.19 Blockwork paving to Clifton Road

[Plates 4.2.19-4.2.25]



4.2.20 Historic paving to centre of Circular Road



4.2.23 Sandstone boundary to Clifton Road



4.2.24 Mixed brick and stone capped boundary



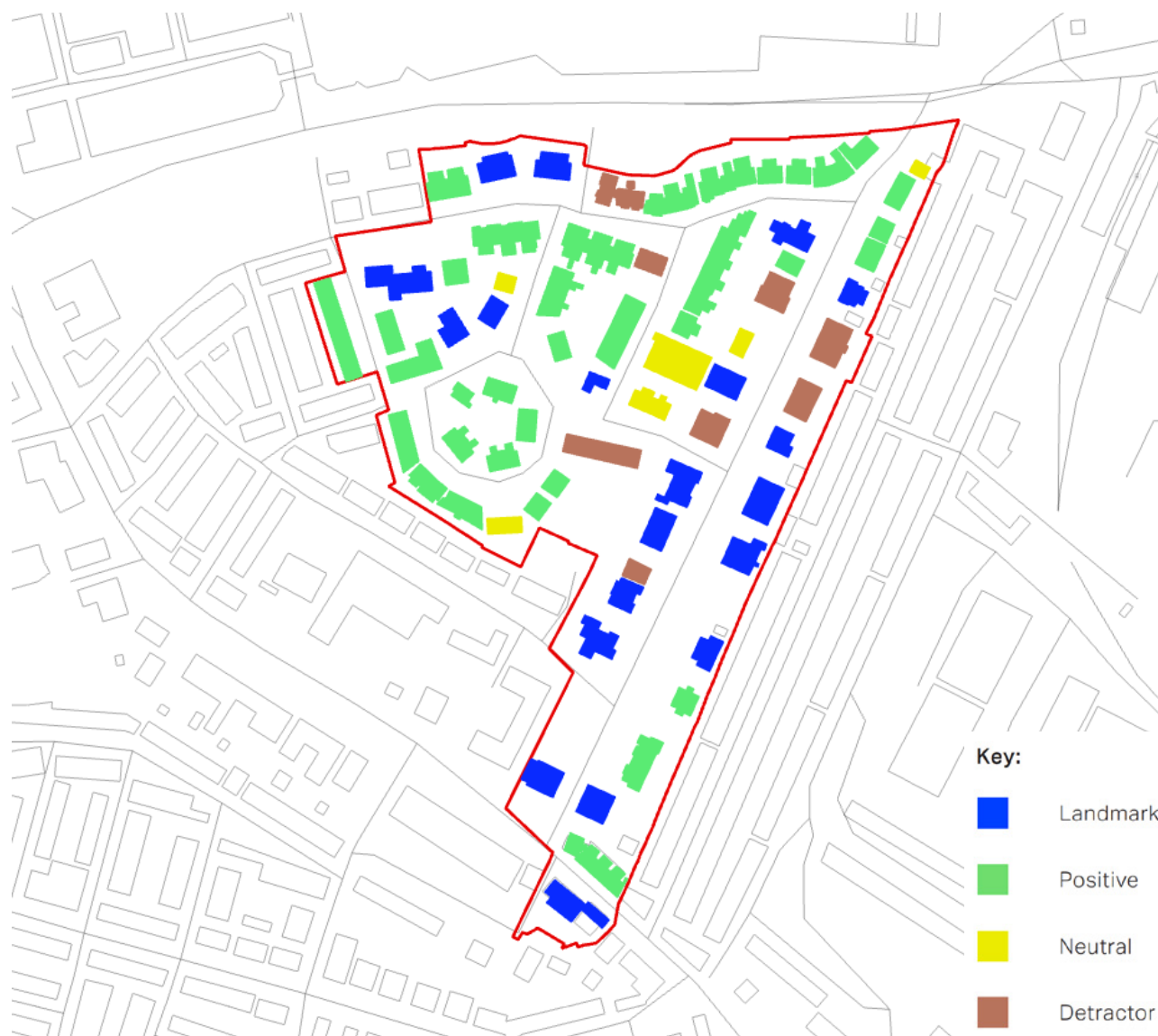
4.2.25 Modern boundary with close board fencing

4.3 Street Analysis

A relatively small area comprising a cluster of roads built on and within the original layout of the villa estate, Clifton Park's frenetic development has resulted in a dispersal of different housing types, scales and styles across the conservation area. Whilst a core of 1840s villas on Clifton Road have resulted in a coherent (mostly) single phase character to the area's spine, the other streets within the townscape are defined by a diverse mix of housing types, plot sizes, styles and materials. As such, the conservation area is described street by street, beginning with a short summary of character, evolution and development and following with a description of townscape.

The corresponding analysis map for the area highlight the contribution of each building. 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).

[Plate 4.3.1]



4.3.1 Significance townscape map

4.3.1 Clifton Road

The grandest - and seemingly only completed - road in the conservation area, Clifton Road forms a linear spine to the east of the area and defining its boundaries. The road's layout and planning contrasts with the curvilinear roads to the west, also laid out by Walter Scott. However, its alignment likely follows that of historic field boundaries and was possibly retained for the considerable views it offers over Hamilton Square and Liverpool.

Dominated by grand villas, most or all of which were probably designed by Scott, the road represents the most complete area of the estate's original 1840s vision. Houses are generally built either as grand standalone detached residences or as symmetrical semi-detached villas, ornamented with Classical, Gothic and Jacobean detailing. Set within generous plots, mature planting within the boundaries of the property's funnels and filters views north, with the road's steep slope obscuring its Victorian setting to the south.

[Plate 4.3.2 and 4.3.3]



4.3.2 View south along Clifton Road



4.3.3 View north along Clifton Road

Design Intent and Evolution

Constructed on the land initially acquired by Captain Willam Sharp, Tithe Maps show that Clifton Road ran parallel alongside the historic field boundary which marked the extent of his land. Laid out as a single linear stretch of villas by Walter Scott over the course of the 1840s, the road was mostly complete by the time of Sharp's bankruptcy in 1852. Indeed, even by the 1843 Tithe Map, much of the eastern side of the road was apparently built. As such, it is the only complete element of the original scheme that was finished as likely intended.

Originally some of the villas were constructed with coach houses to the rear and were designed for the wealthy to be able to commute into the city. Grand in scale, this is illustrated by newspaper reports from the 1850s and 1860s when several of the houses let were described as containing between five and seven bedrooms, with W.C. facilities and 'superior decoration'. The villas continued in residential use during this period, though the current Masonic Lodge was remodelled for its conversion.

In the late 20th century, several of the villas within the area were demolished, with modern housing constructed in their place. In some cases, these were small individual semi-detached houses, but larger blocks of flats were also built within the area in the 1990s and early years of the 2000s.

Built Character

Meeting Whetstone Lane in the south, Clifton Road steeply slopes from the apex of the road towards Birkenhead town centre in the north. At the apex of the road two large Italianate villas flank the gateway, with the easternmost villa obscured by later terracing which stretches around to Rodney Street. **Nos. 47-49 (Grade II)**, now situated within a much encroached upon plot, was originally a pair of houses built in ashlar with a Welsh slate hipped roof. Designed in a heavy Italian Palazzo style, the building is ornamented by a grand pedimented entrance, with heavy rustication and quoining to the tripartite ground floor windows. The roof heavily overhangs the eaves, which are ornamented with scrolled acanthus bracketing. The historic sandstone gatepiers to the house are also listed at Grade II [Plates 4.3.4 and 4.3.5].

This arrangement is echoed to **44 Clifton Road (Grade II)**, also designed on a large square plan as two houses, but stuccoed and scored to imitate the stone of the adjacent building. Giant order pilasters stretch from the plinth to eaves level, with pedimented windows and a rich ornamental doorcase. Whilst large areas of the plot remain in use as ornamental gardens, the conversion of the house into flats has resulted in tarmacking of the southern garden, with the original boundary wall also lost [Plates 4.3.6].

South of 47-49 Clifton Road sits a collection of later houses constructed on the former house's gardens. Designed in a vernacular style, utilising parquetry, half timbering and rich timber detailing, the houses are built in brick and contrast with the more assertive Walter Scott buildings on the road. A small red postbox sits within the houses' boundary wall [Plates 4.3.7- 4.3.9].

On the corner of Hollybank Road, **42 Clifton Road (Grade II)** stands as an assertive expression of Scott's picturesque Gothic Revival style, probably influenced by the work of his mentor George Smith, and J.C. Loudon. Elegantly responding to the sloping site, the building sits on a considerable basement level, with perpendicular style windows, quatrefoils and elegant twisted barley-sugar chimneys. Much of the gardens has been covered with paving, with a large gate obscuring the building from the corner of the two roads [Plates 4.3.10].

On the eastern side of the road two tall pairs of villas are amongst the earliest buildings constructed on the estate, shown on the early tithe map. **Nos. 31 and 33 (Grade II)** were designed by Scott in a Classical style and are stuccoed. The heavy pediment and cornice sit above a frieze enriched with acanthus leaf details. However, **Nos. 35 and 37** comprise an unlisted pair of villas, stuccoed and with windows all replaced with uPVC, their character has been severely degraded [Plate 4.3.11].

40 and 38 Clifton Road were originally built as a pair, with the latter portion demolished in the early 21st century. As such, **40 Clifton Road (Grade II)**, a richly ornamented Italianate villa retaining an original wrought iron balcony, original tripartite and arch-headed sash windows, appears isolated. Standing above its poorly designed modern counterpart, the modern building seeks to emulate the wrought iron railings but is a poor pastiche of Scott's original design [Plates 4.3.12 and 4.3.13].

A cluster of stuccoed semi-detached villas sit within the centre of Clifton Road, prevailing classical in character. **Nos. 30, 32 (Grade II), 34 and 36 (Grade II)** are all such villas, tall sash windows articulating the generous internal proportions. With pavilion like projecting end bays, either gabled or with a hipped roof, their ornament and roofline is varied, but consistency in massing unites them with **Nos. 23 and 25 (Grade II)** on the east side of the road [Plates 4.3.14-16].

Either side of this cluster sit a small collection of generously proportioned standalone villas, all designed in the classical style on a roughly square or rectangular footprint. The grandest of these is the **Masonic Temple (Grade II)**, designed in brick with ashlar facing to the street elevation. Not shown on the Tithe Map of 1843, it is very slightly later in date than much of the road's eastern side. Symmetrical to the street, giant order pilasters stretch from plinth to cornice, with rich egg and dart capitals, moulded and scrolled architraves to windows and doors or enriched with carved caryatid heads. The windows have now been covered with poor-quality grilles and the landscaping has been totally lost in favour of a sea of hard landscaping covering the generous plot [Plates 4.3.17 and 4.3.18].

The richness of this façade is echoed by the Baroque grandeur of **24 Clifton Road (Grade II)**, whose relatively slim frontage conceals a deep pile plan. Heavily channelled to the ground floor, the building mixes window forms to create a symmetrical fenestration pattern defined by light variety between floors. **21 Clifton Road (Grade II)**, whilst also

classical, is far more restrained in style, typical of Regency villas; retaining much mature landscaping, it is the only example of the three that is well-screened [Plates 4.3.19 and 4.3.20].

South of the Masonic Lodge, the townscape becomes much more mixed in age and quality. Sloping down to meet Borough Road and The Woodlands, large apartment blocks and a small collection of post-war semi-detached homes interrupt the prevailing sense of architectural quality, scale and massing. Venture Court, sitting on the former site of a late 19th century chapel, contrasts starkly with the materiality of the area, as does Clifton Gate. Whilst the latter is relatively well-screened, the loss of the original buildings has resulted in a dilution of the villa estate character [Plates 4.3.21 and 4.3.22].

Only **10 Clifton Road**, adjoined to the grand Baronial **72 Woodlands (collectively listed at Grade II)** restores Scott's intended character to the lower portion of the road. Sat on an unusual plan, the buildings date to 1846 and elegantly articulate the architect's ability to eloquently blend varied gothic motifs, with the single storey castellated block assertively sat to the corner of the plot. Exhibiting traceried windows, round-arch mullion lights and built in the same Storeton ashlar as the adjoining building, it retains fretted bargeboards and an elegant central gable to the porch. Despite this architectural quality and townscape presence, the building is in a poor condition, with several missing windows, a considerably overgrown plot and damage to masonry [Plates 4.3.23 and 4.3.24].

The quality of the townscape declines as the road moves north to meet Borough Road, the spacious plots replaced by a tighter urban grain. Whilst individual villas survive at **3 and 5 Clifton Road**, they have been stuccoed, their windows replaced with uPVC examples and landscaping lost. This is replicated to **1a and 3a**, which sits almost on the junction of the road. As such, the visual impact of the gateway to the north has been undermined [Plates 4.3.25].

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the road:

- Dynamic views of the townscape, defined by variety in the roofscape and views over the wider estate
- Linear views north, terminating in the Birkenhead flyover
- Long-range views over Birkenhead and Liverpool, both directly along the road and through townscape gaps between villas
- Short-range views to eastern setting (Rodney Street), primarily between buildings



4.3.4 Rear of 47-49 Clifton Road



4.3.5 47-49 Clifton Road



4.3.6 44 Clifton Road



4.3.7 Later vernacular houses south of 47



4.3.8 Later vernacular revival houses



4.3.9 19th century postbox



4.3.10 42 Clifton Road



4.3.11 31 and 33 Clifton Road



35 and 37 Clifton Road



4.3.12 40 Clifton Road with modern railings



4.3.13 38 Clifton Road



4.3.15 30 and 32 Clifton Road



4.3.14 36 Clifton Road



4.3.16 23 Clifton Road



4.3.17 Former masonic temple



4.3.18 Large pilasters to former Masonic Temple



4.3.19 24 Clifton Road (2)



4.3.20 24 Clifton Road



4.3.21 Eroded villa townscape



4.3.22 Off scale proportions of Clifton Gate



4.3.23 10 Clifton Road



4.3.24 Retained driveway and garden to 10 Clifton Road



4.3.25 3 and 5 Clifton Road, looking towards northeastern gateway

4.3.2 The Woodlands

Design Intent and Evolution

One of the roads laid out by Walter Scott as part of his original scheme for the villa estate, The Woodlands follows the snaking line of the stream and belt of woodland known variously as Grange Vale, 'The Rubicon' and Happy Valley. Named for this wooded character, the boundary of Tranmere and Birkenhead also followed the stream, prompting the ironic use of the 'Rubicon' name.

Described as a public nuisance in the 1840s, the stream was apparently foul-smelling, possibly accounting for the fact that only two villas had been constructed along the northern side of the road by 1858.

By the 1870s Grange Vale had been infilled or culverted and the woodland removed, leaving an isolated green bank between the pre-existing villas and the newly created Borough Road. Another large villa had been constructed on the south side of the road during this period, with a non-conformist church following later in the decade.

However, the bulk of housing built on the road was constructed during the 1880s and 1890s. With many of the plots remaining vacant during the middle of the century, plots were ripe for speculative development and long rows of terraces in a mix of designs, bricks and scales were constructed.

Little development appears to have followed in the 20th century, though some of the terracing built to the rear of the villa plots facing Borough Road were demolished to widen it.

Built Form

The curvilinear form of The Woodlands is of considerable interest as part of Scott's original plan for the estate. A key road within the conservation area, traffic calming measures have been adopted across the road, including speed bumps. Nonetheless, it remains a popular vehicular cut-through for either avoiding or accessing the busy Borough Road.

Beginning at the western end **Fearnley Hall (Grade II)** sits within the prominent corner plot to the edge of the conservation area, serving as a key landmark at the north-western gateway. Designed as one of the early villas on the estate by Walter Scott, the sprawling and complex plan exhibits a long rear range, a shorter parallel front range, and a gabled wing. Ornamented with prominent chimneys, the gabled wing is highly visible along the road, marking the extent of the conservation area to the west **[Plate 4.3.26]**.

Small scale terracing sits opposite the Fearnley Hall, in small blocks of varying quality. Probably constructed speculatively, the modern housing development and degraded blocks to the west sit outside of the conservation area boundary. Similar to the tall terracing on the western side of Brookland Road, some exhibit polychromatic diapered external walls with corbelling and canted bays. The retention of gardens to these terraces is generally sporadic, with mature landscaping softening their impact to the road in some places, but largely replaced with hard surfacing across much of the area **[Plates 4.3.27 and 4.3.28]**.

The terraces are generally staggered behind each other, following the snaking path of the road, whilst party walls remain connected. The highest quality examples are located to the centre of the road, exhibiting half timbering to gabled attic storeys, stepped access to the entrances and retained historic stone boundaries. A small number of terraces retain historic glazing and timber windows; however, these have broadly been replaced **[Plate 4.3.29 and 4.3.30]**.

Breaking up the terraced blocks, two pairs of demi-detached stone villas stand at **53 and 55, 57 and 59 The Woodlands (Grade II)**. Designed with grand proportions and heavy Baroque masonry, they are both relatively similar in style. Now divided into apartments, the former example (also known as 'Grange View') is in a relatively good state of repair, but its hard landscaped gardens detracting from its historic setting **[Plate 4.3.31 and 4.3.32]**.

A modern apartment block, replacing the 19th century church, occupies the whole of a large corner plot. Though relatively well articulated, it detracts from the character of the street **[Plate 4.3.33]**.

The road exhibits relatively wide pavements, all fully paved in red blockwork with localised areas of loss. Boundaries are inconsistent, as is the case across the area, with some mature planting softening the townscape **[Plate 4.3.34]**.

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the road:

- Curving revealed views of the townscape around Circular Road and Lowwood Road
- Short range glimpsed views out of the area to Borough Road
- Linear views up Lowwood Grove and Brookland Road into the secluded core of the area



4.3.26 Rear of Fearnley Hall



4.3.27 Small scale terracing opposite Fearnley Hall



4.3.28 19th century typical terrace



4.3.29 Typical block of late 19th century terracing



4.3.30 Contemporary paint to brickwork of late 19th century terrace



4.3.31 53 and 55 Woodlands



4.3.32 Grange View



4.3.33 Modern apartment block



4.3.34 Red blockwork paving and mixed boundaries

4.3.3 Lowwood Road and Circular Road

Primarily laid out during the middle phase of development, the majority of the townscape is constructed in brick, with a small number of earlier stone villas peppering the streets. A few earlier villas form the centre point of the area but are generally surrounded by belts of later terraces constructed during the final building phase of the estate.

Four earlier villas are reminiscent of those on Clifton Road in terms of composition and scale, but are slightly less opulent in architectural detail. The majority of the interest to the area is concentrated in the unusual arrangement of Circular Road, conveying a sense of privacy to the houses within it and forming the core of the original villa plan.

Design Intent and Evolution

With the circular plot forming the core of Scott's design from which the other curving and fluid roads radiate, Circular and Lowwood Roads are at the centre of the architect's inventive response to uniting the awkward curves of the northern and southern boundaries with the linear field boundary to the east. Despite its position within the scheme, by 1858 the road was minimally built up, with only 8 and 12 Lowwood Road, 15 Lowwood Grove and 10 Lowwood Road in place.

Most of the circular plot was built up during the middle phase of development, with the buildings all constructed as large semi-detached housing in the Gothic Revival style. The raised sites surrounding

the central core were all constructed during the final 'mass housing' phase of building, and are stylistically varied. Probably speculatively constructed, this smaller scale housing was influenced by the arrival of mass transit to Liverpool in the 1880s.

There has been some localised demolition in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with poor quality modern housing replacing the large villa on the corner of Lowwood Road and Circular Road. A small post-war bungalow also sits within an elevated site above Circular Road.

Built Form

Running roughly parallel to The Woodlands along much of its path, Lowwood Road stretches around the back of the circular core of the area to connect both Whetstone Lane and Clifton Road to one another. However, this sense of connectivity has been eroded with the addition of boarding and built-up pavements, which have effectively severed the road into three sections [Plates 4.3.35].

Much of the eastern side of Lowwood Road is of no historic or architectural significance, with modern developments such as The Moorings dominating the townscape [Plates 4.3.36]. Indeed, even the historic terraces to this area have been badly degraded by modern additions such as stone-effect cladding, rendering and a loss of front gardens. **8 Lowwood Road (Grade II)** is the only building within this part of the road which has been retained from Scott's original scheme, with the building directly facing it having been demolished in the late 20th century. Designed in

an assertive gothic and Jacobean revivalist style with a crowstepped roof to the porch the building is in a very poor condition; its added paint peeling in several areas, with large swathes of vegetation covering the side elevations [Plates 4.3.37].

Within the central circular plot most buildings are constructed of brown brick with polychromatic brick and timber detailing. Dating to the middle period of development, the buildings are constructed in pairs of semi-detached homes with generous front gardens and constrained rear plots. Whilst there is a general unity in gothic detailing and style, the buildings to the north are generally more ambitious in scale. The condition of the buildings is mixed, but they generally retain mature plots [Plates 4.3.38].

Surrounding the polychromatic buildings at the circular core of the area, the townscape echoes the final phase of development. Light in architectural detail two pairs of semi-detached villas exhibit high-quality stone boundaries, retained gardens and one of the only areas of historic setts to the alley between them [Plates 4.3.39].

However, most of the townscape is dominated by terracing raised above the street level on a slope. Typical of the other terracing across the area, it breaks from the rest of Clifton Park in being built primarily in buff brick. Whilst generally retaining historic boundaries, the buildings have predominately lost their original features and are cluttered with modern security detailing, wiring and aerials. Though some individual terraces are well maintained, there is a lack of consistency across the townscape, resulting in a sense of incoherence [Plates 4.3.40].

12 Lowwood Road comprises the only other Walter Scott villa within the area. Formerly in use as a vicarage, the building's coursed and squared rubble face is dressed with ashlar, creating a rugged appearance at odds with many of Scott's other works. In proportion and footprint similar to 21 Clifton Road, the classical villa retains bulky chimney stacks, original piers and heavy bracketed window surrounds to its large tripartite fenestration. Despite the quoining to the corners of the building and its robust appearance, it is well screened by mature planting and as such is less prominent within the townscape than other buildings of a similar scale **[Plates 4.3.41]**.

A modern blockwork scheme covers the roads, with modern street lighting and bollarding. Whilst visually less detrimental than the tarmacking seen across the area, the lack of pavements reduces the sense of pedestrian connectivity **[Plates 4.3.42]**.

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the road:

- Curving revealed views of the townscape around Circular Road and Lowwood Road
- Linear views towards Lowwood Grove and the Pyramids Shopping Centre
- Views between buildings into the core circle of built form



4.3.35 Wooden bollarding dividing road



4.3.36 Altered terracing and Moorings beyond



4.3.37 8 Lowwood Road



4.3.38 Mature planting and polychromy to Circular Road



4.3.39 Historic setts to 20th century semi-detached housing



4.3.40 Typical building to Circular Road



4.3.41 12 Lowwood Road



4.3.42 Blockwork paving scheme to road

4.3.4 Lowwood Grove

Design Intent and Evolution

Part of Walter Scott's original masterplan for the site, Lowwood Grove remained undeveloped during the early and middle periods of construction. By 1858 nothing had been constructed on the open sites within it.

By the time the road was surveyed for the OS map of 1897-1899, a single terrace had been built on the eastern side of the road, with the large brick house on the corner of Lowwood Road and Lowwood Grove also visible. However, the site of the current bungalow on the western side of the street remained open and unbuilt upon, possibly constrained by the awkward trapezoid plan. Only in the 1930s did a small collection of outhouses and linear blocks arrive on the site, probably connected to the adjoining plot.

Little further development occurred during the end of the 20th century, aside from the construction of the small bungalow on the awkward trapezoid site to the west.

Built Form

Serving as a short linear connection between Circular Road, Lowwood Road and The Woodlands, Lowwood Grove is one of the shortest roads within the conservation area. Like much of the western side of the area, its lack of development during the initial phase of construction resulted in small blocks of terracing to the street [Plates 4.3.43].

The road's character is primarily defined by the red brick of the terraced houses on its eastern side. Set back behind small brick walls capped with stone, front gardens are generally minimally maintained, replaced with refuse storage. Small two bay homes are situated on a slope and therefore constructed across multiple levels. Exhibiting simple stone dressings with light carving and canted bays, the buildings are minimally ornamented but form characterful examples of the type [Plates 4.3.44].

The low-lying walls to the group are reflected in the mixed rubble and brick walling to the simple brown brick bungalow to the west, which is of no architectural or historic value [Plates 4.3.45].

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the street:

- Linear views terminating in the Pyramids Shopping Centre to the north and opening up to the small turning circle on Lowwood Road in the south
- Anticipated, glimpsed views around the curve of Lowwood Road



4.3.43 View south along Lowwood Grove towards Circular Road



4.3.44 Simple stone dressings with later UPVC windows to terracing



4.3.45 Mixed brick and rubble masonry wall to bungalow

4.3.5 Brookland Road

Design Intent and Evolution

Running parallel to Clifton Road, connecting Lowwood Road with The Woodlands, Brookland Road was the only short linear route within the original plan. Whilst forming part of the designed estate, the only building constructed on it by 1858 was 8 Lowwood Road, defining the junction between the roads.

The road was primarily built up during the middle phase of building, when tall terracing was constructed along the road. Additional localised development followed in the early decades of the 20th century. Between 1912 and 1925 a large hangar style building was constructed to the rear of a villa on Clifton Road, forming a Drill Hall which has later been adapted for teaching and storage uses. In the 1930s some of the redundant space to the rear of the buildings to Clifton Road was developed as semi-detached housing; whilst modest in scale, the buildings served to intensify development in the area.

Built Form

Mostly built up with housing during the final key phase of construction, small scale domestic workers terraces dominate Brookland Road. The snaking nature of The Woodlands ensures that some of these buildings retain addresses to this road, but actively sit within the street scene of both streets. To the north-east these terraces are simple, built in fletton brick with canted bays to the ground floor. Most windows have been replaced with uPVC [Plates 4.3.46].

However, as the street slopes south, two pairs of more generous 1930s semi-detached homes exhibit curved bays, quoined brick and render. Domestic in character, whilst larger in scale than the small terraces they sit next to, their character echoes that of the Vernacular Revival buildings to the northern side of The Woodlands. One house at 65 The Woodlands retains its stained glass and timber windows [Plates 4.3.47].

The road's most striking buildings are the late Victorian terraces, set back slightly from the pavement. Standing three storeys tall and situated at the height of the slope, they have a considerable presence in the townscape. Flemish bonded red and buff brick create added interest to the elevations, which are otherwise relatively plain. One house within the block has been inappropriately rendered, sitting awkwardly within the block and disrupting the sense of symmetry to the upper portion of the road [Plates 4.3.48].

The poor modern surfacing, coupled with the domineering presence of the early 20th century former Drill Hall hangar to the south, creates a cluttered townscape. With little green landscaping to the western side of the road, which is instead dominated by a small area of hard landscaped parking, close board fencing and metal alleyway fencing, the area's public realm is in a poor condition [Plates 4.3.49].

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the area:

- Linear views north along the road, terminating in historic terracing to the south, but which is overshadowed by the Pyramids Shopping Centre
- Linear view south, terminating in the brown brick modern terracing along Lowwood Road
- Short range view along the rears of south side of The Woodlands



4.3.46 Simple worker's terracing to north-east of Brookland Road



4.3.47 1930s semi-detached housing



4.3.48 Polychromatic brickwork to Brookland Road terracing



4.3.49 Poor quality public realm and Drill Hall to right

4.3.6 Fearnley Road

Design Intent and Evolution

Not designed as part of Scott's original layout for the villa estate, Fearnley Road reflects the final phase of terraced construction. Laid out between The Woodlands and Lowwood Road, it was constructed during the 1880s or 1890s, little change has occurred since this date.

Built Form

Dominated to its eastern side by the tall sandstone block wall to **Fearnley Hall (Grade II)**, from which the road took its name, the tall shaped gables, finials, stone lantern and grand chimneypots dominate dynamic views along it. However, the brick extension to the rear of Fearnley Hall creates a sense of transition to the brick terraces fronting Fearnley Road [Plates 4.3.50].

The terraces to the road are all identical, with large entrances, retained front gardens and canted bays stretching across both ground and first floor levels. Though only two bays wide, the proportions of the terraces are relatively generous. Views of the terraces to the west have been undermined with the loss of their pitched roofs and original slates. However, the rich moulded brickwork and mix of materials present create a sense of rich symmetry across the townscape [Plate 4.3.51].

The overhanging mature planting to this part of the road is replicated to the front gardens of the terraced housing on the western side, creating a well-greened street. This character is undermined by the modern metal streetlighting, utility poles and generic gates to the rear alleyways [Plates 4.3.52].

Local Views

The following views are most prominent within the area:

- Linear views north and south along the road, terminating in the poor-quality modern Pyramids Shopping Centre
- Short range views into the rear of Fearnley Hall's plot, looking towards rear of Lowwood Road



4.3.50 View of boundary wall and apex of Fearnley Hall gables



4.3.51 Typical terrace along Fearnley Road

4.4 Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses

Road Name	Strengths	Weaknesses/Issues
Clifton Road	Most complete expression of Captain Sharp and Walter Scott's original vision for the design of the estate. Grandest buildings richest in architectural detail, illustrating Walter Scott's ability to work in mix of styles. Retained gardens, mature planting, Victorian postbox and gate piers create leafy suburban character that hints at historically open setting and provides framing to views towards Hamilton Square and Liverpool. Glimpsed short range views into terracing to Rodney Street and western setting illustrate economic and social development of Birkenhead and its ties to the development of Liverpool.	Poor condition across many of the earliest buildings and gardens, with historic features and ornamentation at high risk of loss. Considerable loss of original landscaping, boundary treatments and historic public realm detracts from legibility as aspirational villa estate. Demolition of original villas and replacement with blocks of flats which respond poorly to historic context. Inappropriate rendering and painting of historic villas.
The Woodlands	Curvilinear form of the road reflects Walter Scott's original villa estate design, following the line of the former stream and woodland. Despite some inconsistencies, mature planting and wide red blockwork pavements soften the streetscape. Retained boundary treatments are of considerable quality. High-quality mix of architectural detailing.	Inconsistent condition to townscape, with considerable loss of front gardens. Poor quality detracting modern development across the area undermines sense of historic and architectural value. Fast traffic speed and limited parking resulting in heavy car presence within streetscape, undermining pedestrian connectivity. High volume of visual clutter.

Circular Road and Lowwood Road	Original road designed as part of the villa development laid out by Scott, adding to the legibility of the historic area and forming its core. Unusual arrangement conveys sense of privacy historic interest and intrigue to pedestrians. Mix of speculatively terraced developments displaying architectural variation and good quality detailing. Retained polychromatic brick and timber detailing to buildings of particular value.	Some terraces well maintained but general loss of historic features and visual clutter (e.g. wiring, aerials, security features) undermine character. Lowwood Road has been fragmented by modern interventions such as bollarding and raised paving, undermine sense of connection between spaces. Inconsistent landscaping to historic terraces, some hard landscaping.
Brookland Road	Original road designed as part of the villa development laid out by Scott, adding to the legibility of the historic area. Mix of speculative terraced developments displaying architectural variation and good quality detailing.	Some historic features lost and replaced with poor quality/inappropriate materials e.g. concrete pantiles to roofs, uPVC to windows and inappropriate rendering. Poor condition to public realm, with lack of green landscaping to front gardens and heavy use of tarmacking. Overly prominent fencing. Views bookended by poor-quality modern development to both the north and south.
Fearnley Road	High-quality terracing sits comfortably against historic Fearnley Hall, expressing phased development of the townscape. Richness of architectural detailing to brick terracing supplemented with high-quality mix of materials Retained mature planting and generally well-maintained historic brick boundaries to front gardens.	Some historic features lost and replaced with poor quality/inappropriate materials e.g. concrete pantiles to roofs and uPVC to windows. Views bookended by poor-quality Pyramids Shopping Centre to the north, reducing sense of legibility to setting. Considerable clutter to roofline and facades of buildings relating to satellite dishes and security detailing. Poor quality modern street furniture and anti-social measures have created visual barriers to historic streetscape elements to alleyway.

5 Setting, Gateways and Views

5 Setting, Gateways and Views

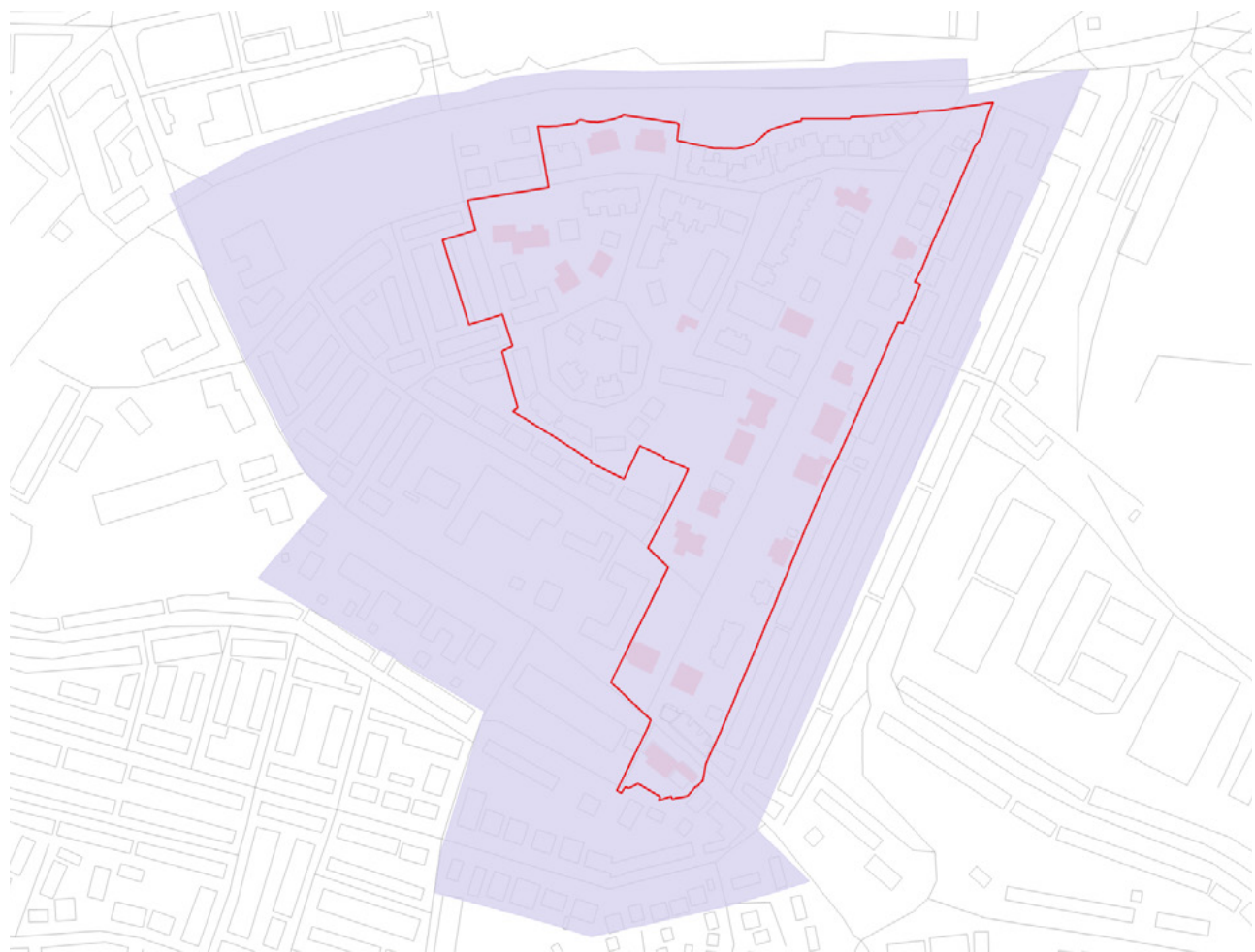
5.1 Summary of Setting

[Plate 5.1.1]

When Clifton Park was initially laid out it was an isolated suburb south of the rapidly growing town of Birkenhead. With ferry services having only existed within the area since the 1810s, its expansion had taken place in the two decades prior to the construction of the estate. As such, Clifton Park was surrounded by open land when it was first built, with other pockets of dispersed development occupying individual sites to the south and west of the area (see section 3).

However, this character is now considerably altered. In the decades following the estate's initial construction the stream and woodland to the north was replaced by a new road, signalling a period of southern expansion to Birkenhead's borders. Since the middle of the 19th century this development has continued, and the villa estate is now surrounded by later Victorian and early 20th century terraces to the east, west and south. Speculatively constructed, this housing is generally much more densely packed than the grand and spacious villas that occupy most of Clifton Park, resulting in a considerably tighter urban grain to the surroundings, that is reflective of the other grand planned developments of Birkenhead Park and Hamilton Square.

As such, the relatively urban immediate and wider setting to the area makes a limited contribution to its significance, representing a considerable departure from the original design intent. However, it serves to contextualise the rise and fall of the town of Birkenhead, its varying economic conditions and phased expansion. As such, it is somewhat sensitive to change, especially in cases where the visibility of Birkenhead and Liverpool would be impacted by modern development. The setting is considered in two strands; the immediate setting surrounding Clifton Park, which is most sensitive to change, and the wider setting, which claims a reduced but still important visual relationship with the estate.



Key

- Clifton Park Conservation Area Boundary
- Listed buildings
- Immediate Setting

5.1.1 Setting map

5.1.1 Immediate Setting

The immediate setting of the Clifton Park Conservation Area is almost completely residential to the south. It is defined as the terraced residential streets that either sit within the original plan of the estate (and Captain William Sharp's ownership) or immediately border Walter Scott's original plan. However, separated from the conservation area's northern boundary by the A552/Borough Road, commercial and retail uses dominate the immediate setting to the north, the large Pyramids Shopping Centre visually dominating the setting and reducing the visibility of the historic high street located further north.

As such, there is intrinsic variation to the character of the immediate setting, defined by the following elements:

- **Contrasting scale:** The terracing to Hazel Road, Hollybank Road, Rodney Street and Whetstone Lane varies in scale but retains a general sense of human scale, rarely built above three or four storeys tall. However, that Pyramids Shopping Centre lacks this sense of scale, forming a cliff-like wall of minimally articulated brickwork that dominates views along the A552/Borough Road.

- **Variation in plan:** The general sense of linearity present within the planned development of Hamilton Square to the north is lost around The Pyramids Centre, with the snaking Borough Road following the natural curve of a former stream. The historic road of Whetstone Lane, a curving turnpike typical of those seen across the more rural areas of the Wirral peninsula, is also curved, but contrasts with the linearity of Rodney Street and much of the wider setting.
- **Permeability:** The relatively small roads within the original plan of Clifton Park and small roads such as Rodney Street are accessible by vehicle but remain quiet with a good sense of permeability and connectivity. This is starkly contrasted with the large dual carriageway to the north.

[Plates 5.1.2-5.1.4]



5.1.2 Human scale to terracing on Hollybank Road



5.1.3 Large footprint of Pyramids dominates views north



5.1.4 Simple terracing and quiet to Rodney Street

However, whilst the character of the immediate setting to the north contrasts with the residential roads that otherwise encompass the area's surroundings, there is a general sense of unity to the domestic terracing.

Several key features define its broad character:

- **Tight urban grain:** Mostly comprising terraced homes built in large stretches across a mix of snaking and linear roads, the urban grain is significantly finer than the large villas and generous plots seen within the conservation area.
- **Linearity in plan:** The tight urban grain is especially clear within the linear blocks of terracing - although located on roads that curve and follow historic street arrangements, large blocks or terracing predominate.
- **Consistent residential character:** Almost all of the buildings are consistently in either single occupancy or multiple occupancy residential use.
- **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:** Rarely above three storeys in height (and frequently between two and two and a half storeys) the buildings are generally only two to three bays wide, occupying small plots which contrast starkly with the rich gardens and surroundings within Clifton Park.

[Plates 5.1.5-5.1.7]



5.1.5 Tight urban grain and linear roads to immediate setting



5.1.6 Consistency in residential use and simple material palette



5.1.7 Shared sense of height to surrounding terrace

5.1.2 Wider Setting

The wider setting of the conservation area is more mixed in character, with a variety of uses visible in its further surroundings. What constitutes the area's wider setting is varied, with long-ranging views over the area's surroundings not replicable outside of the vantage point on Holt Hill. Situated on the edge of the historic township of Tranmere, once surrounded by open landscape, the estate's surroundings have grown up organically around it and are therefore highly variable in the following ways:

- **Spatial Arrangement:** The wide-open wasteland to the former gasworks site to the east, and the low-lying dry docks on the coast are of a relatively loose urban grain, their arrangement subordinate to the geography of the site. However, the strictly planned Hamilton Square contrasts with both this looser grain and the chaotic street pattern and arrangement of speculatively developed terraces to the south of the site.
- **Street Pattern:** The grid-iron pattern of Hamilton Square and much of the northern side of Birkenhead is not replicated to the immediate north, east, south and western setting.
- **Phases of development:** With the earliest development to the north of the area, around the core of the Birkenhead ferry landings, the settlement developed and stretched south over the course of the 19th century, constructed in phases of

speculative and planned development influenced by the economic success of the town and its transport infrastructure. As such, the 1820s and 1830s development of Hamilton Square contrasts starkly with the late 19th century roads around the east and south.

- **Topography:** The north of the conservation area is broadly flat, with a soft slope upwards towards the docks. However, the southern and western setting is situated on a rocky sandstone ridge above the lower-lying coast. Holt Hill and Higher Tranmere to the south starkly contrast with the geography of the northern area of setting.

[Plate 5.1.8 and 5.1.9]

However, despite these differences, the setting of the conservation area remains of significance for the following elements:

- **Dynamic coastal views**
- **Dynamic long-range views of Birkenhead and Liverpool's key buildings**
- **Sloping topography**
- **Layered and varied spatial planning**
- **Elegant 19th and early 20th century terracing**

[Plate 5.1.10 and 5.1.11]



5.1.8 Linear streetplan to Hamilton Square (Google)



5.1.9 Loose urban grain around former gasworks and docks (Google)



5.1.10 Sloping topography and views of Liverpool and Birkenhead



5.1.11 Elegant terracing south of the area

5.2 Gateways

[Plate 5.2.1]

The original plan of the park, determined by the unusual shape of the plot owned by its developer, was historically accessible only from a gated entrance off Whetstone Lane and to Clifton Road. However, the infilling of the stream to create Borough Road shifted the principal access points from Whetstone Lane towards the north, with additional pedestrian gateways to The Woodlands situated along the same road. However, the sense of arrival at these gateways varies considerably.

The alignment of the plan in a triangular shape creates several sharp points at which roads meet with each other. Located at the corner of the conservation area, the roads that bound it joint at key nodal points and signal a change in character.

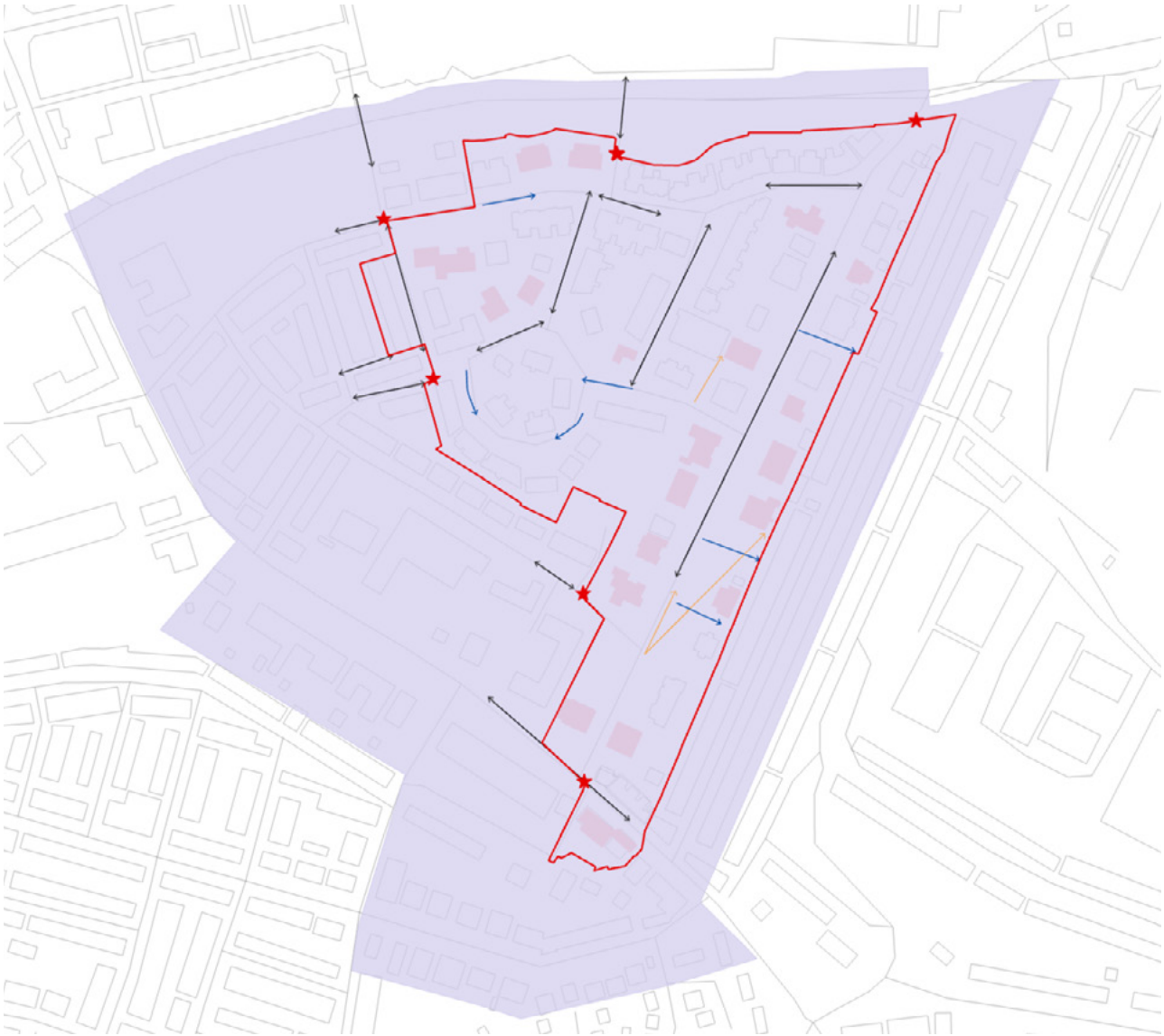
The principal gateway and most prominent arrival point sits to the south of the area, at the highest point within it. Located on Holt Hill, the convergence of Whetstone Lane and Clifton Road. Flanked by a grand classical villa to each side **(44 and 47-49 Clifton Road)**, these stucco and ashlar buildings contrast with the red brick Victorian townscape on the southern side of Whetstone Lane, with the opening to the linear Clifton Road well framed by the overhanging mature planting to each garden. An interpretation board is located to the corner of the western side, whilst the termination of the red blockwork paving marks the end of the original villa's extent **[Plate 5.2.2]**.

Smaller pedestrian gateways to the northern boundary of the area lack distinctive landmarks, with only the rear elevations of the villas to The Woodlands backing onto Borough Road. This lack of architectural grandeur, coupled with the limited pedestrian connectivity over the dual carriageway, poor quality bollards and areas of underutilised public highway ensure that the pedestrian gateways from Borough Road are of limited significance **[Plate 5.2.3 and 5.3.4]**.

Several other gateways lack the landmark buildings of the principal gateway to the south. Where the earliest villas were built up along the key corner plots and Clifton Road, the later linear roads that break up Scott's spacious layout generally also lack a sense of arrival. Exacerbated by the construction of bollarded barriers that have removed vehicular access and undermined pedestrian and disabled accessibility to Circular and Lowwood Roads, these gateways are equally of low significance **[Plate 5.2.5]**.

This is also true of the north-eastern gateway to the area, marked by the meeting point of Clifton Road and the large flyover of Borough Road, which is less legible than that to Whetstone Lane. Lacking a clear landmark flanking the entrance, the grand Gothic **10 Clifton Road** terminates the views into the area, but the snaking shape of the road reduces the sense of arrival than at the northern side of Clifton Road. Pedestrian access here is considerably impaired, with a generally poor sense of connectivity between the monolithic Pyramids Shopping Centre and much smaller scale of the townscape to the conservation area **[Plate 5.2.6]**.

Though a consistent public realm scheme is present across much of the conservation area, creating a sense of distinction to Clifton Park as a discrete estate, other elements of the public realm are degraded, reducing the sense of arrival into the estate. Signage of the area is relatively limited, with the interpretation board located at the apex of the road in poor condition.



Key

- Clifton Park Conservation Area Boundary
- Listed buildings
- Immediate Setting
- Gateways
- Key long-ranging views
- Key short views
- Key linear views

5.2.1 Gateways and Views map



5.2.2 Blockwork paving to southern gateway



5.2.3 Pedestrian gateway onto Woodlands from Borough Road



5.2.4 Pedestrian gateway towards Fearnley Road



5.2.5 Bollarded access to gateway on Lowwood Road



5.2.6 North-eastern gateway into the area

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 road. 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 Gateways and Views map

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 land is flat, with most views out of and into the conservation area therefore being considerably limited by the flyover and Pyramids Shopping Centre. However, to the south the land slopes steeply, resulting in views from Whetstone Lane being considerably wider. Indeed, the snaking roads planned by Walter Scott, set around a relatively private circular core, result in relatively poor visibility into the interior of the conservation area.

These characteristics result in the following views:

- Filtered views from Whetstone Lane into Clifton Road
- Funnelled and focused short-range views into the townscape from between building gaps, including on Rodney Street and Whetstone Lane
- Short-range views to the rear elevations and coach houses from Borough Road and the raised promenade area of The Pyramids Shopping Centre
- Short range views from gateways of individual buildings, such as of 10 Clifton Road from the north-eastern gateway

[Plates 5.3.2-5.3.5]



5.3.2 Filtered view into Clifton Road



5.3.3 Rear of terraces to sides of Whetstone Lane building



5.3.4 Rear of houses from Borough Road



5.3.5 View of 10 Clifton Road from northeastern gateway

5.3.2 Views out of the Conservation Area

Truncated by the large dual carriageway of Borough Road to the north and Whetstone Lane to the south, views out of the conservation area are generally either short, truncated by the residential townscape or Pyramids Shopping Centre to each. However, the topography of the area also lends itself to panoramic views of the immediate and wider setting.

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

- Short truncated views of the Pyramids Shopping Centre to Borough Road from the bottom of Clifton Road and The Woodlands
- Short truncated views of Whetstone Lane's Victorian terraces from the apex of Clifton Road at its southern extremity
- Short glimpsed views between houses to the rear of Rodney Street
- Panoramic and focused long-range views north, including Birkenhead and Liverpool's docks and its skyline
- Coastal views over the Mersey

[Plates 5.3.6-5.3.9]



5.3.6 View towards Pyramids Shopping Centre



5.3.7 Views of between buildings to rear of Rodney Street



5.3.8 Views over Birkenhead from apex of Rodney Street



5.3.9 View over terraces to west of area



5.3.8 View over Birkenhead and Liverpool from Clifton Road

6 Negative Factors and Opportunities for Enhancement

6 Negative Factors and Opportunities for Enhancement

6.1 Overview

Clifton Park forms a unique layered area of changing architectural trends within Birkenhead, reflecting the fortunes of the settlement in its ambitious initial plan and later more condensed development. Remaining in residential use, the legibility of the park's original plan and its successive phases of development are key to its interest but currently threatened by its condition.

Currently on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register, its vitality and quality as a phased and diverse villa suburb 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 historic detail and features, poor upkeep and cluttering of facades and, crucially, boundary treatments and gardens.
- Poor condition to buildings, the landscape and the wider townscape.
- 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 modern infill development.

Looking towards the future of the conservation area, there are opportunities for its condition, as well as its interpretation, to be improved. Designed as a high-class residential suburb for the few but now home to a diverse residential population and situated in a strategic location for access between Tranmere and Birkenhead, its significance could be drawn out to tell the story of the area's history more effectively.

6.2 Negative Factors and Detracting Elements

6.2.1 Development Pressures and Poor-Quality Later Development

Impact on significance: high

Though the pace of redevelopment has slowed since the area's designation in 2004, the latter decades of the 20th century saw a degradation of the area's historic character. Several large villas and historic chapels were demolished and development within their plots considerably intensified.

The new developments that have been constructed generally depart from the materiality, architectural detailing and varied roofscape that defines the area. Buildings such as Venture Court and Clifton Gate are particularly prominent.

Whilst other modern housing retains a sense of the buildings' original footprint and historic landscaping, such as 2a Clifton Road, they are often poorly articulated and large areas of their plot hard surfaced. Mostly designed as apartments, none of the buildings represent the high-quality design principles sought as part of the earlier Appraisal or Scott's original design for the villa estate.

[Plate 6.2.1]



6.2.1 Inappropriate development to Woodlands Road

6.2.2 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. Door replacements are similarly common within the area, especially to the smaller scale terracing to the south, and are similarly an issue, undermining the original detailing.

Roofing materials have been replaced with concrete tiles in places, 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.

The cluttering of facades and garden spaces are also associated with incremental change, with high levels of security wiring and clutter visible to front elevations. Aerials and satellite dishes are particularly notable, disrupting the historic roofscape that defines much of the area's character.

[Plate 6.2.2]



6.2.2 Modern UPVC replacement windows

6.2.3 Boundaries, Gardens and Yard

Impact on significance: extremely high

The extent of gardens originally adjoined to houses within the area is highly variable. However, most historic buildings within the townscape were built with front and rear gardens, reflecting the relative generosity of the plot sizes laid out by Scott. Despite this, many gardens have been totally lost, replaced with hardstanding or covered with a low-maintenance lawn and minimal shrubbery. With the considerable scale of the original plots, this mass of lawn can result in a stark appearance to the villas, their massing and large proportions emphasised to the detriment of Scott's utopian 'villa suburb' ideal.

Conversely over maturity to planting is also an issue to some buildings, with climbing plants visible to several of the historic villas. Whilst adding to a sense of greening within the townscape, these plants pose potential maintenance risks in the long term, also scarring the historic brickwork where root ingress takes place. A lack of maintenance to the planting within the townscape can result in the building being totally obscured, creating a sense of inactivity and vacancy.

It is unclear if there was ever consistency in boundaries to the various phases of development. As such, a sense of variety characterises the boundaries. However, the loss of boundaries, construction of modern replacement walling and railings and tall gates create a chaotic appearance to the townscape. In a small number of cases close-board fencing has been

added to the front and side elevations of boundaries, which is highly prominent to the street, obscuring the original elevation of the building.

[Plate 6.2.3]



6.2.3 Poor quality gardens and boundaries undermined character

6.2.4 Condition

Impact on significance: extremely high

The general condition of some buildings within the conservation area is poor, mostly resulting from a lack of regular upkeep and maintenance. Though small-scale terraces frequently exhibit degraded boundaries, windows and architectural detailing that is poorly maintained, the largest early villas on the estate have suffered most from a general deterioration in their condition. Added to Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register, the deteriorating condition of many buildings, creates a poor visual appearance to the streetscape and considerably undermines the legibility of the area's early streets as a high-status villa suburb.

Key examples of this include 10 Clifton and 8 Lowwood, the former of which is missing windows and scarred with lines of historic vegetation to its façade. The declining condition of paintwork and render to 8 Lowwood, exposing some of the ashlar beneath, creates an untidy appearance. Broadly linked to economic factors that have limited maintenance, the condition of the largest single-occupancy residential villas is both the most visually impactful and common. The latter example should be considered a building at risk, whilst others should be monitored.

This poor condition to the buildings themselves is often replicated to the landscaped gardens, almost all of which have been badly degraded. As such, the decline in condition to both the built form and landscapes associated with it has undermined the legibility of the area as a high status suburb, designed to serve the wealthiest of early Victorian society.

[Plate 6.2.4]



6.2.4 Poor condition to historic building, including inappropriate paintwork

6.2.5 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. This is a particular issue to Borough Road and the associated flyover, which severs the historic visual connection between Clifton Road and the former Clifton Crescent (now mostly demolished). Pedestrian access is also limited in some areas, with no pavement to Circular Road impacting the degree to which it can be safely accessed on foot.

Whilst there is a coherent paving scheme covering most of the conservation area, this is not reflected within the street furniture, which is severely lacking and inconsistent in style. To Clifton Road, postwar concrete lampposts are mixed with contemporary examples, whilst there is a general lack of public bins, benches and amenity space within the public realm.

Modern traffic calming measures, whilst positive in reducing the area's use as a rat run, are visually detrimental to the public realm. Poor quality modern bollards fail to do justice to the streetscape, whilst also undermining Walter Scott's original intentions for Lowwood Road to form a fluid unifying street across the awkwardly shaped area.

Additionally, to Borough Road there are almost no wayfinding elements to signal the existence of the conservation area behind the belt of residential villas. Some signage offers public interpretation of the area on Whetstone Lane, but the plastic has now degraded, and the boards themselves are no longer legible. As such, despite the heavily built-up nature of the area's setting, the historic significance of the roads is often subordinate to its position between the centre of the settlement and Tranmere; with limited spaces to dwell and opportunities for the community to better understand and interpret the area lost.

[Plate 6.2.5]



6.2.5 Poor quality public realm

6.2.6 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 Clifton Road and The Woodlands, where the considerable size of villas, high maintenance needs and generous plots all offer redevelopment appeal.

[Plate 6.2.6]



6.2.6 Vacant sites present risks to redevelopment

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 along key roads. In many cases, a lack of awareness of the value of individual features and the character of the area has resulted in this loss; the production of new maintenance and energy efficiency / climate change 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 Wirral Council and relevant stakeholders would help to maintain the area's character on a wider scale **[Plates 6.3.1-6.3.4]**.

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 built environment is often the cause of the construction of poor-quality modern development or the insertion of inappropriate street furniture, paving and signage within the public realm.

On a larger scale, the enhancement of public-facing areas within the conservation area would help to improve the visual appearance of the historic buildings' surroundings. Though limited possible public spaces exist within the area, fast roads, limited pedestrian paving and street furniture could be enhanced to add to dwell time within the area, and increase appreciation of its historic origins and architectural interest **[Plates 6.3.5 and 6.3.6]**.



6.3.1 Some historic features could be repaired



6.3.2 Some houses have been covered with render



6.3.3 Some boundary treatments could be improved



6.3.4 Some owners have recently undertaken restoration works to key features



6.3.5 Some alleys could be improved



6.3.6 New interpretation boards could bring interest to the area's history

6.4 Boundary Extension and Additional Designations

The original boundary of the conservation area has remained intact since its initial designation. The previous Appraisal's study area was broadly replicated during this assessment, though the whole of Elm Grove, Wellington Terrace and Borough Road was considered in addition to the previous assessment.

6.4.1 Boundaries

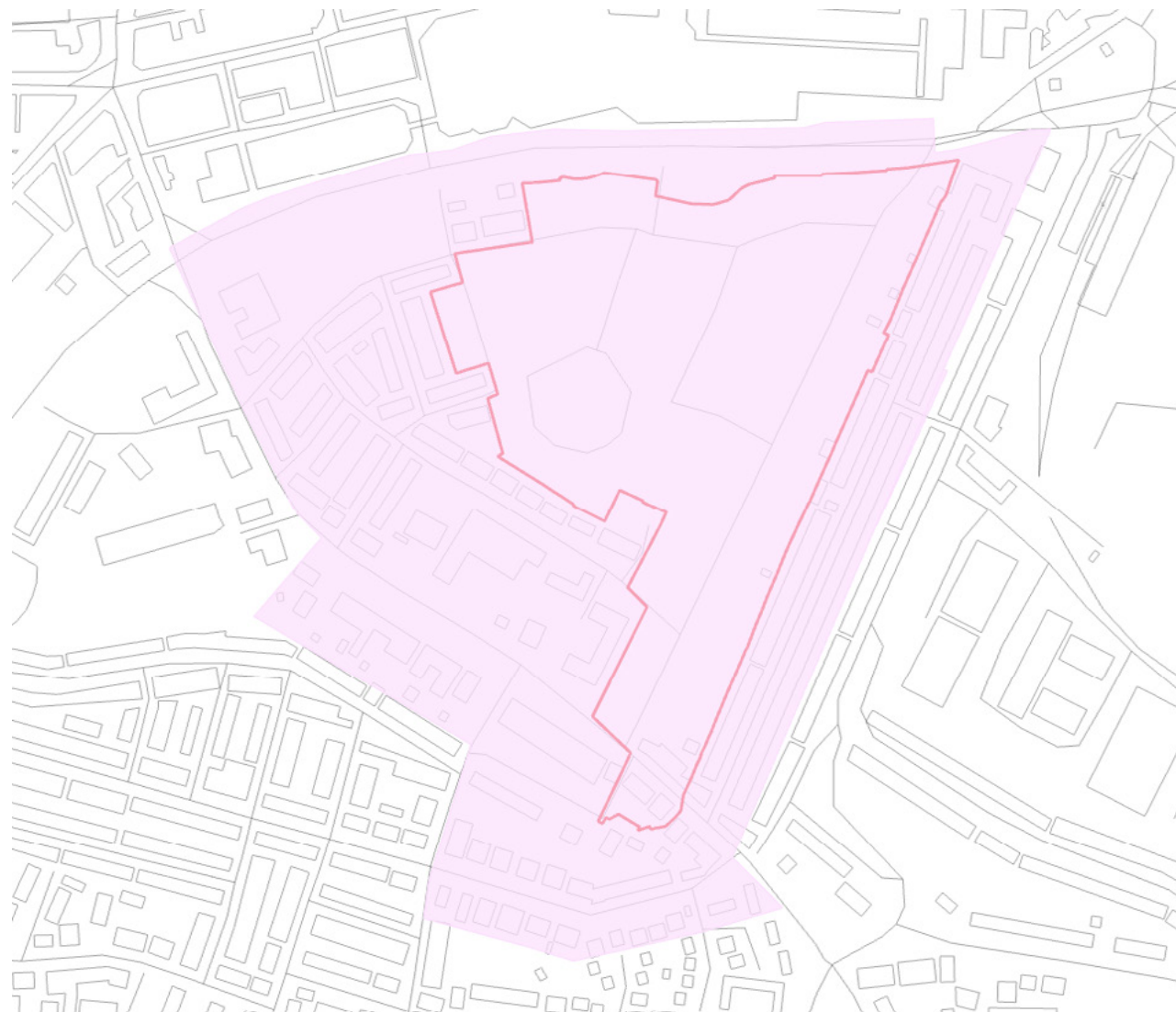
As a development conceived under a unified design intent within what was then a rural setting, the current Clifton Park Conservation Area boundary reflects much of the eastern parcel of land laid out by Walter Scott in the 1840s. Although the estate was originally larger, with Clifton Crescent extending beyond the reaches of the former river to the north-west, the construction of the flyover has resulted in a total severing of this historic relationship. This is equally true of the further housing shown as having been constructed by Captain Sharp in the 1830s and 1840s; not historically designed as part of the estate, its quality is so degraded so to not be considered within the proposed conservation area. As such, the existing line of the conservation area was considered an appropriate boundary.

[Plate 6.4.1]

6.4.2 Additional Designations

Whilst outside the scope of this Appraisal, analysis of early maps of Tranmere suggests several other small villa estates were built in the Holt Hill area south of Whetstone Lane, albeit on a far smaller scale than Clifton Park's original vision. Their designers remain unknown, and the quality and condition of the surviving houses was not assessed as part of this piece of work, but could be investigated as part of any studies into further designations within the Wirral.

Further designations of residential buildings within the townscape itself should be considered, as described in the Management Plan below.



Key

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

6.4.1 Study area and boundary map

7 Management Plan

7 Management Plan

7.1 Introduction

The Clifton Park Conservation Area was designated in 2004 and currently retains its original boundaries, with recommendations having been made by Donald Insall Associates in the Appraisal informing the designation **[Plate 7.1]**.

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 6. They seek to provide guidance to Wirral Borough Council in determining planning applications for development and to building owners and developers when preparing development proposals. They also seek to guide Wirral Borough Council 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 formal public consultation process is undertaken as part of the adoption process. Conservation areas are not frozen entities, and the contribution of Clifton 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 and townscape 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 Walter Scott.

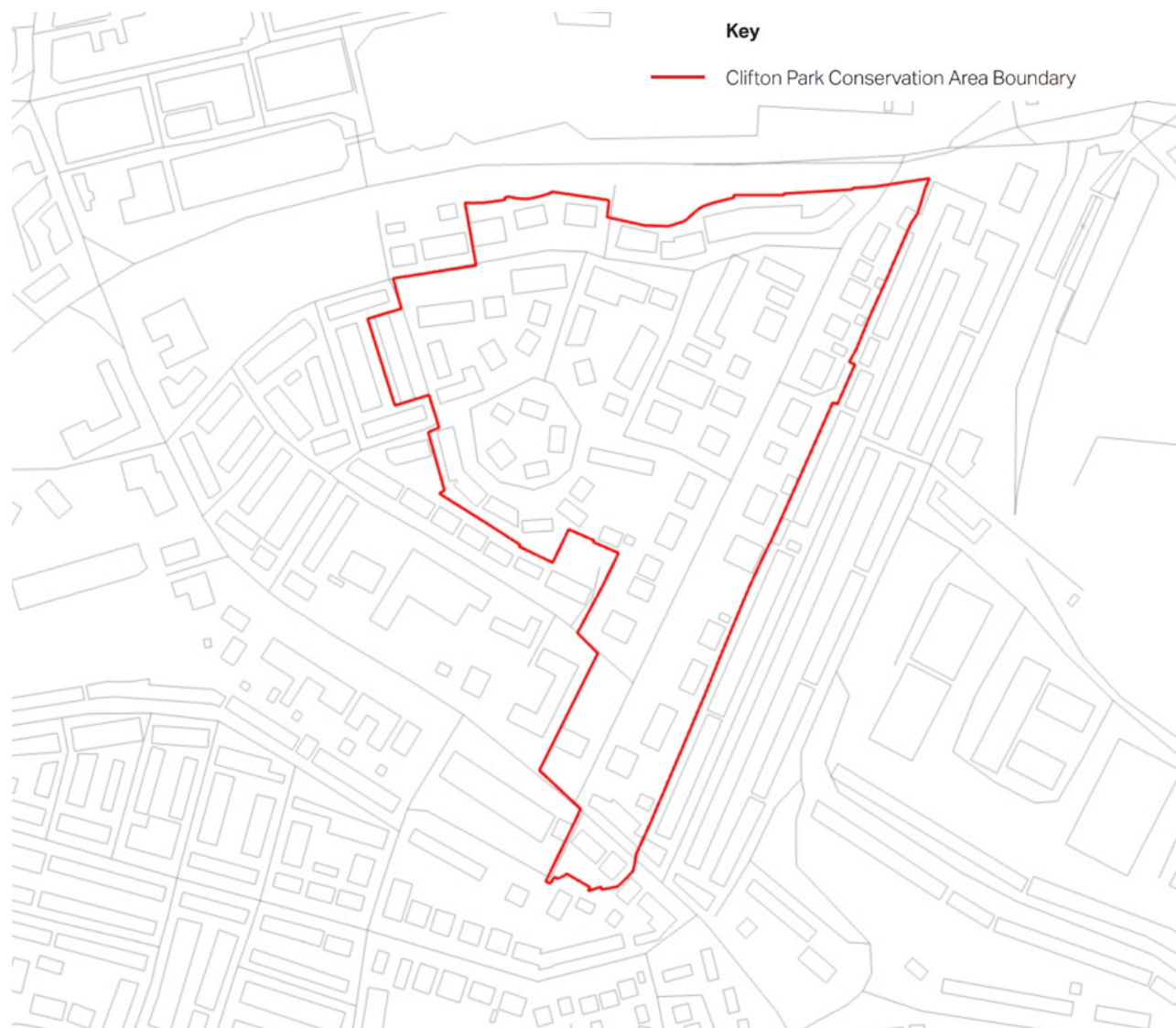
There will be some cases of overlap between this Management Plan and existing policy documents and guidance. It is not the remit of this document to address matters associated with the wider management of the community.

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 Wirral Borough Council, 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 Clifton 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 Wirral Borough Council with an up to date, evidence-based Appraisal and Management Plan for the designated conservation area of Clifton Park;
11. Contribute to the economic and social prosperity of Birkenhead.



7.1.1 Conservation area boundary

7.2 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 Borough Council 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, Wirral Borough Council 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, Wirral Borough Council.

The sections of the 1990 Act form the foundation for Wirral Borough Council to 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 1st April 2025). Where applicable, links to the documents have been listed in the relevant sections below to provide additional guidance.

7.4 Management Plan Policies

Designed by Birkenhead-born architect Walter Scott as a single-phase suburban villa estate in the 1840s, Clifton Park has evolved through successive phases of construction, its layered townscape articulating the rise and fall of the town's fortunes during the 19th century. This Management Plan hopes to support the preservation of this unique character and design intent.

Several 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 and Public Realm
- D. 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.

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 strictly 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, 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 Buildings should not be rendered or painted where not present historically.

Recommendation A.1i 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.

Principle A.2a 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.2b 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.2c 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.2d 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 and respect established building lines; porches and fire escapes will be discouraged
- Utilise traditional materials of the late 19th and early 20th 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 the street
- Retain balance in the building where it was designed with a sense of symmetry in mind; this also applies to semi-detached buildings
- Respect the townscape character of the surroundings, not attempting to emulate the grander villas on the estate

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

Principle A.2f 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.2g 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 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 ornamental ironwork and bargeboards, should be retained wherever possible.

Recommendation A.2i 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 A.2ii Wirral Borough Council should consider undertaking enforcement action against those who depart from these policies

Recommendation A.2iii The local civic societies should undertake bi-annual audits of the area to understand how well these policies are being adhered to.

Recommendation A.2iv Wirral Borough Council should consider commissioning a Design Guide and Code focusing on its Victorian suburban and villa conservation areas, to provide guidance on repair, maintenance and reinstatement of historic features.

This should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and its uptake promoted 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 Clifton Park, where the gardens are of particular importance to the special interest of the area, 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 estate's original intended design.

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 and 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 A.3i 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, as well as the visual harm of poor quality and mixed boundary treatments to the area.

Principle A.4a There is a presumption against any alteration to gardens and historic boundary treatments and gate piers.

Principle A.4b Reinstatement of historic features, and removal of detrimental ancillary buildings, surface treatments and boundary treatments will be strongly supported.

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 treatments found within the area should be 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.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.

Recommendation A.4i 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, with specific focus to Clifton Road.

Boundary Treatment Good Practice Guide for Residents, Owners and Developers

The original boundary treatments associated with the estate are crucial to maintaining the character of the area as a high-class villa estate. 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 Frontages

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 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. Historic features should not be concealed. 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. The location of signage on or sited to the gardens of buildings must also be carefully considered so as to not harm the appearance of the building.

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 will be removed. Ventilation ducts, air-conditioning units, security equipment and wiring should be relocated to more discreet locations and redundant services/ wiring removed. There will be a presumption against window grilles and mesh to windows. Applications for future proposals must take into consideration the impact on the appearance of buildings and the conservation area.

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

Recommendation A.5i Wirral Borough Council should produce 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 estate built in a secluded area of countryside between Birkenhead and Tranmere

Principle A.6a 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.6b 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.6c 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.

Principle B.1a 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.1b 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.1c 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. 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 Scott's estate.

Principle B.1d 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 be of an appropriate scale, design and siting within the plot.

Principle B.1e 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. New development should not compete for visual and spatial dominance within the townscape, especially in the case of early villas.

Principle B.1f 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.1g 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 to the road.

Principle B.1h 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.1i 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 landmarks at these junctions or detract from their setting.

Principle B.1j 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 townscape

Principle B.2a Development within the setting of the estate must preserve its significance.

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.

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

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/>

C Townscape and 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 19th century.

Principle C.1a The existing street lighting and information boards add to the amenity value of the area, but should be upgraded. Their location should be 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 Planting of further trees, hedging and shrubbery should be encouraged across the area, with its locations carefully considered.

Principle C.1d A consistent scheme of paving across the area laid out as part of the Clifton Park estate development should be considered. Where opportunities exist to uncover or reinstate historic setts, cobbles and paving, this would be encouraged.

Recommendation C.1i Wirral Borough Council should commission and adopt a Design Guide and Code for its Victorian villa and suburb conservation areas 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 and refuse storage.

Recommendation C.1ii Wirral Borough Council should consider the introduction of a public realm scheme to create consistency in paving, signposting and of street furniture, improving the appearance of lighting.

Recommendation C.1iii Wirral Borough Council and partners should consider extending any pedestrian-focused public realm schemes around the conservation area to the key transport gateway at Birkenhead Central and over Borough Road

Recommendation C.1iv Wirral Borough Council and partners should consider an improvement scheme to the Birkenhead Central Merseyrail Station forecourt and its connection to both Clifton Park and Birkenhead Centre.

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 Conservation Area

D.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 D.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 D.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 D.1i The opportunity to work with schools to better promote the value of the built heritage of Clifton Park as an educational resource and utilising the Appraisal document as a tool should be considered by local civic societies.

Recommendation D.1ii The existing public interpretation board to the corner of Clifton Road and Whetstone should be renewed, creating a visual aid. A further public interpretation scheme could be considered to other pedestrian gateways and underutilised areas of highway

D.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 D.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 D.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 D.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 D.2i Wirral Borough Council should work with Merseyside Civic Society, 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 D.2ii 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 D.2iii 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 19th century historic villas dating to the middle phase of construction on the estate should be included, such as 1-7 Lowwood Road, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 Circular Road should be added.

7.5 Further Guidance Links

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

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>

7.6 Summary of Recommendations

This Management Plan, following an analysis of the risks and issues within the area has made several principles and recommendations, designed to support the Local Authority, owners and stakeholders with the management of the historic environment of the area. 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 for a scheme of enhancement to the public realm to the historic buildings. This could be done by:

- Restoration of the historic paving and a new scheme of landscaping and street furniture considered to underutilised areas south of Borough Road.
- Consideration of greening scheme to underutilised areas of highway on northern border of the conservation area

Overall, 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. 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 both in terms of built form and landscaping. A Design Code specific to boundary treatments and landscaping would be particularly desirable.
 - Recommendations for local listing, recognising some of the high-quality buildings that form the middle phase of residential development within the area. Many of these are currently undesignated, and therefore at the highest risk of loss and degradation.
 - Creation of a user guide or leaflet for owners of residential properties, focusing on condition management, climate change alterations, permissions required for alteration and any support or resources that might be available to support them.

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:

- Birkenhead Central railway station and shops: extending the existing pedestrian-focused public realm within the conservation area to the railway station, to create a coherent scheme wayfinding into the historic core of Clifton Park could improve knowledge of the conservation area's existence.
 - Borough Road: The busy dual carriageway to Borough Road could be improved, with pedestrian crossings enhanced and the legibility and signposting of the area given greater space to the road. The belt of green space along the road could be improved, to funnel pedestrians across the road from the Pyramids Shopping Centre.
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The following recommendations, made in the above Management Plan, have been summarised in the table below, delineating the responsibility in taking it forward.

Recommendation name	Recommendation	Responsibility
A.1i	Maintenance guidance for historic properties, which links guidance documents to the website, should be produced and advertised	WMBC
A.2i	An Article 4 direction should be considered to protect features of interest within the conservation area	WMBC
A.2ii	Enforcement action should be taken against those who depart from these policies	WMBC and local civic societies
A.2iii	Bi-annual audits of the area should be undertaken to understand how well policies are being adhered to	Local civic societies
A.2iv	A Design Guide and Code for Wirral's Victorian villa suburbs should be commissioned and adopted as an SPD	WMBC
A.3i	Energy efficiency guidance for historic properties should be published	WMBC
A.4i	A signage	WMBC
A.5i	Signage guidance should be produced for owners of historic properties and adopted as an SPD	WMBC
C.1i	A Design Guide and Code for Wirral's Victorian villa suburbs should be commissioned and adopted as an SPD, with specific reference to the boundaries, the public realm, landscaping and refuse storage	WMBC
C.1ii	The introduction of a public realm scheme to create consistency in paving, signposting and improvements to street furniture and lighting	WMBC and partners
C.1iii	Pedestrian-focused public realm schemes should be extended around the conservation area to the key transport gateways	WMBC and partners
C.1iv	An improvement scheme to the Birkenhead Central Merseyrail Station forecourt and pedestrian crossing to Borough Road should be considered	WMBC and partners
D.1i	Local schools should be worked with to better promote the value of the area's-built heritage and its historic value	WMBC, Conservation Areas Wirral and other civic societies
D.1ii	The public interpretation boards should be renewed and the scheme considered for extension	WMBC
D.2i	Community ownership of the plan should be encouraged	WMBC, Conservation Areas Wirral and other civic societies
D.2ii	An Article 4(2) Direction should be introduced and a Local Development Order considered to prevent continued incremental change	WMBC
D.2iii	Recommendations of positive contributors, especially those older examples, should be made to the local list	WMBC

Appendices

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.

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.

Appendix II: Local Policies Affecting the Conservation Area

Wirral Local Plan 2022-2037 (Adopted April 2025)

The Wirral Local Plan was adopted by the council on 1st 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

Clifton Park (CON-SA3.6)

B. Proposals within Clifton Park Conservation Area will be supported where they, amongst other considerations:

1. preserve or enhance the historic character or appearance of a Victorian suburb and its landscaped setting;
2. retain and enhance the consistency of scale, massing and separation between neighbouring buildings;
3. retain the variety of buildings together with highly decorative details and roofscapes, their materials and design;
4. retain, create and improve unifying features such as boundary treatment, including stone walls, sandstone flags and railings and attractive landscaping within public vantage points as well as protect the tree scape within the Park area.

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 flatted 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