



## BIDSTON VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

---

### PART 1 – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Prepared for Wirral Council by Donald Insall Associates Ltd 2007 - Wirral Council 2009

## CONTENTS

### PREFACE

- Background to the Study
- Scope and Structure of the Study
- Existing Designations, Legal Framework for Conservation Areas and the Powers of the Local Authority

### PART 1 – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

- 1.0 LOCATION**
  - 1.1 Geographic Location
  - 1.2 Topography and Geology
  - 1.3 General Usage (e.g. residential)
  - 1.4 Conservation Area Boundary
  
- 2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**
  - 2.1 Early History and Origins
  - 2.2 18th and 19th Century Development
  - 2.3 20th Century Growth and Expansion
  - 2.4 Archaeology
  
- 3.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISTAS**
  - 3.1 Setting and Relationship with the Surrounding Area
  - 3.2 Character and Relationship of Spaces
  - 3.3 Views and Vistas within the Area
  - 3.4 Green Spaces and Planting
  
- 4.0 TOWNSCAPE AND PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS**
  - 4.1 Grain, Scale, Repetition and Diversity
  - 4.2 Principal Buildings and Features
  - 4.3 Boundaries and Surfaces
  
- 5.0 ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALS AND DETAILS**
  - 5.1 Prominent Styles
  - 5.2 Known Architects and Designers
  - 5.3 Materials
  - 5.4 Typical Features and Details
  
- 6.0 NEGATIVE FACTORS**
  - 6.1 Overview
  - 6.2 Recent Development
  - 6.3 Unsympathetic Extensions
  - 6.4 Unsympathetic Alterations
  - 6.5 Loss and Development Pressures
  
- 7.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER**

## PREFACE

### **Background to the Study**

This report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd on behalf of Wirral Council. Its purpose is to clarify the designation of the Conservation Area, which will protect and enhance the character of the historic core of Bidston Village.

### **Scope and Structure of the Study**

The scope of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is based on the guidelines published by English Heritage ('Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' and 'Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas', both dated February 2006) and represents a factual and objective analysis. In accordance with the guidelines, the following framework has been used as the basis for this analysis:-

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

The document has been structured to encompass these areas of study and concludes with recommendations for the Conservation Area boundary and other matters such as provision of Article 4 Directions.

### **Existing Designations, Legal Framework for Conservation Areas and the Powers of the Local Authority**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Buildings and structures may not be demolished without formal consent from the Council (Conservation Area Consent).
- Trees are protected and all work to them requires consent from the Council.
- New development is expected to reflect the quality of design and construction of the surrounding area and should make a positive contribution to the area's character.
- Local planning authorities may, if necessary, exercise even greater control by removing the basic permitted development rights of householders.

- Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council has a legal obligation to ensure that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance" of the area when formulating decisions on planning applications.

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

This should then underpin local policies for the 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 areas overall character. PPG15 notes that "the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded; the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions".

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

## PART 1 – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

### **1.0 LOCATION**

#### **1.1 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

1.1.1 Bidston village lies towards the northern end of the Wirral Council. The village is situated in an elevated position on Bidston Hill, overlooking Birkenhead, Wallasey, Moreton, Leasowe with the Welsh hills beyond. The Bidston Observatory, on the summit of Bidston Hill, although not seen from the village, stands as a prominent landmark over it. The M53 motorway linking Liverpool via the Kingsway Tunnel passes close by.

#### **1.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

1.2.1 The Conservation Area slopes down to the north and west from the narrow north-south ridge which forms the summit of Bidston Hill. The settlement covers an area of drainage basin within a sheltered inlet to the sea. This has formed the nearby ‘moss’; a raised area of bog and marsh which contains peat deposits.

1.2.2 The higher land of Bidston Hill is Keuper Sandstone, while the surrounding area is made up of mottled sandstone. This is overlain by boulder clay in some areas of the west and north east of the settlement. In the area of Bidston Moss are silts and clays which overlay the peat due to it being inundated by the sea after c. 4700 years ago.

#### **1.3 GENERAL USAGE (E.G. RESIDENTIAL)**

1.3.1 The area is almost exclusively residential. Surprisingly, there are no services provided in the village. The former Ring ‘O Bells Inn closed in 1868 (Stone Farm, 1 Bidston Village Road) and corner shop (39/41 Bidston Village Road) have been converted into residential accommodation. The few non residential buildings within the village include the Church and the former School. One of the 5 farmsteads (Church Farm) remains in agricultural use and there are 4 farms where horses are kept. Whilst farming itself is no longer prevalent in Bidston, horse activity remains a strong part of its character.

#### **1.4 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

1.4.1 Bidston village was the first area to be designated as a conservation area within the Wirral by County Borough of Birkenhead in 1972. With St Oswald’s Church at the centre on Bidston Village Road, the current boundary crosses School Lane to the north, runs along the boundary of the

large housing estate to the south west, crosses Statham Road (including Cowdrey Avenue, Ikin Close and Lindwall Close) and then goes around Bidston Hall and associated landscaped setting. When the conservation area was designated, the area to the south (Statham road, Cowdrey Avenue, Lindwall Close and Ikin Close) had not been developed as a housing estate.

## **2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS**

2.1.1 The circular nature of St Oswald's Church grounds indicates that the settlement has an early origin and the fabric of the church has clear medieval elements. The layout is a typical medieval settlement pattern and suggests that the village may go back well before the seventeenth century date of most of its cottages.

2.1.2 The Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record identifies artefacts which indicate that Bidston was a centre of early activity prior to the medieval settlement. The majority of buildings within the village were built during the post medieval period. The first detailed survey of the settlement was commissioned by Lord Kingston in 1665, which reveals that the settlement was principally an agricultural farming community.

### **2.2 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT**

2.2.1 Bidston underwent industrial expansion during the nineteenth century; the largest effect was possibly in the draining of Bidston Moss during works on the Bidston Docks. The building of the Bidston-Hoylake Railway and the erection of the Holyhead- Liverpool electric cable, the new Bidston Lighthouse and the Bidston Observatory were other key developments at the time.

### **2.3 20TH CENTURY GROWTH AND EXPANSION**

2.3.1 Army training and reserve camps were established during the First and Second World Wars. The twentieth century has also seen various housing estates spring up throughout the parish - Birkenhead North End, part of Noctorum, Ballantyne and Beechwood. The population of the parish is now approximately 10,000. After the parish hall was destroyed by fire, the interior of the church refurbished so that it could be used for community activities. This was completed in 1988.

**2.4       ARCHAEOLOGY**

- 2.4.1       The Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record has accounts of finds in the village. Reportedly, two Neolithic stone artefacts were discovered in fields close to the village core, north-east of St Oswald’s Church. Excavation in the 1990s discovered Mesolithic flint and Roman pottery. Roman pottery and a coin of Maximilian (286-305 AD) have also been found close to the village core.
- 2.4.2       Archaeological research is currently underway following the discovery of a reportedly Viking ‘mini-hogback’ stone and several other finds. It should be noted that future archaeological discoveries such a these, may give further light on Bidston’s history and therefore significance. Any applications for new-build or extensions to the footprint of buildings within the conservation area should therefore be referred to the Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record for assessment.

### **3.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISTAS**

#### **3.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SURROUNDING AREA**

- 3.1.1 The rural setting of the historic village has been lost to the north and south by encroaching modern housing estates. However, the agricultural use of Church Farm at the centre of the village and equine use of other buildings and sites maintains the agricultural setting at the heart of the historic village. The wooded approach to the village from the east is further maintained by the grounds of Bidston Hall. Now by-passed, much of the heavy traffic from Birkenhead is taken through Moreton and west around Bidston village restoring some of the tranquillity to the village.
- 3.1.2 Without any village facilities, neighbouring Birkenhead, Wallasey and Moreton serve the local population.
- 3.1.3 Bidston Observatory on the hill above the village was a recognised weather observation station on Wirral. The observatory was built in 1866 providing an unbroken series of meteorological records dating back to 1867. Together with records from the original Liverpool Observatory built at Waterloo Dock in 1845. Until its recent closure, the Observatory provided a valuable scientific resource and weather records to solicitors, shipping companies etc, on Merseyside. It was most notable internationally as the foremost tidal prediction centre in the world. The nearby lighthouse of 1873 was used until the 1920s and is now open by arrangement
- 3.1.4 Bidston's fairly central position on the Wirral Peninsula has for many decades meant that traffic is a major issue to residents. The construction of the by-pass took out the connection between Birkenhead and Moreton, but the local traffic generated by the adjoining estate and commuter traffic from nearby Upton have largely replaced it. Means of discouraging the use of the village by vehicles has been considered but without any particularly positive outcome because of the needs of emergency vehicles.
- 3.1.5 There are important views into the conservation area from the surrounding area. The tower of St Oswald's Church is particularly prominent from the M53 motorway as it swings around the village.

#### **3.2 CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES**

- 3.2.1 The village centre has a distinctly medieval street pattern with roads set around the circular grounds of the church. Bidston Village Road is the principal thoroughfare through the conservation area, travelling east to west across the village.
- 3.2.2 The character of the village is first defined by the Lilac Cottages. Set in an elevated position adjacent to the church and facing Bidston Village Road,

together they form a prominent mixed group of attractive buildings in the centre of the village. The five farms; Stone Farm, Yew Tree Farm, Bidston Hall Farm, Ivy Farm and Church Farm present a good mix of historic agricultural buildings, land and dwellings consistent with the village's earliest origins.

3.2.3 The natural bedrock of Bidston Hill is a consistent feature throughout the village. It provides a bearing for the stone buildings and a local source of materials for much of them. The unmade part of Eleanor Road between Bidston Village Road and towards Statham Road allows part of the natural bedrock to show through. There are similar instances in the yard to the newly converted buildings at Bidston Hall Farm and on School Lane adjacent to the church.

### 3.3 VIEWS AND VISTAS WITHIN THE AREA

3.3.1 With the majority of buildings predominantly set back from the street line and gardens/agricultural land consistently bounded by local buff sandstone walls, the agricultural and rural origins of the central village are retained. Mounted in an elevated position, the Church and Lilac Cottages are the focus of the village views and vistas:

- View of the Church with Stone Farm behind
- View of the Church with Church Farm in the foreground
- View of the Church with Lilac Cottages in the foreground
- View of Church Farm from Bidston Village Road
- View of St Oswalds from near the Corsair Public House
- View of Bidston Hall from Bidston Village Road and the unmade portion of Eleanor Road
- View of the elevated churchyard and boundary wall from School Lane.



*(Left) View of the church, lych gate and Stone Farm beyond. (right) View of Church Farm through the gate posts off Bidston Village Road.*

3.3.2 Rising to Statham Road beyond Bidston Hall Farm, attractive far reaching views of the Welsh hills can be seen.

- 3.3.3 Perhaps the most significant view within the village is looking down Bidston Village Road with the Lilac Cottages in the foreground and the church, Stone Farm and Church Farm beyond.



*Tithebarn Cottages with church beyond*

### 3.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING

- 3.4.1 The wooded approach to the village from the east is important in that it creates a buffer from the busy road towards Birkenhead and the junction with the motorway. However suburbanisation to the north, west and south of the village encroaches on the former rural, agricultural setting of the village.

- 3.4.2 There are two types of green space within the village:

- Former agricultural areas (now mainly paddocks), consisting of fields and hedgerows. These are within the centre of the village to the south of Bidston Village Road.
- Landscaping/ grounds of domestic houses. Bidston Hall has fairly extensive landscaped grounds protecting the leafy setting of the arrival into the village from the east. Church Farm in particular has a very attractive garden with mixed mature trees that significantly contributes to the setting of the central village. All of the houses in the conservation area have well maintained gardens contributing to the sense of community pride in the village.



*(Left) Clover Cottage; (Right) Church Farm*

## **4.0 TOWNSCAPE AND PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS**

### **4.1 GRAIN, SCALE, REPETITION AND DIVERSITY**

4.1.1 Dominated by farmsteads which have evolved over a period of centuries, Bidston village has no distinct grain or historic planned layouts. The 1840s title map included in the appendix to this document, illustrates the irregularity of the juxtaposition of plots of land and buildings to Bidston Village Road. Although the road was given an even width later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the odd relationship of buildings remained. The fields around the farms, now enclosed by surrounding sub-urbanisation, also maintain a green and irregular setting to the buildings and the centre of the village.

4.1.2 Buildings within Bidston Village are predominantly two-storeyed, with some single and three storey properties. Barns, cow byres, stables and pig sties further add to the mix of building heights, with the tower of the church providing a central landmark in the village. Floor to ceiling heights of buildings vary according to the original status of the building. The earlier higher status houses are noticeably higher and more generous in their proportions.



*Bidston Hall*

4.1.3 Within the historic buildings of Bidston, there is no repetition but buildings are united by the use of local sandstone. Common architectural features include stone mullioned windows, stone coped gables, steep pitched roofs.

### **4.2 PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES**

4.2.1 The following is a list of principal buildings which are important to the character and / or history of the conservation area:

- St Oswald's Church - re-built about the middle of the thirteenth century with the tower added in 1520. The tower still stands today and is the only part of the present-day church dating from before 1856, when a further rebuilding took place, the previous structure having fallen into disrepair. The attractive windows to the south aisle, installed in 1912 are significant for being by Morris & Co. (Grade II listed)
- Church Farm farmhouse, originating from early C16, but main structure substantially early C17, though built in several phases. (Grade II listed)

- Stone Farm - 1 Stone Farmhouse. C18 but with earlier origin (Grade II listed)
- Ivy Farmhouse and outbuilding - now 2 separate dwellings. Largely late C18-early C19 but with earlier origins.
- Yew Tree Farm - dated 1697 but with earlier origins. (Grade II listed)
- Bidston Hall - Probably a late C16-early C17 re-building of an earlier structure, the remodelling itself in at least two phases. (Grade II\*)
- Enclosing wall and gateway to forecourt of Bidston Hall - Garden wall and main gateway. Late C16. (Grade II\* listed)
- Enclosing wall to rear garden of Bidston Hall - Wall surrounding garden. Probably largely late C16. (Grade II listed)
- Bidston Hall Farm - Farm buildings formerly part of Bidston Hall estate. Probably late C18. (Grade II listed)
- Lilac Cottages - Farmhouse, now subdivided. Late C17 but extensively restored (Grade II listed)
- Former Outbuildings at Lilac Cottages - Barn range and stables, now converted to dwellings. (Grade II listed)
- Clover Cottages - Pair of almshouses. Dated 1901. By Architects Woolfall and Eccles of Liverpool. (Grade II listed)
- 2-4 School Lane - Pair of cottages, one now divided into flats. Probably C18 in origin. (Grade II listed)
- The former school and school master's house - reportedly opened in 1838(unlisted)
- Village War Memorial (unlisted)

### 4.3 BOUNDARIES AND SURFACES

- 4.3.1 Most buildings are set back from the road where the front boundary is generally defined by a local sandstone wall.



*(Left) Gate posts to Clover Cottages; (Right) Boundary wall to Stone Farm*



*(Left) Boundary wall to Ivy Farm; (Right) Boundary wall to Church Farm*

4.3.2 Most walls are constructed from regularly coursed large square cut blocks. They are approximately 1 metre in height, however this does vary throughout the area towards a less coursed and more random construction. The copings are largely of neatly dressed coping stones, however there are subtle variations such as the boundary wall to Stone Farm where large coping stones are laid along the bed cope of the wall.

4.3.3 Clover Cottages are bound by a dwarf wall of ashlar faced block with gate posts that have an elegantly concaved profile but have lost their caps (they are reportedly used to form part of the building's chimneys). However, typically within the village, the gate posts are large stones possibly laid to access and enclose former agricultural fields. Entrances to Church Farm and Lilac Cottages are framed by stone gate posts with ball finials copings. The enclosing wall and gates to Bidston Hall are surmounted by domed finials. It should be noted that many boundary walls were constructed from 'recycled' stone from earlier uses in the village and therefore may have some archaeological significance.



*(Left) Gate posts to Church Farm (Right) Grade II\*listed gates to Bidston Hall*



*Typical former agricultural stone gate posts.*

4.3.4 With the exception of the homes under construction on Bidston Village Road, there are no rendered or brick front boundary walls. The consistency of the front boundary walls, are therefore a critical component of the character of the village. Furthermore, the stone boundary walls are typically enhanced by hedging or attractive trees and planted borders behind.

4.3.5 Many of the pavements within the conservation area have a modern tarmac surface. However there are stretches of pavements to Bidston Village Road and School Lane that are of attractive York Stone flags with stone kerbs. There are some attractive yards, of granite setts (Lilac Cottages), cobbles (Church Farm, Yew Tree Farm) and stone flags (Bidston Hall Farm).



*(Left) stone setts to Lilac Cottage Outbuildings, (Right) Bidston Hall Farm*

4.3.6 Whilst not enhancing the setting of the historic building as a high quality natural stone surface would, tarmac surfaces for roads do not significantly detract from the setting of the historic buildings. However, the quality and maintenance of the tarmac surface is key. Loose gravel surfaces are generally more in keeping with the likely historic treatment of the road surface and on unadopted roads, such as the unmade stretch of Eleanor Road, the original sandstone surface is often seen which adds to the character of the area.

*Eleanor Lane, where the original sandstone surface and bedrock is visible beneath modern loose surface and tarmac patching.*



## **5.0 ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALS AND DETAILS**

### **5.1 PROMINENT STYLES**

- 5.1.1 The prominent architectural style of the historic centre of Bidston village is predominantly historic farmsteads. Agricultural buildings often lack architectural pretentious but provide some of the most important evidence for local building crafts and changing farm technologies. Traditionally constructed, the use of locally available stone, combined with local vernacular traditions, makes a fundamental contribution to the conservation area and regional diversity. The use of stone reflected not only the availability of materials but also the status of the farm and its owner.
- 5.1.2 The English Heritage Guide, ‘Historic Farmsteads’ identifies that for the north-west region, the shortage of timber in the uplands and lowlands from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards led to the present distribution of timber framed buildings being confined almost entirely to Lancashire and Cheshire. The survival of timber framed element in Bidston further defines and contributes to the regional identity.
- 5.1.3 With six surviving historic farmsteads at the centre of the village (Church Farm, Bidston Hall Farm, Yew Tree Farm, Stone Farm, Lilac Cottages and Outbuildings, Ivy Farm) in the now much sub-urbanised area of the Wirral, Bidston and its historic farmsteads make an extra claim to special interest on account of their rarity. Stone mullioned windows, stone coped gables and relatively steep pitched Welsh slate roofs dominate, contributing to the architectural quality of Bidston in terms of the use of local materials and the display of local craftsmanship. Further adding to Bidston’s local significance, is the fact that it is the only village grouping of buff stone buildings on the peninsula (others such as Frankby and Saughall Massie are of red sandstone).
- 5.1.4 The relationship between farm based activities determined how buildings were arranged around the farmstead and how they related to the house. The

linear plan of Yew Tree and Ivy Farms represents an example where houses and farm buildings were attached. These are ideally suited to small farms (usually stock rearing and dairy). The dispersed plan comprising clusters and unplanned groupings seen at Church Farm were more widespread. The dairy farms of Cheshire from the late 18th century adopted the L or T shaped plan (Bidston Hall Farm) where typically the combined barn and fodder house were built at right angles to the cow house range, often separated by a cart entry for loading hay and corn into the first floor lofted areas. Pigsties would usually be placed close to the house, either attached to the L shaped range or as an individual element of the farmstead.

- 5.1.5 There is some ancient enclosure relating to dispersed farmsteads, but the communal fields that related to the village were enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries; arable cropping for nearby urban centres was much more prevalent than in the adjacent areas of Cheshire.

## 5.2 KNOWN ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

- 5.2.1 Clover Cottages on Bidston Village Road are Almshouses, dated 1901 designed by Liverpool based architects ‘Woolfall and Eccles’ in a free Elizabethan style with semi circular gable.



*Clover Cottages*

## 5.3 MATERIALS

- 5.3.1 Buff local sandstone is the most visually prominent material seen within the conservation area. Used in much of the village’s buildings; walls, boundary walls gate posts and some roofs. Because of the more porous nature of some sandstones, walls were often rendered or whitewashed, however no evidence remains in Bidston. More regularly finished stone became increasingly common in the late 18th and 19th centuries, especially for storeyed farm buildings and farmhouses and is associated with the more widespread introduction of lime mortar. In some places the bedrock foundations are clearly visible.



*Barn to Stone Farm; stone with cruck frame evidence. Brickwork possibly resulting from lowering the roof pitch following replacement of thatch by slate.*

5.3.2 Red brickwork is a characteristic feature of the Wirral and Cheshire. Seen more commonly in slightly later buildings, as the use of brick increased throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century where access to building stone was limited. It is often used as a later alteration (for instance chimneys, later storeys, extensions) to a stone building, most notably in 2-4 School Lane.



*(left) Lilac Cottages, (right; upper) School Lane Cottages (right; lower) Ivy Farm*

5.3.3 The listing descriptions of Yew Tree Farm house and stables and Church Farm identify cruck frame construction. The only external timber framing visible to the street is the gable of Yew Tree Farm. The infill between the timber frames would be wattle and daub.



*Gable to Yew Tree Farm*

5.3.3 Most historic buildings have Welsh slate roof coverings, used in the region relatively early due to its accessibility through coastal shipping. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century the use of thatch was common, even in areas where there was local stone suitable for splitting into slates. However thatch is now a rare feature with no evidence in Bidston, although it sometimes survives beneath corrugated metal sheet in some farm buildings, more often replaced by stone slates or welsh slate. Corrugated roofs are seen at Church Farm.

5.3.4 Corrugated iron was used in England from the 1820s, initially for industrial buildings. By the First World War corrugated iron was in general use for the repair of roofs on farm buildings, particularly thatch. From the 1940s asbestos cement cladding was used on the farmstead. Hit and miss vertical boarding has been used as a cladding since the 1970s.



*Barns to Church Farm*

## 5.4 TYPICAL FEATURES AND DETAILS

5.4.1 **Window** openings are typically small with stone lintels and sills, stone mullions, with hood moulds to the higher status houses (Church Farm, Bidston Hall). All traditional windows in the conservation area are timber and have either a white or black painted finish.



*Windows in the conservation area (1) leaded lights (2) sliding casement windows (3) stone mullioned, window casements*

5.4.2 **Doors** within the conservation area are often simply constructed with timber vertical boarding as detailed for the doors to barns, stables etc.



*Doors in the conservation area (all); vertical boarding (2) including lights*

5.4.3 **Chimneys** within the conservation area are either stone or brick, typically rectangular in plan and plain with a simple coping. The chimneys stacks to clover Cottages are a prominent, decorative feature of the architectural design.



*Chimneys in the conservation area; (1) Clover Cottages (2) stone with sections rebuilt in brick seen extensively (3) simple copings to stone chimneys(4) plain brick stack.*

5.4.2 **Eaves, gables and verges** tend to be of traditional details. Most gables have stone parapets but range in character from the decorative mouldings and kneelers seen at Lilac Cottages, to simple stone coped details seen in the majority of buildings.



(1) Parapet detail to Lilac Cottage (2) simple stone coped gables seen extensively

## **6.0 NEGATIVE FACTORS**

### **6.1 OVERVIEW**

6.1.1 A study of this nature cannot attempt to highlight every part of the built environment that has a detrimental impact on the character or setting of the conservation area; instead this report summarises the most apparent of examples and key problems within the conservation area as a way of encouraging an understanding and awareness of these issues.

6.1.2 Appended to this document is a plan showing the contribution of buildings to the character of the conservation area, the plan was produced as a tool to gain an understanding of the significance of different parts of the village and to inform as to the appropriateness of the boundary. This plan puts each building, or group of buildings into the following categories:

- A: (Red) – Buildings that are critical to the character of the area: typically these may be landmark buildings and / or buildings with most of their original character retained
- B: (Yellow) – Buildings that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area: buildings may have some alterations but original character is still prominent
- C: (Green) – Neutral - Either modern buildings of little interest or buildings where character has been lost beyond economic redemption.
- D: (Blue) – Buildings that detract from the significance or character of the area.

## 6.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2.1 There are currently two fairly large projects under construction in the conservation area; a new build project of 5 terraced houses are being built in the centre of the village on Bidston Village Road and Bidston Hall Farm is currently being converted into 10 properties.



*(Left) Conversion underway to Bidston Hall Farm (Right) Construction in progress on Bidston Village Road*

- 6.2.2 Housing developments to the south of Bidston Hall Farm are included in the conservation area. There are generally 3 house types; the houses to Statham Road, Lindwall Close and Ikin Close. All are under concrete tile roofs with a range of masonry wall finishes of stone effect textured facing, red brick and buff brick. The brick and stone effect blockwork are not of high quality and detract from the quality of the conservation area and the neighbouring Bidston Hall Farm. However the effect is slightly reduced by the general buff appearance of the facing material and the larger plot size of the houses on Statham Road with well presented gardens.



*(Left) House on Statham Road (Centre) Cowdrey Avenue (Right) Ikin Close*

- 6.2.3 Other modern buildings in the conservation area are generally isolated. There are a couple of one-off bungalows to School Lane, however these are set back from the street line and behind well presented and fairly large front gardens. Further encroachment of housing estates within the central historic area would affect the village's character; the origins of the farmstead settlement are currently only protected by the field buffer that surrounds the central village farms.

### 6.3 UNSYMPATHETIC EXTENSIONS

6.3.1 There are relatively few extensions within the conservation area of a significant size. Most extensions have been to the rear or sides of houses to provide single storey ancillary accommodation. The most unsympathetic of extensions are likely to be those that confuse the original form of the building and lessen the overall perception of quality. Good extensions would either use the materials and detailing of the original building or be of a modern design and construction that is of a high quality but adequately contrasting to the original.

6.3.2 The large flat roofed extension and concrete tiled roof with boarded windows to Bidston Old School House are not sympathetic alterations to the original character of the building although the principal impact on the village is from Ballantyne Drive, outside the conservation area boundary..



*(Left) rear and side extension to Old School House*

### 6.4 UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS

6.4.1 Unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings are probably the greatest current threat to the character of the conservation area. The following alterations are commonly seen and have a detrimental effect:

- Replacement of historic timber windows in UPVC, metal or poor quality timber. These changes almost always involve a large change to the configuration of the window panes and framing due to the different properties of the modern materials. The way in which windows open are generally changed, also, with the characteristic feature of horizontally sliding sash windows being gradually lost. Modern doors are a similar issue.
- Insertion of new or changes to the shapes of existing openings. Picture windows are particularly out of character with the traditional, small paned windows.
- The addition of rooflights into roof slopes which project above the slates or tiles.
- Replacement of the historic roof coverings with modern poor quality, artificial alternatives such as concrete tiles.
- Changes to chimneys, most notably reduction in their height or removal.

- Rendering of brick and stonework.
- Damage to historic building fabric as a result of changes to the traditional building materials. The use of hard pointing and impermeable coatings generally accelerated the rate of decay of the softer historic materials, most notably sandstone. In certain instances the effect of this phenomenon threatens not only the physical fabric but also the appearance of that part of the conservation area.
- The insertion of injected damp proof courses into stonework. This practice is generally ineffective and damaging to the appearance of the building.
- Loss of natural bedrock – excavated during alterations/extensions
- Fencing behind stone boundary walls as at 41 Bidston Village Road



*(left and right) poor quality pointing to stone and brickwork as well as highly detrimental palisade fencing at Ivy Farm.*



*(Left) Bidston Hall Farm - Former farmstead outbuildings converted to cottages, by extensive alteration. The original character of the outbuilding has been permanently affected.*

## **6.5 LOSS AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES**

- 6.5.1 Large scale development encroaching on the heart of Bidston to the north, west and south rather than loss of fabric presents the greatest threat. The overriding character of the village is its historic farmstead settlement and to

develop the remaining land that surrounds the farms would significantly and detrimentally affect the character and origins of the village.

- 6.5.2 As with many historic villages, particularly near major urban areas, there is significant pressure to convert existing agricultural buildings to other, higher value, uses, most notably residential. This may bring not only changes to the buildings themselves, but to their immediate surroundings which are also critical to the character of the area. Conversion often brings pressure for creation of hard-landscaped areas, for example for car parking and the subdivision of farmyards, fields and paddocks for gardens and private driveways.
- 6.5.3 Further development pressure exists from the inclusion of a significant part of the Bidston Village Conservation Area within the Interim Housing Policy boundary. Wirral Borough Council's Interim Policy for New Housing Development aims to restrict the granting of planning permission for new housing development outside the Housing Market Renewal Initiative Area and other areas in need of regeneration. Due to the large extent of the peninsula that is therefore effectively excluded from development, there is significant pressure on the more attractive sites within the policy boundary. In the light of this policy, Bidston may be subject to planning applications for infill development that may conflict with the agricultural character of the village. However, there is only one significant area of currently undeveloped land that is within both the Interim Housing Policy and conservation area boundaries: the area of fields and woodland to the north of Bidston Hall, on the other side of Bidston Village Road, is protected from most types of development by being categorised as 'Urban Greenspace' within the Unitary Development Plan.
- 6.5.4 Within its more recent history, there appears to be no significant building loss to Bidston village. The 1830s plan indicates a former linear farmstead development has been lost, replaced by Kingdom Hall and housing to School Lane. The greatest impact however on the character of the village has been the loss of surrounding agricultural land, now developed by housing estates.

## **7.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER**

7.1 Bidston Village Conservation Area's special character can be summarised as follows:

- Historic village with pre medieval origins.
- Historic farmstead settlement dating to 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Central Church rebuilt in twelfth century, tower dating to 1520, altered 1856 with windows by Morris and Co (1912), H. Hughes.
- Bidston Hall and gates; a late C16-early C17 re-building of an earlier structure
- Good range of historic agricultural buildings and layouts; barns, cow byres, pig styes, stables
- Open land remains at the centre of the village.
- Interesting mix of building scale, height and size with irregular fenestration patterns
- Buff local sandstone, welsh slate and stone slate roofs
- Rare cruck frame construction survives
- Stone mullioned windows, coped gables, chimneys
- Well presented gardens, local sandstone boundary walls, gate posts.
- Visible natural bedrock
- Vertical boarded doors
- Stone cobbled, setts, flagged yards